

# St John Ambulance alleged abuse victims ‘deserve to see report’

By Ali Bracken

Independent Newspaper

17<sup>th</sup> April 2022

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/mar/28/inquiry-investigates-deaths-of-1500-nhs-mental-health-patients-in-essex>

A man who claims he was sexually abused as a child at St John Ambulance is demanding a report by independent investigators be provided to victims at the same time it is given to the organisation.

The ongoing review is led by Dr Geoffrey Shannon, former special rapporteur on child protection, and focuses on how the organisation handled complaints of sexual abuse when they arose. It is understood Dr Shannon has committed to complete his report in July.

DUBLINER Mick Finnegan (39), one of several men who was allegedly sexually abused and raped by a man at the voluntary paramedic organisation, said: “Dr Shannon’s report must be published in full and be made available to survivors once his review is completed. “Personally, I hope this review provides me and others with the answers to questions we have had for many years.”

He said he hoped the review would “finally give survivors some closure, but more importantly, protect future generations of children” who will join St John Ambulance. “I have campaigned and fought for over 20 years to highlight systematic child abuse within St John Ambulance,” Mr Finnegan said.

“I was never acknowledged or supported until I worked with Minister of State Anne Rabbitte, Senator Lynn Ruane and Minister for Children Roderic O’Gorman, who put pressure on St John Ambulance to commission a review into their child safeguarding policies and procedures with particular focus on how they dealt with survivors of child sex abuse within their organisation.”

Mr Finnegan has taken a civil action against his alleged abuser as well as St John Ambulance. The case will be heard in July and is the first of its kind against the organisation. “All I want to do is stand there. I want my day in court. I want to see my abuser and St John Ambulance held to account. This is not about money. That’s never been my motivation, and that’s the truth. It’s about accountability,” he said.

“It’s time for them to finally face up to what happened. They can no longer ignore this, ignore me or the other victims. Of course, I would prefer to see him criminally charged, and I hope the gardaí continue to pursue him.”

The alleged abuser, who is at an advanced age, was questioned by gardaí over a series of claims of rape made by Mr Finnegan and several other men, but was never charged. This was due to insufficient evidence, given the passage of time. Security sources say the garda investigation remains open.

In 2020, an inquiry by Tusla established that the allegations of child sexual abuse made by Mr Finnegan and others against the former senior volunteer were founded.

Mr Finnegan was the first person to go public with his claim of being sexually abused by the volunteer. Seven other men who were allegedly abused by the same person have since contacted gardaí. By pursuing his civil case, Mr Finnegan hopes it will help him move on with his life.

The alleged abuser worked at St John Ambulance for two years after Mr Finnegan reported his abuse. He later resigned over an issue unconnected to the alleged assaults.

**If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this article, you can contact Dignity4Patients, whose helpline is open Monday to Thursday 10am to 4pm.**