

Submission to Cumberlege Commission from Rt Revd. Terence J. Brain, Bishop of Salford: 22nd September 2006.

In reply to the four questions being asked to gather information on the outcome of the five years following the Nolan Report "*A programme for action*".

Question 1:

Yes: it has been an impetus to thinking through the structures needed to create a culture of vigilance and a safe environment. It has cost some soul searching and at times finding the right balance between COPCA's vision and diocesan responses has been tense. The impetus of the Nolan Report has also contributed to a degree in the programmes seen in most diocese now of Clergy Pastoral Support. Such support programmes would have materialised for other reasons but awareness of the isolation and vulnerability of clergy has been underlined by the addressing of the need to create a safe environment. So, indirectly, we have also benefited from the pressure of Nolan.

What more needs to be done?

There is a need to monitor COPCA and recognise that where it has completed its initial task then there is no need to continue to provide those resources. COPCA has been a considerable drain of diocesan financial resources.

Barriers to it working well?

Time-scales set by COPCA for work to be completed by Diocesan Child Protection Commissions has sometimes been too tight and COPCA insistent that we have to comply.

Diocese are of different sizes geographically and demographically: demanding a "one fit all" response showed a lack of understanding from COPCA of the energies and resources of diocesan teams.

It also showed a relational weakness: to support and encourage is also part of COPCA's management of local teams. It is not a good way of building relationships to be seen as heavy handed. Some diocesan teams felt this of COPCA. Questioning the time scale was not necessarily a sign of lack of enthusiasm for or commitment to the cause.

Question 2:

In the main, yes. Initially a natural embarrassment and repugnance of the whole question of child abuse within the clergy had to be overcome in the Church's openness to COPCA: the very detail of COPCA's protocols were sometimes perceived as without pastoral understanding: or that a pastoral dimension was discarded as not valid when dealing with abuse. This led to some evidence of a lack of trust that priests would get a hearing from their bishops, or that their bishops would

stand by them. Much of this has now settled though the concept “administrative leave” still raises questions with some of the clergy.

As a bishop I wonder if I could answer a COPCA protocol without being tripped up on some point: there is no margin for error. In a genuine attempt to make them fail safe, they may have provided rope for us to be hanged with.

The annual report from COPCA in its effort to be completely open left an impression that there was much more offending behaviour that was the case in the Church in England and Wales. Degrees of seriousness of alleged offences: distinction between historic cases, known or newly come to light. I felt that clearer distinctions should have been used to show progress and openness in the Church’s response.

Question 3:

The requirements of the Nolan Report for COPCA have been achieved. All seven bullet points (●) have been addressed. With the development of the diocesan agencies much of the ongoing education and monitoring is being undertaken by the local agencies. A protocol developed by Salford for use in the Diocese of Salford for Parish Child Protection Officers is to be adopted by COPCA. This indicates that the work of a central COPCA should be able to be reduced to the last two or three bullet points: monitoring, maintaining central data base, liaising with statutory agencies (though here with the development of stronger teams in diocese their links with statutory bodies will also improve. A large central office is hopefully not going to be needed in the future. A slimmed down version requiring less office space would release financial resources to give to other initiatives in the Church as the local Child Protection Commissions take their place in the structures of the dioceses.

Question 4:

My experience as a diocesan bishop is that the diocesan structure is healthy and working well. My team of three are well supported by a good management committee of wide expertise. The diocesan team has facilitated training for COPCA, written material that COPCA has adopted. Several religious congregations have used us for their own processing of CRB checks, and the Polish Vicariate in England and Wales has asked Salford Diocese to assist them nationally with their Child Protection procedures. There is a good relationship within the diocese towards the Child Protection Team and good collaboration with parishes. This has not been achieved without some teething problems, within the diocese and with COPCA !

That several religious have approached us for help over CRB etc points to a difficulty for COPCA of getting all the religious to their standard. Religious are fewer and wider spread, across diocesan boundaries. Their electing of superiors for a fixed term can mean changes in personnel, which can alter priorities or emphases leading to difficulty in co-ordination of a programme like that being rolled out by COPCA over several years.

I wish to acknowledge the work done by COPCA on behalf of the Church in England and Wales: it has not been easy or understood by everyone. I recognise that it was necessary, but I hope that we now have the confidence to show that we have the structures in place to provide a safe environment and that COPCA can step back and allow the dioceses to be responsible for their own discipline now that COPCA has given us the tools to do this.

+ Terence J. Brain
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