



The Bishop of Norwich  
The Rt Revd Graham Usher

 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Norwich

18<sup>th</sup> June 2026

*Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ*

I am writing to inform you about the apology issued today for the Church of England's role in historical adoption practices.

As you may be aware, a number of mother and baby homes, or similar, were overseen by diocesan moral welfare councils as part of a wider network of provision for unmarried mothers and babies, particularly in the years between 1949 and 1976. There has been growing awareness in recent years of practices within these homes and their outcomes for mothers and their babies.

Further information on the research and apology, and support, is available here:  
[www.churchofengland.org/adoption](http://www.churchofengland.org/adoption)

My understanding is there were three such mother and baby homes in the Diocese of Norwich: St Paul's Lodge, Great Yarmouth; Lyndene Shelter, Kings Lynn; St Bridget's Shelter, Lowestoft.

The Church of England played a significant role as part of a wider system shaped by social attitudes and legislation which often stigmatised unmarried mothers. The apology reflects the deep sorrow felt by senior church leaders for the pain, trauma and stigma experienced - and still carried - by many people affected. Whilst the policy of the Church of England's Moral Welfare Council was to encourage mothers and babies to be kept together where possible, we recognise that this guidance was not always upheld in practice within individual homes. Some mothers have described harsh and unkind treatment whilst resident in Church of England-affiliated homes, while others were not given a meaningful choice about whether to keep their baby.

I recognise the impact this may have on people living in your community, now and in the future. While the number of those affected is unknown, some people in your congregations and parishes may have been affected in some way - as mothers, adoptees, or perhaps as those who were employed in the homes. For some, there may be a wish to tell their stories and be heard by their clergy or church family. For others, there may be a need for more specialist support. We encourage you to signpost people to the support services included at the bottom of this letter, or, where appropriate, to diocesan safeguarding colleagues if safeguarding concerns reach the relevant threshold.

I recognise that this is a complex and wide-ranging history, with very different experiences, and the apology does not seek to make a blanket judgement on everyone involved or the motivations of those who worked and cared for others at the time, including those who worked in the homes and adoptive families.

With all good wishes and every blessing.

Yours sincerely

+ Graham

## **Finding Support**

If you have been affected by this news or would like to speak to someone, a range of options are listed below. This includes specialist agencies and charities we have worked with, followed by details of how to contact the Diocese of Norwich or The Church of England.

## **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.

<https://www.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.

[www.family-action.org.uk/pac-uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk/pac-uk)

0300 1800 090

## **Adoption UK**

Practical suggestions, information and encouragement with signposting to specialist help.

website: <https://www.adoptionuk.org/information-and-support-service>

0300 666 0006

Email: [informationsupport@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:informationsupport@adoptionuk.org.uk)

## **Contacting the Diocese of Norwich**

- **Diocese of Norwich:** 01603 880853 and ask to speak to the safeguarding team. Or email: [safeguarding@dioceseofnorwich.org](mailto:safeguarding@dioceseofnorwich.org)
- **Safe Spaces:** provides a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church. <https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk> Helpline: 0300 303 1056