



The Revd Canon Jeremy Blunden,  
Chair House of Clergy Rochester

William Nye  
*Secretary General*

Mrs Sarah Poole,  
Chair House of Laity Rochester

20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

By email

Dear Canon Blunden and Mrs Poole

### **Rochester Diocesan Synod Motion**

We are deeply conscious of the terrible hurt and lasting damage to survivors that has been caused by the actions of John Smyth, and the failings of the Church in its response. The Archbishop's Council itself commissioned the independent Makin Review to properly examine and learn from these failings. Along with everyone in the Church, we are shamed by its findings.

We take very seriously the motion of no confidence passed by the Rochester Diocesan Synod. The Trustees of the Council continue to reflect on their responsibilities for safeguarding at the national level and always welcome conversations with all those across the Church that can help inform those reflections. Your Synod may have been unaware of how we and the National Safeguarding Steering Group, informed by the National Safeguarding Team (NST), are actively responding to the recommendations of the Makin review. This includes ongoing support for victims and survivors of abuse.

In line with recommendations from the Makin Report the NST and the relevant dioceses are urgently reviewing cases with reference to information in the report. Following professional advice this is a four-stage process, which begins with an assessment of any immediate safeguarding risk, and culminates in a decision by senior safeguarding professionals as to whether any disciplinary action under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 should be taken. These decisions will be taken against the background of an agreed set of guidance criteria for decision makers. We have arranged for the decisions that are made to be reviewed by an external barrister before they are implemented. We are committed to being open and transparent about the process being followed by the NST in response to the Makin review and updates have been posted here: [Steps currently being undertaken in response to the Makin review | The Church of England](#)

On 5 December we considered proposals for independent church safeguarding to be discussed by General Synod in February, which seek to reduce as far as possible the risk of perceived or actual conflict of interest in order to improve trust and confidence in the

Church's safeguarding practice. The House of Bishops will consider the proposals on 10th December. Also in February, the General Synod will be asked to give Final Approval to the draft Clergy Conduct Measure which contains a number of provisions to strengthen and better align the Church of England's disciplinary and safeguarding provisions.

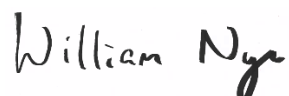
More widely, we continue to provide financial support for the work of Safe Spaces and for the Interim Support Scheme, both essential current provision for victims and survivors. The work on a Redress Scheme is making significant progress, with notable input from survivors, as is the case with all major work carried out for the Council. But we dare not be complacent in its work to improve safeguarding and we continue to commission Codes of Practice, to be agreed by the General Synod.

We are aware of the absolute necessity for trauma-informed assessment in all our work on safeguarding. We particularly value advice from senior members of the National Safeguarding Team in this regard and look forward to further scrutiny from the National Safeguarding Panel under its newly appointed Chair, Nazir Afzal. We have asked him to challenge our work and to hold us to task, with the concerns of victims and survivors central to all the Council does.

We would value a conversation with the Diocesan Synod to further understand your concerns and we look forward to hearing the discussions at General Synod on the independent safeguarding recommendations. We remain deeply committed to the safeguarding, care and nurturing of everyone within our church community and will continue to work to ensure the Church is a safer place for all.

Yours sincerely

Signed on behalf of the Trustees of the Archbishops' Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Nye". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

William Nye LVO

Secretary General