

Historical child sex abuse apology – January Full Council

Leader Councillor Kay Cutts

One of the greatest duties that can be bestowed on a person or an institution is the responsibility for the safety and upbringing of another's child.

This is not something that we at Nottinghamshire County Council treat lightly.

And I also know that *today*, we are doing lots of good work to keep children safe and to ensure that they have every chance to reach their full potential in life.

Sadly, there is a dreadful stain on the history of this Council that we must neither refute nor excuse.

Some children were entrusted to our care and we failed them.

We now know that they were subjected to horrible and heinous abuse that has left many damaged and scarred for life. They suffered at the hands of devious people who had malice in mind.

The fact that this happened is something that leaves me personally feeling deeply saddened and ashamed.

While we cannot eradicate the evil that lurks in our society, we need to be taking every step to keep this away from our children.

This is a period that will be examined in great detail by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse later this year in October and we continue to fully engage in the process, with the next stage being the second preliminary hearing at the end of this month.

The process of laying bare the evidence during this period is undoubtedly difficult for this organisation but there is no question that this is the right thing to do.

Looking back at those times, it very much feels like a different country to the one where we live and work now.

The previous Leader of this council, Alan Rhodes, rightly stood before this Chamber in March 2016 and made an apology for any times that we had failed to adequately protect children in our care. I applaud him for that.

Given the ongoing work with the IICSA inquiry, we continue to understand the nature of our historical failures and it would not be right not to reflect on that further.

On behalf of this Council, as its Leader, I now want to express my deep and heartfelt apology to all of the survivors from this dark period in our history.

While these words today will not change the past, I hope that they will bring some small comfort to those who continue to endure pain as a result.

I hope that survivors of any abuse will listen to these words and feel that they have been heard and, importantly, believed.

My pledge today to survivors is as follows:

- You will have a voice and be heard
- You will not feel that your abuse has happened without steps being taken to address the failings of the past
- You will never be left in any doubt that every effort has been made to bring all perpetrators to justice

While there will always be people who will seek to harm and abuse children and young vulnerable people, we have a duty of care to ensure that we do everything in our power to stop this happening.

I am confident that this is now in place.

While we will never be able to make good what was so clearly wrong at the time, we must do everything that we can to protect the children in our care today.

In so doing we will tirelessly work to lay bare the mistakes of the past and ensure that they are never repeated.

The survivors are rightly demanding truth and justice – we will do everything in our power to make sure that this is delivered.

END