

This blog is written by a member of the independent Commission. These views do not necessarily represent the views of the Archbishops' or the Church of England.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have today announced a new commission aimed at developing a radical and inspiring vision, drawing on Christian theology and tradition, that reimagines care and support. The Commission will set out proposals to achieve this vision.

The origin of the Commission lies in Archbishop Justin's 2018 book 'Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope'. As the Archbishop articulated in a key chapter, 'Health – and Healing for Brokenness', caring equally for the health of all, regardless of perceived economic or societal value, is a clear sign of our values.

The Commission aims to articulate the enduring values and principles which should underpin care and caring. It will seek to shape how we respond to ageing and disability in our society, challenging existing attitudes and models of care, where appropriate, and highlighting the positive and where things are working well.

The Commission will aim to contribute to the national debate on the purpose of care and support and inform how care is provided in future, by identifying practical ideas, informed by extensive listening, and gathering examples of good practice. The Commission's work aims to support the work of churches in communities across the country and to shape public policy as it relates to the nature and provision of care.

The Commission will comprise up to 12 members, each bringing specific expertise and experience in the area, and will welcome contributions to its thinking from as broad a range of individuals and organisations as possible including all church traditions and other faith communities.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said:

"At the heart of Jesus' teaching is the belief that every single person deserves to receive the dignity and love that God offers them in abundance. Adults who need help and support to meet their needs are an integral part of our society, as are those who offer care in many different ways. We are called to welcome their gifts, learn from their experiences and support them where needed. Our prayer is that this Commission might be radical, visionary and challenging. We hope it may help us hear the voices of those who have been ignored, address the issues that have long been considered 'too difficult' and deeply examine the values we hold which are at the heart of how we treat those we live within society."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said:

"We have been drawn back to the core values of society and community during the last 12 months. Society is richer when there is dignity for all and we treat one another with compassion. We have become more aware of gaps in our society: we have not sufficiently valued and loved many people in care and those living with a disability. This Commission will advocate for them and will explore what it means to provide effective care and support in their communities. I will be praying for its work over the coming months."

The CEO of Ageing Better, Dr Anna Dixon MBE, who will Chair the Commission, said:

"Sadly, today too many people are without the care and support they need to live a full life. I am delighted to have been asked to Chair the Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care.

“There is an urgent need for a new vision for care that is clear about its purpose and value and the values that underpin it. A vision that puts people and relationships at its heart and redefines the status of caregivers, both paid and unpaid, and those who need care and support.

“We need to make some radical changes if we are to support one another to live well and fully participate regardless of age and ability; this is an issue for all of us, for the church, other faith communities and wider society.”

The Bishop of Carlisle, James Newcome, who will Co-Chair the Commission, said:

“I am delighted to be involved with the Archbishops’ Commission on Reimagining Care, which will be tackling one of the most urgent and far-reaching issues of our day. We have an excellent Chair and are already in touch with a number of highly experienced potential commissioners, so I look forward to stimulating meetings and a suitably challenging report.’

Notes

- Dr Anna Dixon MBE is the Chief Executive of the Centre for Ageing Better, a charitable foundation that works to create a society where everyone enjoys later life. She served as a member of the Advisory Group to the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland (Sept 2020-Jan 2021). Anna was Director of Strategy and Chief Analyst at the Department of Health from 2013-2015. She has also held positions at The King’s Fund, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the Department of Health and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. In 2005-6 she was awarded a Harkness Fellowship in Health Policy by the Commonwealth Fund of New York. Anna has a PhD in Social Policy from the LSE.
- Bishop James is the Bishop of Carlisle. He is the lead bishop on health and social care/medical ethics and sits in the House of Lords. As well as having personal experience of social care in his family, he has been closely involved with the care system in Cumbria.
- Full membership of the Commission will be reported at a later date.

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