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Chair  
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### **INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: ANGLICAN CHURCH**

We are grateful to you and the panel for your report of the 9 May 2019 *Anglican Church Case Studies: the Diocese of Chichester and the response to allegations against Peter Ball*. The report contained the following recommendation for the Government:

*Recommendation 3: The Government should amend Section 21 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 so as to include clergy within the definition of a position of trust. This would criminalise under s16–s20 sexual activity between clergy and a person aged 16–18, over whom they exercise pastoral authority, involving the abuse of a position of trust.*

I am pleased to be able to provide a response to this recommendation. We will publish this letter on GOV.UK.

I should first like to assure the Inquiry that the criminal law already provides a number of protections to deal with non-consensual and unwanted sexual activity and abuse. These offences rightly carry robust sentences to reflect the seriousness of such offending.

We recognise that there are deeply-held concerns about those who might abuse their position of power over a 16 or 17-year-old to pressure them into engaging in sexual activity.

Such behaviour is likely to be caught by the robust laws we already have in place, and I want to actively encourage anyone who feels that they are a victim of sexual abuse to contact the police. We remain determined that such activity should be investigated, prosecuted and punished, no matter what the perpetrator's occupation or relationship to the individual might be.

We want to ensure that existing offences are being used effectively to tackle this behaviour, and that those working with young people understand their responsibilities and act appropriately. The Ministry of Justice, working closely with colleagues across Government, has already taken forward a review of existing offences, to ensure that they are working as effectively as possible and are clearly understood.

As part of this review, we reached out to the Police and CPS to get their valuable input into how the law is working in practice and how to raise awareness of the existing law and the protections it offers to young people. We will continue to work together as we identify any further action that might need to be taken.

Another key part of this review was our engagement with organisations that work with young people and represent their interests in order to understand their concerns, and also to ensure that the right measures are in place to protect young people from inappropriate behaviour. We held a number of roundtables and smaller meetings with representatives across a wide range of sectors and in a range of capacities, including representatives from faith groups. These were vital to inform our thinking as we consider what, if any, actions we should take going forward.

We are considering the findings of the review in detail and will announce next steps in due course, and will keep the Inquiry updated as this work progresses.

I should finally like to reassure the Inquiry that the protection of children and young people from the scourge of sexual abuse and exploitation remains a top priority for the Government.

**CHRIS PHILP MP**