

ueSteve Reeves

Good afternoon, everybody. You will appreciate this wasn't quite expected. So I have some thoughts to share. But they almost certainly won't be fully formed in the way that I would have liked had we had time to prepare this. It's really clear that we would rather not be in this position. And that we're very grateful for the support that we've had from a whole variety of people, many of whom sitting in this room. So for every tweet, WhatsApp, phone call, sincere gratitude, even if we haven't had an opportunity to respond. But of course, this isn't about us. This really isn't about two individuals who have been appointed to a board. It's about this broader approach that church adopts for itself when it comes to safeguarding. The Independent Safeguarding Board and the events of the last 18 months or so are a very small part of a very large trajectory in the church that has failed significantly, year after year, decade after decade, to do what is due of it to survivors, victims of abuse and people who potentially could become victims of abuse. The solidarity that people feel with survivors is really significant. And if you go outside and talk to those people, I know that they're very grateful for that. Solidarity works to a degree, action needs to follow too. Standing in solidarity with people is important. But change is even more important. One of the things that's been most challenging over the last two weeks has been hearing from survivors for whom hope is slipping away. They feel that this decision has taken away from them something which they feel they deserve, and have fought for for a long, long time.

What I would say to you one of the challenges for me, and Jasvinder will speak for herself, is that the meaning of words in this context is very different to the rest of society. It's very clear to me that when the church or the Archbishops' Council talks about independence, they do not mean independence in the way that you and I and the average person on the street means independence. They mean semi detached, not independent. When the Archbishops' Council talks about trust, they don't mean the word Trust in the same way, as we mean the word Trust. And people in the street mean the word Trust. What they mean is obedience. When they talk about communication, they don't mean communication in the way that the rest of us understand communication, the average person in the street, they mean loyalty. And I challenge you go back to the public statements that you've heard around this, supplant those words, and the meaning will be clear. The reason we are in this situation is, somebody somewhere had a very clear blueprint about what independent safeguarding in the Church of England should look like. They appointed people to develop that, when it started going in a situation, in a direction that they didn't like or didn't think it met that blueprint, they recoiled. They pulled back. When you talk about wanting to rapidly move towards an independent structure, we presented a path for an independent structure, including an interim arrangement that would allow an independent safeguarding board to exist as a separate legal entity, as a matter of pace. We presented that to the Archbishops' Council. Their reaction was to reject those recommendations and impose a chair upon the board, in contravention of the terms of reference that they themselves had approved. So if you want to know what the intention of an act is, I've learned over quite a few years, you want to know what the intention of an act is, look at the outcome, look at the impact and work backwards. So actually, somewhere in a desk somewhere is a blueprint of what the powers that be believe independent safeguarding should look like in the church, the path that we were moving towards, with the solid engagement of survivors, and others, clearly didn't meet that objective. What didn't happen was nobody sat down with us and said, We're not comfortable with this path.

What they did was they threw up obstacles and obstructions, some of you will have had the opportunity to telephone, the ISB at some point in the last 12 months. But actually, one day, we wake up to find our telephone number is disconnected. Just think for how we have a telephone number where you could ring us, it then gets disconnected, it takes five months for that to be reinstated. This is not the action of an organisation that wants to drive towards rapid independent scrutiny, that wants to facilitate the work of those it appoints. There are many many instances like that that we can point to. And when you ask your colleagues on Archbishops' Council, what the motivation for that Dispute Notice was, we've been transparent. The motivation for that Dispute

Notice is listed in the Dispute Notice, it's very clear, where at our discontent or our concern about the way in which the church has operated, the Archbishops' Council operates, it's very clear. We're not hiding anything. We've been very clear, we were very clear about what it is that our concerns were. I would urge you, I'm conscious that I not for lack of politeness, I've gone first today, not least that I entered, as we all know that trying to follow Jasvinder Sanghera is more of a challenge than it should be. So going first is always a safe mechanism. So I thank you for the opportunity. I'm sorry, they're not more fully formed thoughts. But um, but we've given the opportunity, we didn't want to miss the opportunity of sharing some thinking with you. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Jasvinder Sanghera

Thank you. I'll do my best. Um, first of all, I want to acknowledge the survivors, especially those that spoke and those in the room who I've listened to for the past 19 months. When I first met them, they were sceptical of the Independent Safeguarding Board and so they should be. Why should they trust us? We're part of the church they told us. It took us time and effort to earn their trust and their respect. And we achieved that. So thank you for giving us that. Second thing I want to say is it took me courage to come here today. I'm here with my partner, my stomach was churning all morning. You may not know this. But in 2018, when I left the charity, I founded, Karma Nirvana, I made the decision after holding a secret for 12 years, that I was sexually abused and harassed by a very senior member of the peers in the House of Lords. He was a lawyer. And I took on the institution, the House of Lords, and I was told, you'll never dismantle that, nobody's going to listen to you. It's a powerful institution, they look after their own. I still carried on. They had a process that didn't sorry, they didn't have a process, but they created one. And sitting up there today. I felt like when I was in the first debate at the House of Lords, when I was ridiculed, they're all speaking about me. They didn't invite me to the table, I felt like the ghost at the banquet. So I appreciate standing here today. And by the way, that complaint the second debate looked very different, because Theresa May said, the House of Lords will not be allowed to mark its own homework. And now they are very fundamentally committed to it. And I share that with you because I really appreciate the platform to speak.

It's been really difficult to sit there and not be allowed to tell our side of the story. And I'm not going to give it justice in a few minutes. And that's the thing, because I haven't had time to prepare. But what I do want to say is this Me and Steve did not take lightly the decision to serve a Dispute Notice, the title is Dispute Resolution Notice, resolution is the word. The Archbishops' Council served a Dispute Notice on us in February telling us we were not doing the job we were meant to be doing. And by the way, they didn't tell us. We read it in the press. And then we received the dispute notice three days later. It was a last resort to serve the dispute notice and it tells you clearly and it wasn't only about Meg Munn's appointment, it is about a number of things. They will tell you, we accepted the appointment, and in fact, we went out publicly and we said welcome Meg. We were told to do that. In the meeting, when we were told Meg was going to be appointed, me and Steve shared our concerns with the general secretary. We told them, she would not be received by survivors because she may be perceived as not being independent. We told them: You didn't follow a process like us, of open recruitment where we were interviewed by five people. Two were victims and survivors. We told them this but we're still told it's Archbishops' Council decision. Jasvinder, you have to accept it. Give a statement. So we did do that. I put my hand up to welcoming Meg. It was never about Meg. It was about doing what was right and following a process. But even then, we continued, we didn't expect the sheer volume of victim survivors writing to us. 76 In total, telling us please do not share our data with this individual. It was impossible. And we were invited to Archbishops' Council, we shared all our concerns. Jane shared her concerns at that meeting. But the feeling, and I'm somebody that has advocated for victims and survivors for three decades, is that you are listening. But you are not actually listening and hearing and acting. That's how it is felt. For me as an individual. I have to say, that sitting here today and listening and not being given the

opportunity and always being told we don't want to read things on social media, Jasvinder, social networks and twitter etc. Well, what other platform do we have? Every point we go to, we are silenced you don't allow us to tell you how it is.

I came to this role after 25 years as a CEO as a founder of a charity, as a survivor of a forced marriage. I looked at the advert and I wanted to make a difference because I saw the church was on a journey. And I really wanted to make a difference. And that's why I applied for the role. today. I've listened to people say from Archbishops' Council, they want to invite independent people to do independent work. Isn't that what we were doing, Steve? That is exactly what we're doing. And I now think we were too independent. We did our job too well, when I'm being told and Steve is being told, that we are too survivor led and too survivor focused, I feel the church has a problem. Because actually, you should be welcoming the fact that we have achieved what some of you haven't achieved in that leadership role. And that is gaining the trust and confidence of victims, survivors. Why don't you welcome it instead of not welcoming that? So please read our Dispute Notice and listen to what we're saying. Because I personally feel a responsibility to those survivors who trusted us with their stories, those reviews and let me tell you, when someone decides to do a review, they are at the dead end of a road. They've been at local dioceses, they've had their stories looked at under a microscope, but they haven't achieved justice, or they haven't been assured that anything has improved. That's when they come to us and say we want you to look at it. We took months earning their trust, and you just rip that away from them. And I urge you to consider these reviews, do not allow these victims or survivors to have to retell their stories again to new people. Thank you.