

The BBC Panorama programme 'Is the Church Racist?' tonight explored allegations of racism and discrimination within the Church of England.

The programme includes interviews with a number of UK Minority Ethnic clergy as well as laity and those training for ordained ministry about experiences within the Church. We have worked with the producers to provide information and a response to a number of issues raised.

The allegations – whether involving individuals or the wider structures or culture of the Church – are deeply worrying and there is no place for racism or discrimination within the Church.

This week the Church of England publishes the report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce which was commissioned last year by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to scrutinise previous reports and recommendations made to the Church of England over the last 36 years and establish what progress, if any, the Church has made on racial justice.

It followed a public apology at the General Synod in February 2020 by the Archbishop of Canterbury for racism experienced by black and minority ethnic people in the Church of England since the arrival of the Windrush Generation. He also said that there is 'no doubt' that the Church of England is still "deeply institutionally racist".

The Taskforce report, which will be published on Thursday, April 22, Stephen Lawrence Day, will make dozens of specific recommendations to different parts of the Church, with a clear timetable for action, designed to help make the Church of England fairer and more diverse, to become representative of the people of England.

But those specific recommendations will be just the start. The taskforce will lay the groundwork for a new longer-term Commission on Racial Justice to examine broader, systemic questions.

The Archbishop of York said: "The stories we've heard are shocking and there is no doubt that the Church has failed our UK Minority Ethnic brothers and sisters.

"I hope that we are at least now approaching the challenge of tackling racism in a more intentional way and that that this will lead to much greater participation at every level of the Church's life in order that we might become the change that we long to see everywhere.

"The heart of the Christian faith is that in Christ there is a new humanity. The old barriers of separation and exclusion no longer count.

"This is the faith that was born on Easter Day 2000 years ago, a faith that drew in excluded people and I want us to recover that vision of this new humanity where barriers of separation are broken down."