

Synod voted today that proposals for draft legislation to enable the Church of England to deal more effectively with safeguarding issues be brought forward.

General Synod last July voted to endorse work on legislative and non-legislative changes to enhance the Church of England's safeguarding arrangements following on from the Chichester Commissaries interim and final reports.

The proposals take into account not just the recommendations of the Commissaries but also other submissions made in the course of the Archbishops' Council's consultation. The intention is to introduce legislation in July 2014.

The proposed draft legislation outlined in full detail will:

- Tighten up procedures around temporary permissions to officiate in a local parish
- Prevent clergy robing during a service when prohibited or disbarred
- Give bishops power, where appropriate, to direct clergy to undergo a risk assessment (this is currently voluntary)
- Prevent anyone who is on a barred list from serving as a churchwarden or as a member of a PCC, district council or synod
- Prevent anyone with certain convictions in relation to children from serving as a member of a PCC, district council or synod.
- Give bishops the power to suspend people from these posts and bodies if arrested on suspicion of committing certain offences against children.
- Introduce similar provision covering lay workers and Readers.
- Remove the 12 month Clergy Discipline Measure limitation period for bringing a complaint about sexual misconduct committed against children or vulnerable adults.
- Extend the bishop's power of suspension.

Three additional suggestions for reform include:

- (i) The imposition of a duty on relevant persons to have due regard to the House of Bishops' current safeguarding policies
- (ii) The imposition of a duty on all diocesan bishops to appoint a diocesan safeguarding advisor
- (iii) The imposition of a duty on relevant persons to undergo safeguarding training when required to do so by the bishop.

The Bishop of Durham Paul Butler, Joint Chair of the Churches National Safeguarding Committee said: "This is just one step towards the Church

making itself a safer place for all while acknowledging that effects of abuse on survivors can be lifelong. We are determined to improve our procedures and policies. We recognise that simply changing these does not transform our DNA but is an important start. We can never be complacent and we continue to urge any victims or those with information about church-related abuse to come forward knowing that they will be listened to in confidence."

Notes

July 2013 Synod safeguarding debate

May 2013 Response to Final Report of Archbishop's Chichester Visitation

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-news-releases/synod-votes-bring-forward-draft-safeguarding-legislation>