

## GENERAL SYNOD

**Summary of decisions by the House of Bishops and  
by its delegated committees**

**February 2024 – July 2024**

1. This summary of decisions includes those made by the House and by committees delegated under its Standing Orders to handle business on its behalf.

**THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS**

2. The House of Bishops has met three times since the February 2024 Group of Sessions.
3. All the matters reported were taken in a Committee of the Whole House under Standing Order 14.

**House of Bishops 20 March**

4. The House met over Zoom. It began by reflecting on the General Synod in February.
5. The House discussed the report of Professor Alexis Jay on the *Future of Church Safeguarding* which had been published on 21 February, just before Synod. It heard how the programme of engagement was beginning and the Response Group, involving survivors, would bring different voices into the room. Members shared their initial responses to the report and their early experience of the Ineqe audits.
6. The House agreed a draft privacy notice for the use of Clergy Blue Files.
7. The House reflected on the current position on Living in Love and Faith and heard from the Bishop of Leicester on the forward work programme that would engage with members of the General Synod in order for further work to be presented to the House in May.
8. The House considered a paper from the Bishop of Chester on the future of episcopal induction and Ministry Development Reviews and agreed to establish a working group to consider this, focusing on the key issues of wellbeing, fruitfulness, community, resourcing and shared listening.
9. The House was briefed by the Bishop of Guildford on the governance review, noting that governance could not change culture but poor governance could create a framework in which bad cultures could emerge.

**House of Bishops 15 – 17 May**

10. The House met for a residential meeting in York. The House prayed together, celebrated the Eucharist together, and enjoyed fellowship.
11. The House began by being briefed on the latest statistics for mission, in particular the encouraging rise in the number of children and young people attending church in 2023 compared to 2022.
12. It then agreed to the proposals from the governance review, presented by the Bishop of Guildford, to be presented to the General Synod.
13. The House discussed clergy wellbeing at length, drawing on expertise from dioceses and the Clergy Support Trust. It discussed the scale of the

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challenge, the principal causes, and priority actions both short- and longer-term.

14. The House was briefed by the Bishop of Leicester on progress on Living in Love and Faith and the emerging proposals from the working groups on the Prayers of Love and Faith, pastoral guidance and pastoral reassurance. It heard some interim theological reflections and had the opportunity to engage with these. The House agreed that it was content for the proposals to continue to be developed with a view to bringing forward to a meeting on 12 June
15. The House was briefed on the work on racial justice and Project Spire and heard of the challenges facing those working in this area. It agreed unanimously to support the work.
16. The House heard from the work of the Seal of the Confessional working group, noting that because the Government had just published proposals on mandatory reporting it would not be appropriate to make final decisions at this meeting. It agreed some recommendations and looked forward to further advice for the July meeting.
17. The House was briefed on the work to review diocesan finances and the parish share. It noted its ambition to see proposals that addressed both the inequities between dioceses and between different Church bodies.
18. The House discussed proposals on the *Future of Church Safeguarding* and agreed the framework of the proposals to be presented to the General Synod in July 2024.
19. The House agreed a revised privacy notice for use with blue files, to a pilot a CCSL template and to the inclusion of CCSL policy within the Blue File policy.
20. The House agreed proposals for greater transparency in its working, as reported in GS Misc 1387.

### **House of Bishops 12 June**

21. The House of Bishops met following a discussion of the College of Bishops to agree the proposals to be presented to the General Synod on Living in Love and Faith as set out in GS 2358.

## **THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS STANDING COMMITTEE**

### **House of Bishops Standing Committee 6 March**

22. The Standing Committee considered agenda items for future meetings of the House of Bishops. It agreed the outline agendas for the meetings on 20 March and 15-17 May. The Standing Committee subsequently agreed by correspondence that there should be an additional meeting of the House to consider the Living in Love and Faith proposals in June.
23. The Committee was briefed on the request of the Standing Committees of the Houses of Clergy and Laity for access to separate legal advice.
24. The Committee was briefed on progress on the transparency work to be presented to the House of Bishops on 15-17 May.

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## STANDING COMMISSION ON THE FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

25. The Standing Commission met in February 2024 over lunchtime in the margins of the General Synod. It agreed to meet in person for a whole day meeting in July 2024. This will take place after July Synod, in London. The Standing Commission also expects to meet on Zoom in October 2024.
26. Episcopal members of the Standing Commission, with one other ordained member, attended the College of Bishops in January 2024 to discuss its work and remit with the bishops. The Standing Commission discussed this at the February meeting as its main item of business.

## NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING STEERING GROUP

27. The National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG) is a (Committee of the House of Bishops and of the Archbishops' Council). The NSSG considers in detail safeguarding policies, recommendations from nationally commissioned case reviews and audit reports and other developments prior to them being considered and agreed by national member grouping. As a committee of the Archbishops' Council (AC), it has delegated authority to oversee the work of the National Safeguarding Team (NST) in more detail, and to prepare and approve certain matters on the AC's behalf.
28. The NSSG has met three times this year, most recently on 21 May and has been briefed on/approved the following:
- The work of the **National Safeguarding Panel (NSP)** which provides high level strategic advice and offers guidance on policies and practice in safeguarding and acts as a critical friend to the NST providing independent support, scrutiny, and challenge. The panel does not make decisions.
  - The work of the **National Safeguarding Team (NST)** including the Redress scheme, the Smyth review, other areas including casework, policy, the interim support scheme and the development of a strategic plan for the NST.
  - The work of the **Jay /Wilkinson Response Group** noting there are regular updates on the Church of England website and the paper to this Group of Sessions;
  - Areas of policy including:
    - The new ***Code of Practice on Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations and the revised Safeguarding (Clergy Risk Assessment) Regulations*** which will come back to NSSG for approval later in the year and is expected to be submitted to the General Synod in February 2025.
    - The updated policy on **Permission To Officiate, PTO**, which was brought to NSSG prior to approval by the House of Bishops and now requires DBS renewals every three years.

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- Update from **PSO (Parish Safeguarding Officer) National Group** and approval for revised role description
- **Update** from Kevin Crompton the **interim commissioner of independent reviews** linked with the former Independent Safeguarding Board.

William Nye  
Secretary to the House of Bishops  
June 2023