

## Bishop's Council & Standing Committee

### Update to Diocesan Synod June 2025

This note summarises the recent work and decisions of the Bishop's Council & Standing Committee (BCSC) since March 2025 and is shared with the Diocesan Synod for information. Synod will be invited to raise questions at the meeting.

The Bishop's Council has met twice since their last update.

### Routine Business

1. The Bishop's Council is responsible for a significant amount of routine business as Trustees of the WDBF and Members of the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee. These tasks are often technically complex and detailed. Whilst they are a vital element of the Council's role and to ensuring compliance with secular and ecclesiastical legislation, we have not tended to offer great detail on this type of business to Synod.
2. In recent meetings this has included a review of the Diocesan Strategic Risk Register, consideration of a range of pastoral schemes, a review of two major parish buildings and missional development plans as well as consideration of the Annual Reports and Accounts.

### Historic Forced Adoptions

3. Last year, members of the Diocesan Team became aware that the diocese had historically operated a home for unwed mothers, closing in the 1960s. This home was operated through a separate charity – the Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility, which was closed in the early 2000s, with the remaining assets transferred to the WDBF as a restricted fund.
4. Once we became aware of the existence of this home (located in North Walls, Winchester) we undertook a review of any records we could find relating to its management and operation. These were limited, mainly consisting of minute books held at the Hampshire Records Office. By their nature these did not cover details of the residents, families or children who stayed at the home.
5. As we were working through this process, the impact of such homes (both state and church run) was highlighted in a series of media reports: ['I carry a hole in my soul': Nearly 200 babies from church-run homes buried in unmarked graves | ITV News](#) and also this report to the government on the Joint Committee for Human Rights which is asking for a public apology from the government (which has still not been forthcoming and campaigning continues): [The violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women 1949–1976](#).
6. As such we issued an appeal for more information via our website to help us better understand the impact this home had on anyone connected with it. <https://winchester.anglican.org/appeal-for-information-winchester-diocesan-maternity-home/>
7. We are deeply grateful for those who have contacted us to share their stories and experiences. These have often been harrowing to hear and resulted in lifelong implications for the mothers and children involved.

8. The Bishop's Council considered this situation at their June meeting and have agreed in principle to a potential response to the historic hurt and pain that was caused. We are in the process of seeking further advice from a range of specialists and are therefore not able to offer more detail on what this response might look like at this time. We will seek to update Synod as soon as possible.
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