

## **Open Letter to the Chair of the Charity Commission, Mr. Orlando Fraser KC: 13<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022**

Dear Sir,

We write to the Charity Commission as a group of concerned General Synod members (past and present), clergy, laity, survivors and victims of church abuse, their advocates, as well as complainants and respondents who have been maltreated and harmed by Church of England safeguarding processes (including IICSA core participants). We are placing on record our common experience of the National Safeguarding Team, Independent Safeguarding Board, National Safeguarding Panel, Dioceses, Lead Bishops for Safeguarding, and those trustees presiding over this (i.e., the Archbishops' Council).

We are all witnesses to a highly dysfunctional church culture – one lacking in care, wisdom and responsibility – uniformly poor in responses to allegations of abuse, and subsequent complaints about corrupted, cruel and inhumane processes. These have led to despair, suicides, travesties of justice, all perpetrating much longer term pastoral and personal damage on a colossal scale. Yet nobody in the Church of England takes any responsibility for this. We have no functional leadership in safeguarding.

We can have no further trust or confidence in these bodies, nor the individuals working within them. Nor do we harbour any hope that this will ever change. Current safeguarding processes, bodies, panels, and their personnel are incompetent, ineffective and unfit for purpose. The leadership is insincere and inaccurate in its claims that progress is being made. Conflicts of interest run rife throughout the handling of complaints. Victims of abuse and poor process have no advocacy, and no redress. Mismanagement and misconduct are not addressed. 'Core Groups' lack clarity, consistency and basic competency. There are negligible signs of genuine concern for any victims.

We judge that a General Synod vote of no confidence in the work of safeguarding in the Church of England is already long overdue. However, the Church of England as whole has demonstrated that it does not possess the will, wisdom, capability and resources to improve this work. This culpable failure and neglect stems from the persistent ineptness of the trustees for the Archbishops' Council to exercise leadership and oversight.

We believe that Church of England safeguarding practices must now be subjected to a formal Charity Commission investigation (i.e., a fully independent review under your auspices). This is because most recent IICSA recommendations have been treated with scant regard by the trustees, or simply evaded. The only way forward in church safeguarding is fully independent regulation, oversight and quality control – without which there will never be transparency, fairness, accountability or proper process.

We must regrettably accept that trustees of the Archbishops' Council have led us nowhere. We can have no more failures, fudging or fawning self-flattery. If there is to be any hope it is time to face reality. The Church of England must become subject to public standards of truth and justice. We therefore urge the Charity Commission, using statutory powers, to order a fully independent review into these concerns.

Yours sincerely, *MARTIN SEWELL*, General Synod (Lay Member, Rochester & 51 others).

**The 51 Signatures** (i.e., Survivors, Advocates, Clergy, laity, GS Members, Victims, etc.):

1. David Lamming
2. Ian Elliott
3. Dr Sarah Horsman
4. Dr Fiona Gardner
5. Richard Scorer
6. Dr Helen King
7. Andrew Graystone
8. Canon Valerie Plumb
9. Revd Janet Fife
10. David Greenwood
11. Gilo
12. Josephine Stein
13. Jane Rosam
14. Kate Andreyev
15. Simon Barrow
16. Katherine Tucker
17. Graham Jones
18. Matt Ineson
19. Revd Graham Sawyer
20. Melissa Wilson
21. Dave Lucas
22. Rebecca Parnaby-Rooke
23. Anthony Archer
24. Revd Fergus Butler Gallie
25. Revd Stephen Parsons
26. Revd Robert Thompson
27. Revd Stephen Kuhrt
28. Revd Jonathan Aitken
29. Revd Bernard Randall
30. Fr. Robin Gibbons
31. Revd Roger Chapman
32. Fr. Paul Stewart Williamson
33. David Brown
34. Karen Gadd
35. Geoff Haines
36. Patricia Lyon
37. David Ingle
38. Survivor WH
39. Survivor NY
40. Survivor AB
41. Survivor PW
42. Survivor OD
43. Survivor PV
44. Survivor CA
45. Survivor TT
46. Survivor SL
47. Survivor LT
48. Survivor TN
49. Survivor SU
50. Survivor MN
51. Revd John Hudghton