**NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME**

**General Synod July 2023 Debate Presentation**

**Bishop of Truro, Philip Mounstephen, chair of the National Redress Board**

Thank you Synod. Before any of the Project Board speak, I would like to give the first word to one of the members of our Survivor Working Group. As she comes to speak to us, let’s hold in our minds our responsibility to speak graciously to and about each other. While some parts of this project are very technical and process-based, the whole thing is an effort to express the Church’s deep repentance to survivors and all our conversations should be based in compassion, justice and love.

It’s most important that survivors of church-based abuse have the first word in a discussion such as this. It is a matter of shame that they have such stories to tell. But it would be a matter of further shame if we were not willing to listen to them.

To help us reflect on the gravity of all we have just heard, I suggest we hold a moment of silence rather than rushing into the next part of this conversation.

We come to you at a crucial stage in this project, before legislation, with a motion to test the mind of Synod and help us design a genuine process of repentance which we can all embrace and honour. While we have done an enormous amount of work – arguably more in the last three years than other less complex schemes managed with much bigger teams working on it – we are at the stage where every decision prompts another set of crucial questions to explore. Indeed, many of you have raised those questions with me or with others, and we’re grateful to all those who have spoken into this.

I will not repeat the substance of the paper, which you have read and which has been well publicised along with the announcement that the [Church Commissioners have allocated £150million](https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/church-england-national-redress-scheme) which will help to underpin the Scheme and make sure we can respond promptly to survivors’ applications. I’m very grateful for that allocation, but it’s vital to say that this is not the ceiling. What will determine the quantum of financial redress survivors receive will not be the total sum available, but the nature of the abuse to which they have been subjected.

Before you hear from Alex Kubeyinje with a reminder of some of the details, I want to outline for you some of the core commitments that lie at the heart of the emerging scheme and have informed the work of the Project Board:

* Robust and fit for purpose.
* Timely while not compromising the quality of the Scheme – we must get this right.
* Working with survivors to develop this together.
* To ensure that the Scheme is about more than money. Even if that does tend to focus the mind we must not forget that the Scheme is about financial redress, *and* psychiatric, therapeutic, spiritual and emotional support, acknowledgement of wrongdoing on the part of the Church, apology, and support for rebuilding lives.
* We’re not providing compensation per se, but redress, so this is not equivalent to a loss of earnings scheme or similar although the financial assessment model, once we have finished designing it, will probably include some discretion for aggravating factors. But we are clear that the focus is on the nature of the abuse experienced, and that the financial awards will be assessed consistently so that people who have had similar experiences of abuse are served equitably.

The paper touches on the Biblical approach of covenant, which is fundamental to this. You will have read that already, so I won’t repeat it. But as you know, as with Old Testament covenants, it is not at all inappropriate that this covenantal commitment one to another and to victims and survivors should be underpinned by law. Legislation will be brought forward to clarify where responsibility for redress lies within the institutions of the church, and with the assurance of support from elsewhere in the church as that is needed.

So in this scheme grace and law work together, and in fact there is real grace here because the Scheme will provide more and not less reassurance to church bodies and will decrease rather than increase their vulnerability.

But above all, I hope this scheme will provide at least a modicum of grace to survivors who have been sorely denied it.

**Alex Kubeyinje national director of safeguarding**

Before I start just want to say thank you to Jane for her courage and commitment to be there.

Who can apply for Redress?

Survivors of sexual, physical, psychological or emotional abuse (including spiritual abuse) ​

Perpetrated by someone who was representing the Church of England: ​

* lay or ordained​
* paid or volunteer​
* in England or elsewhere (but must be on behalf of Church of England and not another province or denomination)

How will the scheme work?

* Survivors make an application through a**third-party supplier.**​
* A consistent assessment process on the basis of **balance of probability**.​
* **Bespoke forms of redress appropriate to the survivor** (apology, acknowledgement, further action). Survivors are leading on the design of these forms of redress. ​
* Financial awards will be **standardised with a series of pay bands consistently applied** according to the nature of abuse and further aggravating factors.​
* This version of the Scheme will run for **five years**in this form.

**Lead safeguarding bishop, Joanne Grenfell, Bishop of Stepney**

I have just started being involved with Redress and I can see we are at one of those points where, when we talk about all the great work that has happened so far, lots more questions arise. That’s why we’re here at General Synod at this stage, before legislation, so we can benefit from your insights for the next steps.

Among the workstreams for the next few months are:

* Crucial work with survivors to make sure we completely understand and agree the criteria for forms of abuse that will be recognised here, and the forms of redress which should be made available.
* A very comprehensive procurement process to make sure we find a supplier who can help us with the final technical stages of designing the Scheme and then go on to deliver it.
* Finding a way for us all to work together to contribute, through insurance and other contributions, to make sure that we all honour the experiences of survivors and apologise fully to them.

**Conclusion, Bishop Philip**

To conclude, I want to affirm that, in taking a whole Church approach to expressing repentance to survivors, we are not creating a new vulnerability for Church bodies but supporting one another in managing responsibilities which already exist, and which are consistent with the response to survivors set out in House of Bishops’ guidance, and where there may already be legal liability in the event of a civil claim.

It’s therefore about giving concrete, substantial expression to our core conviction that ‘safeguarding is everyone’s business’.

Synod, this is a serious piece of work that encourages our serious engagement with it. We need to have a good, open conversation about this – but above all else this is an opportunity for us to express our corporate repentance. We cannot put right such serious historic wrong – but we should corporately express genuine repentance for what is happened.

I’m sure you don’t need me to remind you that confession and repentance are not the same thing. After Confession in BCP Evening Prayer, within the Absolution itself, the Priest beseeches the Lord to ‘grant us true repentance that those things may please him, which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure, and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.’. May this Redress Scheme be itself not only a mark of our contrition but of our genuine and heartfelt repentance. Thank you.