

26th January 2020

Open letter to the Bishop at Lambeth

Dear Bishop Tim

It feels as though we are at a moment of significant opportunity and risk on the journey towards CDM reform. We hope it is a point at which you are able to take bold action.

We assume that the case has now been made conclusively that the CDM needs to be replaced. However, we believe that the CDM has so badly undermined trust in the institution that the process of reforming CDM is now almost as important as delivering a good outcome. The harms done have been very significant, and the process of reform has itself the opportunity to begin healing. Despite our best endeavours to avoid it, there is secular press interest starting to circle around this subject. We can see no good coming of that and would be immensely relieved to see a swift and decisive initiative from the church to take the lead in self-reform. We hope it won't wait to be publicly dragged there.

Given our extremely serious pastoral concerns around CDM, we have taken the liberty of setting out a possible roadmap for next steps to restore confidence and build the foundations of a good and lasting solution.

You continue to be in our prayers as you navigate this immensely challenging terrain – we don't underestimate the scale and sensitivity of the task.

Yours sincerely
Sarah Horsman, Warden and Carl Lee, Lay Chaplain

Roadmap

- Establish a formal mandate for the process, demonstrating commitment from Synod and the Archbishops' Council
- Budget funding £500,000
- Appointment of a lead person with the necessary time, skills, stature, profile and relationship to the institutions
- Assemble a new core working group with the right range of expertise, perhaps with an openly advertised recruitment process for some positions
- Set up an online platform for transparent step by step consultation and progress reporting (Sheldon Hub might be able serve if requested but see below**)

- Publish a target timescale with milestones. Setting up framework (3 months), consultation and evidence gathering (12 months), drafting and refining legislation (6 months), legislating (6 months) – complete by summer 2023
- Within 3 months agree a reasonably high threshold of gross misconduct. Implement a moratorium on all new CDM cases below the threshold and triple the Ecclesiastical Legal Aid.
- Initiate an independent process of restorative justice with past case review and opportunity for formal apology and/or financial compensation
- Full scoping exercise to shape the phase of consultation and evidence-gathering
 - Dream big – what should be the essence of a first class 21st century professional accountability framework? What would make us proud as a church – a respected leader in the field?
 - Clarity on what it is intended to achieve and why
 - Who are the key relevant parties (clergy, complainant, church institution, local church community) and what purpose should it serve for each affected constituency?
 - Locate risk and vulnerability – especially home and livelihood for clergy. Set out the essential components of a safe system (including training, funding, process accountability, role clarity, data collection, review, appeal)
 - Identify what other legislation and codes it need to integrate with (some of which also need reform). Including safeguarding, criminal justice, human rights, canons of the Church of England, guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy, covenant for clergy care and wellbeing, capability procedure)
 - Clear articulation of differences between gross misconduct, grievance procedure and dispute resolution
 - Source relevant expertise, good practice and research. To include practice in other denominations, other Anglican jurisdictions, other caring professions; academic disciplines such as process justice, theology, restorative justice, psychology of stress, trauma and moral injury; Sheldon/Aston and other direct research; informed practitioners such as CECA, Sheldon, APC.

*** The consultation would need to include wider participation than Hub definitions for either Ministry or Associate membership <https://www.sheldon.uk.com/ministry/ministry-definition> . A recent consultation within the Hub was very clear that the safety of the Hub space for clergy was not consistent with broadening either of these criteria. We would therefore need to set up a third level to include people like Synod members, local church office holders, etc. With the Hub being well established and already respected on this subject, it could be the cheapest option but would need scoping and costing. Ball park estimate £10,000 setup, plus running costs."*