

From Rt Revd Dr Joanne Grenfell, Church of England's lead safeguarding bishop and Bishop of Stepney

Sir, - further to Helen King's letter last week on the Church's response to the Jay and Wilkinson reports, as co-Chair of the Response Group announced in January, I thought it would be helpful to clarify some of the points she raised. As I said in my speech at Synod. despite bringing in some of the best safeguarding professionals in the country to serve in our dioceses and our national team, the Church has not yet gained the confidence of many of the survivors and those who love and support them, and we have not sufficiently put right the wrongs that we have done. This is part of this ongoing work which we must all do together.

For transparency, the Terms of Reference were published at the same time as the Jay Report, and before the Response Group began its work; the General Synod papers were published nearly three weeks before this. The membership listed including advisors is by no means exhaustive but gives an indicator of those who will participate across the Church. Importantly, this includes the voice of victims and survivors who will also play a wider part in the work.

There was an open call for involvement through Church networks, which included working with the survivor engagement team. We are committed to ensuring there is input from those in the Church who may not usually contribute. It should also be noted that the Response Group is overseeing a period of wide Church engagement, that General Synod voted on by a large majority; it is not in charge of implementation. It will then feedback any recommendations to various governance groups, and key decisions will ultimately come back to Synod for a vote on the way forward.

We agree that independent advice, input, and scrutiny of our work are important parts of this process, and we are currently looking at ways of factoring these in on a more formal footing.

We heard a range of voices at Synod about our approaches to the Jay and Wilkinson Reports and there are strong and diverse views. However, I think everyone would agree that, as the Archbishop of Canterbury said, 'we must act as fast as is wise'. The Response Group is committed to this approach.

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