

15 October 2024

Dear Bishop Joanne,

We are writing to you following the publication of the Scolding Report. As members of the General Synod, we are beginning to engage with the commentary upon it and to address its limitations and deficiencies. For your ease of reference, we also link the significant discussions on the [God Loves Women/Needs Light](#) blog, Stephen Parsons' [Surviving Church](#) and the [Thinking Anglicans](#) which link to core materials.

The Private Member's Motion, brought to York Synod by the Revd Robert Thompson and supported by myself and the signatories to this letter, sought a more comprehensive review than that commissioned by the two very institutions whose own leadership failures and neglect facilitated the prolonged abuse.

In the July debate, you assured Synod that 'clearly we need to learn about the mistakes that were made'. Bishop Alan Smith urged us to await the outcome of Fiona Scolding's work since he felt that would enable everyone to be treated 'more fairly'. And yet whole areas of (yet another) safeguarding failure remain unexamined, obstructed by Ms Scolding's inability to gain access to people and information from the National Safeguarding Team and survivors' lack of confidence in the integrity of an internal inquiry.

It is also clear from the review itself that Fiona Scolding KC and Mr Ben Fullbrook were not allowed access to key documentation, and that they found it difficult to gain the trust of victims because the Terms of Reference were drawn up by the very people most vulnerable to criticism. This matters to victims, a significant number of whom understandably declined to engage.

While the reason cited for the inability of the NST to fully inform the Scolding Review is potential breach of GDPR rules, in fact and in law, personal information can be released with personal consent. It is not currently clear whether the data owners were specifically asked by the NST for permission to release that data, neither is it clear whether that data included material belonging to non-participating victims who might consent to release of their material into a comprehensive Review if there were victim-approved Terms of Reference.

The unamended original motion would have resulted in a more comprehensive and better-informed Review; more likely to be one that did not leave victims re-traumatised. Meanwhile, those responsible are still left unaccountable for their actions.

Most tragically of all, the victims of Soul Survivor and the Church of England have no sense of closure or justice. You may wish to address the dissatisfied victims directly about this in a public statement. Taking responsibility for the delay would be a small step in the right direction.

We would like to ask you a simple question which ought to be answered without the need to wait for a response at Synod in five months' time:

What will you, as the Lead Bishop for Safeguarding in the Church of England, do to fill in the gaps and rectify the incompleteness of the Scolding Review?

Even the motion as amended, which was passed at General Synod, committed the Archbishops' Council to consulting with the victims of Mike Pilavachi's abuse at Soul Survivor to assess their level of satisfaction with the Scolding review. When will this be put in motion and how and when will members of General Synod, which has made this commitment, be informed of the way forward?

As a courtesy we are formally copying this letter to both Archbishops as these matters will clearly involve decisions by Archbishops' Council. This is therefore not a private letter and we shall accordingly share it widely, not least to assure victims that a number of Synod members understand and empathise with their continuing anguish and search for truth, accountability and closure.

Yours faithfully

Martin Sewell Rochester

Robert Thompson London

Clive Billenness Europe

Helen King Oxford

Judith Maltby Universities and TElS

and 26 other members of the General Synod