

18 June 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Church of England apology for role in post-war historical adoption practices

(All clergy, LLMs, PSOs and churchwardens)

I am writing to draw your attention [to the apology issued today by Archbishop Sarah](#) acknowledging the Church of England's role in historical adoption practices.

You may have seen over recent years that a number of mother and baby homes, or similar institutions, formed part of a wider network of care for unmarried mothers and their children, particularly between 1949 and 1976. Some of these homes were overseen by diocesan moral welfare councils. While many sought to offer support, we now know that some women experienced harsh or unkind treatment, and others felt they had little or no real choice in the adoption of their children.

The Archbishop's apology recognises with honesty and humility that some of these practices fell far short of the love, dignity and compassion expected of Christian communities. It speaks of a deep sorrow for the pain, trauma and stigma endured, often carried over a lifetime, by those affected.

I wholeheartedly support the apology issued by Archbishop Sarah and give local reiteration of that apology within the Diocese of Guildford. I echo her call for the Church to 'listen, lament and to learn'. I recognise the importance of creating space for people's stories to be heard with sensitivity and care.

Within our own Diocese, we are aware of six Church of England-affiliated homes or shelters that once operated in Woking, Guildford, Haslemere, Walton-on-Thames, Dorking and Aldershot. While we are not aware of the detailed personal accounts from these particular homes, we remain mindful that individuals may now want to come forward to share their stories.

As clergy and lay leaders, we may encounter individuals who wish to share their experiences with us. I encourage you to receive them with compassion, to listen carefully, and to respond with pastoral sensitivity. Your presence and willingness to listen may be deeply important.

Where more specialist help is needed, please do signpost to the support services listed below, or, where appropriate, to diocesan safeguarding colleagues.

If you have any concerns or would value a conversation about how best to respond pastorally, please do not hesitate to contact me or the archdeacons.

With love in Christ and prayers.

+Paul

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+Paul Davies." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'D' and a period at the end.

The Rt Revd Paul Davies
Bishop of Dorking
& Acting Bishop of Guildford

Finding support

Government resources

The Adoption Contact Register

The Adoption Contact Register enables adopted adults and birth relatives to register their wish to make contact with one another. Where both parties have registered and consented, the service can help facilitate contact and reconnect family members separated by adoption.

Website: gov.uk/adoption-records/the-adoption-contact-register

Phone: 0300 123 1837

Specialist advice

National PAC-UK Advice Line

The National PAC-UK Advice Line provides independent, confidential advice and information for people affected by adoption, special guardianship and other forms of permanent care. The service is staffed by qualified and experienced PAC-UK counsellors and social workers with specialist expertise in these areas.

Website: family-action.org.uk/pac-uk

Email: advice@pac-uk.org

Phone: 0300 1800 090

Family Connect Advice Line

Delivered by Family Action's adoption support agency PAC-UK, Family Connect provides information, support and guidance on tracing and reconnecting with family members, the services available, and whether you may be eligible for funding.

Website: familyconnect.org.uk

Email: familyconnect@pac-uk.org

Phone: 0300 1800 205

Adoption UK

Practical suggestions, information and encouragement with signposting to specialist help

Website: adoptionuk.org/information-and-support-service

Information and support service: 0300 666 0006

Email: informationsupport@adoptionuk.org.uk

Safe Spaces provides a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church

Website: safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk

Helpline: 0300 303 1056

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the [diocesan safeguarding team](#) or the National Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@churchofengland.org.

Additional services

Barnardo's Adoption Support

Support for adoptees, birth families, and adoptive families

Website: barnardos.org.uk/adopt/link-adoption-support-service

Email: link.referralhub@barnardos.org.uk

Samaritans

24/7 emotional support for anyone in distress

Website: samaritans.org

Phone: 116 123