

The General Synod has welcomed a Church of England report paving the way for an overhaul of clergy discipline with a new system for the



Members voted to back the first moves to create legislation for a Clergy Conduct Measure, replacing the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) 2003.

The vote follows the publication of the report *Under Authority Revisited* which sets out proposals for complaints to be allocated into three different tracks, depending on seriousness.

Opening the debate, the Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, who headed the Implementation Group that drew up the report, said that the time for change was 'overdue'.

"Whilst the critique of the CDM could be extensive, the principal failing of it as a piece of legislation lies in its inflexibility to respond to different levels of misconduct and complaint," he told the Synod.

"In meeting our objectives the Implementation Group has sought to apply four fundamental principles – first, the process must provide for a proportionate and efficient way of dealing with a much wider range of grievances and misconduct. Secondly, the process must protect clergy from frivolous, malicious and vexatious accusations.

"Thirdly, there must be swift access to justice for both those who have been wronged and those who face allegations. And fourthly, the rules of natural justice must permeate the system as a visible sign of fairness."

The report has been published after a working group was set up to respond to the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) for the Church of England to make improvements to the CDM in dealing with safeguarding complaints.

The findings of the working group identified that there was a pressing need for the creation of a system that could deal with different levels of misconduct and behaviour and that the CDM needed replacing in full.

Bishop John Inge is Chair of the Clergy Conduct Measure Implementation Group which was formed last year to formulate legislative proposals for the creation of a new Clergy Conduct Measure.

The text of the motion passed is below:

That this Synod:

- a. welcome the report from the Clergy Conduct Measure Implementation Group (GS 2277); and
- b. request that the Archbishops' Council introduce legislation to give effect to the report's recommendations for first consideration by this Synod at the next available opportunity.'