

## Delivering Change and Building Trust

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## Appointment of CSSA Independent Chair and Non- Executive Directors

After a thorough and robust recruitment process, the former Chief Crown Prosecutor in the Rochdale grooming gang cases has been appointed as the Chair of the new safeguarding agency. The appointment of **Nazir Afzal** as the Chair of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) will be formally announced at an online press conference on the morning of Tuesday 18 May 2021 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Short-Term Task Group (STTG) of the Catholic Safeguarding Project. Mr Afzal was formerly the Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England and Director in London, as well as the Chief Executive of the Police and Crime Commissioners. During 24-year career Mr Afzal has prosecuted many of the most high-profile criminal cases in the country, advised on many others, and led nationally on legal matters surrounding such topics as violence against women and girls, child sexual abuse, and honour-based violence. He was responsible for bringing sex-traffickers in the Rochdale grooming gang scandal to justice, as well as Stuart Hall, the former television presenter who in 2014 was convicted of multiple sex offences against children.

The bishops and STTG will also announce the appointment of **Stephen Ashley** as the Deputy Chair of the CSSA. Mr Ashley is a former Assistant Chief Constable who authored a Home Office report on the conduct of the police during the investigations into sex offences committed by former television personality Jimmy Saville. The appointments of **Lady Amanda Ellingworth**, **Wesley Cuell** and **Dr Jenny Holmes** as Non-Executive Directors will also be announced by the bishops. The Board will be strengthened with the appointment of **Bishop Paul Mason** of the Bishopric of the Forces who has been named as the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, and **Fr David Smolira SJ** who has been named as the Lead Religious. **Carol Lawrence**, Project Director, will also remain as a Director of the CSSA.

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## Cardinal Vincent Nichols on the Chair's appointment



I am delighted to give my full support to the appointment of Mr Nazir Afzal as the first Chair of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. Mr Afzal brings to this role the freshness and vast experience required in order to make the establishment of the CSSA a truly significant step change in the work of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church.

Mr Afzal has a proven reputation for being a champion of victims and survivors of abuse in many different institutions and settings. In the response of the Catholic Church, published last week, to the findings of IICSA, we stated that 'key' to the 'heartfelt change' we are seeking is 'greater listening to the voice of victims and survivors of abuse'. I have no doubt that CSSA, under Mr Afzal's chairmanship, will hold us to that undertaking.

Mr Afzal's firm and proven conviction that public confidence is created by clear, just and well scrutinised processes will also be at the heart of the contribution he will make.

His appointment is a bold and timely step. I thank all those who have worked so hard in the implementation of the Recommendations of the November 2020 Elliott Report among which is the establishment of the CSSA. The appointment of Mr Nazir Afzal is a pivotal moment in this needed development.

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## Nazir Afzal OBE on his appointment

**I am delighted that the Catholic Church has taken what some might consider a brave and bold decision in appointing me as the first ever independent Chair of the CSSA board.**

I've spent three decades responding to harms in every community and institution. I learnt that victims have been failed by every institution who were responsible for safeguarding them. I also understood how reputation was thought more important than exposing those who abuse. Nowhere was safe. Victims were not only abused by perpetrators but then again by those who should have protected them and acted to stop it. The effects of abuse are lifelong and often undetected with victims beset by feelings of shame, guilt and fear. That had to change.

The Catholic Church has recognised the failures of the past and the need to put things right. This is what attracted me to the role. To make a difference, you have to act differently. It usually takes great courage to do so. When I helped deliver justice to thousands of victims of abuse, I realised that they were the most courageous of all.



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# Biographies of Independent Chair and Non-Executive Directors

## Nazir Afzal OBE – Chair

Mr Afzal was Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England and formerly Director in London. Most recently, he was Chief Executive of the country's Police and Crime Commissioners. During 24-year career, he has prosecuted the most high-profile cases in the country and advised on many others and led nationally on several legal topics including violence against women and girls, child sexual abuse, and honour-based violence. He had responsibility for more than 100,000 prosecutions each year. His prosecutions of the so-called Rochdale grooming gang and hundreds of others were ground-breaking and drove the work that has changed the landscape of child protection.

He is Chair of Hopwood Hall. He sits on the Independent Press Standards Organisation. He is National Adviser on Gender Based Violence to the Welsh Government, independent member of Oxfam's Safeguarding and Ethics Committee and trustee of Association of Safeguarding Partners.

Mr Afzal is a tutor for several leadership programmes in the public and private sector. He has made presentations to dozens of diverse organisations in this country and abroad. He has given hundreds of interviews in all forms of media. Mr Afzal gives a considerable amount of time to charitable work and is trustee and patron of several NGOs including ServiceSix, DVAssist, Jan Trust, Samantha Sykes Foundation, Karma Nirvana, Halo Project and SaveraUK and was Chair of the Prince of Wales' Mosaic Trust. He is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Central Lancashire and Glyndwyr University, and awarded Honorary Doctorates in Law by the University of Birmingham, Manchester University and Bradford and Leicester University. He has chaired conferences in New York, Madrid, Paris, Norway and Geneva. He has assisted the Governments of Somalia, Ukraine and Pakistan on Rule of Law reform.

Mr Afzal has received many accolades. In 2005, he was awarded an OBE by the Queen for his work. He has also had the honour of being the only lawyer to ever prosecute a case before the Queen. In 2007, he was named Legal Personality of the Year by the Society of Asian Lawyers, received the UK Government's Justice Award 2007 and awarded the *Daily Mirror* "People's award" voted for by readers. Mr Afzal was also selected for the Asian Power 100 along with the Muslim Power 100 list, recognised as one of the 100 most influential leading Muslims and Asians in the UK. He has been listed in the Pakistan Power100 which regards him as one of the 100 most influential people of Pakistani origin in the world today, and awarded the lifetime Achievement Award by the Power 100. He was Asian Media Group's Man of the Year 2012, and won the Asian Achievers Award 2014. The acclaimed BBC Film *Three Girls* was based on his case and featured Ace Bhatti playing him.

## Stephen Ashley – Vice Chair

Mr Ashley retired from the police in 2013 after rising to the rank of assistant chief constable and spending the last three years of his career working for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. His final role was to work for the Home Secretary in producing a report on the way in which the police had dealt with allegations around Jimmy Saville. Since retiring, Mr Ashley has undertaken a series of non-executive roles including high profile mandates such as independently chairing the Rotherham local safeguarding board during the point of intense scrutiny. He continues to serve as independent chair of the local safeguarding boards at Hillingdon and Tower Hamlets. In recent years, he has united three local safeguarding boards in Lancashire to operate as one entity and for the past 18 months has acted as its independent scrutineer. In addition to these roles, he has chaired an NHS foundation and has undertaken serious case reviews. Mr Ashley has extensive experience of high-profile public cases from his police career, including his work as senior investigating officer in the murder of Reece James to his later work in Rotherham.

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## **Lady Amanda Ellingworth - Non-Executive Director**

A social worker by background, Lady Amanda Ellingworth has built up an impressive portfolio of roles and would bring relevant experience in safeguarding, governance and establishing new bodies to bear on this role. Most of her time is occupied by her roles with Great Ormond Street Hospital and Plan International, as well as roles at smaller charities and grant-making bodies. The role at Great Ormond Street Hospital, which includes chairing the Quality and Safety Committee, involves working in an environment in which safeguarding is a priority. At Plan International Lady Ellingworth was originally recruited to the UK board before being elected to the International Board, although she is still the safeguarding lead for the UK. Lady Ellingworth has recently relinquished her post on the board of Barnardo's where she chaired the Historical Abuse Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee.

## **Wesley Cuell – Non-Executive Director**

Mr Cuell is a social worker by background and his final executive role was at board level at the NSPCC where he was responsible for all service provision to children and families. During this time, he was instrumental in the successful merger of Childline into the NSPCC. He holds various non-executive roles including the Chair of Parents and Children Together, and is a trustee of Papworth Trust. Mr Cuell also served for six years on the Church of England Children's Society including chairing the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee.

## **Dr Jenny Holmes – Non-Executive Director**

Dr Holmes is a Speciality Doctor/Acting Consultant in Psychiatry of Learning Disability as well as the Clinician and Lead for North West England NHS Practitioner Health Service. Until last year, she spent 20 years as Forensic Physician and Clinical Lead for Sexual Offences Merseyside, which included Safe Place Merseyside and at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool. During that time Dr Holmes was also Clinical Lead for Merseyside Police Custody Team and Forensic Examiner for Merseyside Police. In non-executive work, Dr Holmes served as part of the NHS England Clinical Reference Groups overseeing the production of Commissioning Standards for Custody Healthcare and Sexual Assault Referral Centres. She is a trustee of the Doctors' Support Network which provides peer support to doctors with mental health and substance misuse problems.