

General Synod today voted to endorse key priorities for action on safeguarding, focusing on themes which came out of the first set of hearings, in March, by IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) into the 'Anglican Church'.

The priorities include taking forward work on closer engagement and support with survivors, on new requirements and policy around clergy selection, suitability and discipline, and on structure, independence and oversight - including a business proposal for the establishment of an independent Ombudsman Service for complaints about how safeguarding cases have been dealt with. The full details of the programme of work can be found [in the report](#) from the Church's National Safeguarding Steering Group, who will lead on the next steps, working with the National Safeguarding Team and in consultation with survivors.

The debate and vote followed a presentation from representatives of [SCIE](#) (who carried out the independent diocesan audits) and [MACSAS](#) (Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors); Sheila Fish (SCIE) and Jo Kind (MACSAS). The presentation touched on the initial findings of the SCIE research into how the Church can better respond to survivors of abuse and a challenge from Jo Kind, who clearly acknowledged the other victims and survivors present at Synod, for the Church to endorse timely action, not just talk.

The motion (as amended), was carried by 368 votes to 0 (with 2 recorded abstentions). It read as follows:

That this Synod, recognising that safeguarding is at the heart of Christian mission and the urgent need for the Church of England to continue to become a safer place for all and a refuge for those who suffer abuse in any context:

1. endorse the priorities for action outlined in the report ([GS2092](#)) and
2. endorse as an additional priority the support of safeguarding at parish level to create a safer church for all; and
3. call on the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council to ensure that the plan of action is implemented as a matter of priority; and
4. call on the House of Bishops to introduce, as a matter of urgency, ways to improve relations between the Church and those survivors currently in dispute with the the National Church Institutions including, where appropriate, by the use of mediation processes.

Bishop Peter Hancock, the Church of England's lead bishop on safeguarding, opened the debate and praised the courage of survivors coming to Synod and those who shared their personal experiences at a meeting co-produced by SCIE and MACSAS – [read his full speech](#).

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