

Statement

Today (24th May 2023) Jasvinder Sanghera CBE and Steve Reeves MBE have formally served a Dispute Notice on the Archbishops' Council.

The Board members' dispute with the Archbishops' Council ("the Council") is that it has frustrated their capacity to deliver the services of the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB).

The Board members assert that the Council has interfered in the operation of the ISB, compromising its independence.

On 21st March 2023, the Council informed the Board members that it had made several decisions which compromise the ISB's independence and terms of reference. These decisions related to the appointment of an acting ISB Chair, and the level of engagement permitted with survivors of Church abuse. The decisions were in direct contravention of the terms of reference of the ISB, which were unanimously approved at the outset of the ISB's work by the Council itself.

In addition to these serious instances of the Council frustrating the independence of the ISB, the Council has engaged in a pattern of conduct which has restricted the ISB from exercising key elements of its role.

The Survivor Advocate has specific duties to lead the ISB's work on survivor engagement, including playing an independent role on the Board's behalf relating directly to victims/survivors. The Survivor Advocate has been prevented from carrying out her duties and these actions have been questioned by those whose experiences she is responsible for advocating and incorporating into safeguarding policy and practice frameworks.

These decisions have resulted in a profound loss of confidence in the ability of the Council to ensure competent safeguarding practice.

The Board members have spoken at length with the Archbishops, the Archbishops Council, Synod, and the House of Bishops about the importance of ISB independence. The actions taken by the Council, without consultation with the ISB, are a direct threat to its independence and run contrary to the Council's undertaking not to frustrate the work of the Independent Safeguarding Board.

The Board members seek to fulfil their contractual duties in accordance with their individual contracts, terms of reference and standing orders, without these functions being frustrated by the Council or other Church bodies.

The Notice of Dispute is not being published today, but the Board members will provide appropriate updates as to the steps taken to resolve these issues.

For those adversely affected by this information, details of available support is shown at <https://independent-safeguarding.org/links/>