

Partial transcript from the General Synod (Monday, 9 February 2026)

Questions to the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council **([questions 56 and 57](#))**

Written question from Dr Brendan Biggs (Bristol):

On 31 January 2025, [the Chief Executive Officer of the Charity Commission, David Holdsworth, wrote to diocesan bishops](#) to ask whether, after the decisions taken by General Synod in February 2025, there would be 'any remaining structural, procedural or constitutional arrangements under ecclesiastical law that you consider conflict with, or prevent you and your cotrustees from fulfilling, your safeguarding duties as charity trustees (Legal Impediments)'.

Have the bishops' responses to Mr Holdsworth's letter been collated centrally, and is there a plan for addressing any such Legal Impediments identified?

Written response from Canon Alison Coulter on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Some dioceses have shared their responses with the staff of the Archbishops' Council, but we have not produced a central digest.

The Charity Commission for England and Wales considered the responses it received from diocesan bishops as part of its case concluding statement on its findings in relation to the Archbishops' Council. The Charity Commission has – as set out in [Church of England charity must rapidly accelerate safeguarding reforms – GOV.UK](#) – issued a Regulatory Action Plan to the Archbishops' Council that sets out the actions it expects. We continue to work with the Charity Commission on the Regulatory Action Plan and the Archbishops' Council is determined to improve practice to fulfil our requirements. We very much hope that dioceses will work in partnership with us.

Oral supplementary question from Dr Briggs:

Thank you for your answer, and reference to the Charity Commission's press release. That press release refers to the Regulatory Action Plan mentioned but, as far as I can see, it doesn't link to it. And so my question is, has the Regulatory Action Plan been published.

Oral response from Canon Coulter:

I don't know the answer to that, Brendan, but I certainly think that ... it is a Regulatory Action Plan, there is nothing in it that wouldn't be surprising to Synod. It is all work that you know about. It would be good for it to be in the public domain so I can make sure that I send you a copy, and to other members of Synod we can think about how we make that publicly available.

I just want to assure Synod that we continue to meet and work regularly with the Charity Commission, and for me that's a real priority, that we have their confidence, and the confidence of the public, particularly as we look at changes in safeguarding. So thank you for your question and I think that we will look at how to share that with you. Thank you.

Written question from Mrs Janette Allotey (Chester):

“The Commission’s guidance is clear that trustees must take reasonable steps to protect from harm all people who come into contact with their charity.”

In the Regulatory Action Plan of November 2025 issued to the Archbishops' Council following publication of the Makin report, the Charity Commission expressed concern that the Church did not treat allegations of abuse from an adult not assessed to be vulnerable as a safeguarding issue.

What steps, if any, are being taken to address this criticism?

Written response from Canon Alison Coulter on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops’ Council:

This is a matter that was also raised in the Charity Commission for England and Wales’s findings in relation to the Dioceses of Chelmsford and Liverpool. Staff of the Council are working to identify the questions, issues and requirements this raises and have written to the Charity Commission seeking a discussion on what changes may be needed. I will keep the Synod informed of progress and any changes required. However Synod should note carefully the expectations that the Charity Commission has of trustees, of which they have helpfully reminded us.

Oral supplementary question from Sue Lucas (Chelmsford):

Can you clarify if it is the understanding the expectations placed on trustees by the Charity Commission for England and Wales in relation to the Archbishops’ Council, and also to DBFs [Diocesan Boards of Finance], also apply in the same way to PCCs [Parochial Church Councils]?

Oral response from Canon Coulter:

My understanding is that these expectations are for all trustees. The Charity Commission are quite clear on their website on their guidance. We are having some conversations with them ...

Interruption from the Chair (Mr Stephen Hofmeyr KC):

I am sorry to interrupt. I think that is actually a question seeking legal advice and so I am going to rule it out of order.

Canon Coulter:

I think that is very wise, but I would be happy to tell you more about my conversations with the Charity Commission and we will clarify that for you. But I urge everyone to read the Charity Commission website, advice for trustees.