

Damian Murray emails to Baroness Twycross re Government support for Charity Commission July/August 2026

In a written response to a Parliamentary question from Lord Scrivens 31 July 2026, Baroness Twycross, a minister in DCMS, pledged the Government's 'full confidence' in the current leadership of the Charity Commission. [Charity Commission: 31 Jul 2026: Hansard Written Answers - TheyWorkForYou](#)

Below are the texts of three emails that I sent to the Baroness in response. As of 19 August 2026 I await her response.

5 August 2026

Dear Baroness Twycross

I am one of the two complainants whose concerns and the related Parliamentary Ombudsman's reports the Charity Commission tried to quash through their failed and misguided judicial review claim this year.

The origin of my complaint is the Commission's failure to act when it became aware in 2014 at the latest of a charity's long-term concealment of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest and college principal, Kevin O'Neill. A little research on your part would give you the details.

After eight years now of contemptuous dismissal by the Commission, which continues to this day and has resulted in them being found in contempt of Parliament, with reports by PACAC and Sir Gary Hickinbottom yet to come, imagine my appalled incredulity when today I learned that the Commission has the 'full confidence' of you and your Government.

Given all my experiences to date, this really does add yet further insult to injury.

As one of the complainants on the receiving end of the Commission's (at best) incompetence, I have made abundantly clear that I do not consider Dame Julia Unwin's 'unreserved apology' to be anything of the sort. Nor has Sir Gary Hickinbottom's independent review hardly begun, let alone concluded. If you are merely taking the word of Dame Julia, her Board and executives that everything is now resolved and back on track, then I fear you are being startlingly naïve at very best and can certainly not have looked into the matter in any depth or with a properly critical intelligence.

I am, to say the least, profoundly disappointed and infuriated by this Government response. From my perspective, after all that I have endured, and continue to do so, you have walked onto the stage, with perceived high authority and privileged access to the media, waving your hands and shouting 'Nothing to see here!' without a shred of evidence.

I would now ask that you retract your premature intervention and make a public apology, hopefully more authentic than Dame Julia's, to both me and to the other subject of an Ombudsman's report, Lara Hall.

Sincerely

Damian Murray

7 August 2026

Dear Baroness Twycross

Per my previous email, here are my own observations to supplement the advice and guidance you are currently receiving from the Charity Commission and your civil servants. They will hopefully inform any future declarations of 'full confidence' that you intend to make about the Commission's craven, self-serving and incompetent leadership.

Dame Julia Unwin 'apology'

Like you, I have noted Dame Julia Unwin's letter purporting to contain an 'unreserved apology' to the Committee of Privilege's and her similar, pre-emptive letter to PACAC.

Dame Julia's press lines were however very careful to clarify that the Commission's apology and regrets came 'in hindsight'. This clearly implies that, at the time, the Commission's decisions to disdain the Ombudsman's reports and recommendations and then to pursue High Court action were perfectly reasonable and understandable. They were not.

The judicial claim action also added in my view almost three years onto an already hugely and unnecessarily protracted process, and believe it or not my time is as precious and as scarce a resource as anyone else's. The Commission characteristically do not care about that.

In her letters to Privileges and PACAC, Dame Julia asserts that the Commission's actions 'resulted from genuinely held concerns'. Be that as it may, given the facts before them, the Ombudsman's findings, the gravity of the complainants' cases and the warnings from, among others, Speaker's Counsel, those actions should never have been taken. Their Board and senior executives should have been intelligent and principled enough to know that.

In short, I believe Dame Julia's 'unreserved apologies' in fact to be replete with quite blatant reservations, further compounding the Commission's continuing contempt of Parliament and their refusal to accept the Ombudsman's findings.

Commission Annual Report and Accounts 25/26

I have likewise noted the CC's Annual Report dated 6 July, ie before being found in contempt of Parliament but after their appearances before Privileges and PACAC.

Here is CEO Holdsworth's version of his failed JR claim.

"Finally, I want to acknowledge the work we have done this year to clarify our relationship with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. Following a court decision disallowing a judicial review, which provided clarity as to the Ombudsman's powers, we have worked to ensure we understand the Ombudsman's expectations and that the Ombudsman in turn is clear about the Commission's powers, and the limits of those powers. We have also instigated a judge-led review to gain independent scrutiny of our handling of two cases that the PHSO has criticised us on."

As you see, he is 'acknowledging' the episode (whatever that means) as part of the Commission's 'work', ie as a worthwhile and productive activity. No mention of his appearances and abject performances before Privileges and PACAC, nor that he had ignored Speaker's Counsel before wasting the Court's and everybody else's time, nor that he repeatedly made untrue statements to Parliament.

Clearly he and his colleagues are intent upon continuing to brazen out their contempt of Parliament and indeed of me. Far from being 'unreservedly' apologetic per Dame Julia Unwin, they evidently believe they have done a good day's work.

You will be aware that under government reporting standards, the narrative elements of an annual report are required to be 'fair, balanced and understandable'. I would argue that Holdsworth's disingenuous and self-serving flimflam is very far from that.

Another highlight from the annual report is the concluding paragraph from Dame Julia's Chair's Report:

"I have every faith that the Commission's staff, led by our board and by David Holdsworth as chief executive, will rise to the challenges this moment presents. My ambition and commitment as Chair is to offer both support and robust challenge in the board's oversight of the Commission's work. Good governance matters in charities – it is the promise on which the special status of charity rests – and it matters all the more for the Commission, as regulator of charities."

Without even a hint of irony, a ringing endorsement then for her board and CEO, in full knowledge of their own governance failures and after two car-crash appearances before Parliamentary committees. I think I can now safely say, even so early into her stint as Chair, that she too has drunk the CC Kool Aid and also needs to go, preferably taking her mellifluous platitudes and her hindsight with her.

I note too from the 25/26 accounts that in spite of their unprecedented governance failures it was 'bonuses all round' for the CC's senior executives, with Holdsworth alone trousering between five and ten thousand pounds on top of his already whopping salary. This puts my £1,000 'compensation' (in the Commission's eyes) into stark perspective.

Sincerely

Damian Murray

12 August 2026

Dear Baroness Twycross

In 2018, coincidentally the year I began my complaints about the Marist Fathers with DfE and the Charity Commission, Dame Julia Unwin published an hilarious, spoof policy paper entitled, "*Kindness, emotions and human relationships: The blind spot in public policy*".

I may be the only person ever to have read as far as page 36, but there I lit up this softly glowing pearl of wisdom:

The trouble makers

"The troublesome complainers are the bane of every organisation's life. Frequently irritating, often absorbing vast amounts of organisational time and energy, they are nevertheless the single best source of management information available to those within institutions. Paying careful attention to those who challenge and complain will raise questions about emotional fluency and will provide vital feedback. And of course, the irritation provoked will also provide evidence. Complainers are often right.

The temptation to deal with complaints through a complex architecture may muffle their sound, and may well hide what is going on."

Food for thought.

Sincerely

Damian Murray