

Statement by Scripture Union in relation to Titus Trust and Mr James Stileman

On 25th March, Scripture Union published the Executive Summary of the Independent Review commissioned by us to review our links with the abuse committed by John Smyth. Since then we have become aware of evidence that indicates that various statements in the Executive Summary relating to the conduct in 2014-15 of Titus Trust and, specifically, its then Operations Director, James Stileman, are not correct or are potentially misleading. Details of the relevant errors and issues are set out in the Appendix to this statement. We are also aware that the publication of the Executive Summary has caused damage to the ministry and reputation of Titus Trust and Mr Stileman.

We recognise that the suggestion in the Executive Summary that the sharing of information with the police and statutory agencies was “inappropriately limited” is of particular concern to both Titus Trust and Mr Stileman. Having reviewed both the information relating to Titus Trust’s interactions with the police that Titus Trust has shared with Scripture Union and material provided by the Reviewer, Scripture Union confirms that it has no reason to consider that Titus Trust behaved inappropriately in relation to these interactions. Scripture Union has also seen independent evidence that Titus Trust received legal advice that no referral to a LADO was required and that the content of its serious incident report to the Charity Commission in 2014 was in conformity with the legal advice that it had received.

We recognise that there are inaccuracies and potentially misleading statements in the Executive Summary in relation to the sharing of information with Scripture Union. These are set out in paragraph 3 of the Appendix to this statement. In particular, we are aware of only three written requests for information during 2014-15, to which Titus Trust, through Mr Stileman, responded in a timely manner as set out in paragraph 3(iv) of the Appendix.

The Trustees of Scripture Union apologise for these inaccuracies in the Executive Summary and any damage caused by them to either of Titus Trust and Mr Stileman and we are pleased to put the record straight. We also regret that neither Mr Stileman nor anyone else involved in the handling of the Smyth matter on behalf of Titus Trust was interviewed as part of the independent review and we acknowledge that, had Scripture Union given Titus Trust and Mr Stileman the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the Executive Summary prior to its publication, this would have provided an opportunity for the errors to be corrected at that time.

We also apologise to the victims of John Smyth for any additional suffering caused by the errors and the need to correct them. We remain appalled and saddened that this abuse took place, and deeply regret the suffering this has caused the victims and their families and are committed to dialogue with the victims to identify ways in which we can support them. We are also keen to ensure that our current practices continue to be shaped and improved by lessons learnt so that we can serve and protect those in our care to the best of our ability.

The Board of Trustees
Scripture Union England & Wales

21 June 2021

Appendix

In this Appendix, references to the Ruston Report and the Stileman Report are to the reports given these names in the Executive Summary and reference to the Reviewer is to Gill Camina, who conducted the review and produced the Executive Summary. This statement has been prepared by Scripture Union after receiving information from Titus Trust and James Stileman,¹ checking Scripture Union's own records relating to 2014-15 and confirming what other evidence the Reviewer has in relation to the relevant events.

1. Sharing of information with, the police and statutory agencies

The Executive Summary refers to *"inappropriately limited information-sharing with statutory agencies"* (see paragraph 6.51). This opinion of the Reviewer needs to be set in the following context:

- (i) The Reviewer did not interview Mr Stileman or anyone else involved in the handling of the Smyth matter on behalf of Titus Trust in 2014-15 and did not have copies of all of Titus Trust's correspondence or other documents relating to its interactions with the statutory agencies. While the independent review was being conducted, Titus Trust, on its own initiative, contacted the Reviewer and indicated that if the Reviewer had any queries she should not hesitate to get in touch but no further input from Titus Trust was requested.
- (ii) Scripture Union has reviewed both the information relating to Titus Trust's interactions with the police that Titus Trust has now shared with Scripture Union and material provided by the Reviewer. On the basis of this, Scripture Union has no reason to consider that Titus Trust behaved inappropriately in its interactions with the police.
- (iii) The Executive Summary indicates Titus Trust informed Scripture Union that the Charity Commission had *"no regulatory concerns"* (paragraph 6.40 of the Executive Summary). Scripture Union understands that this has been taken by some people to imply that there is doubt as to whether the Commission had indicated this. However, the Reviewer has informed Scripture Union that she did not intend this implication. In an email to Titus Trust dated 17th December 2014, the Commission stated that it had no regulatory concerns and a copy of that email was sent to Scripture Union on 15th January 2015. Scripture Union has also seen independent evidence that the content of Titus Trust's serious incident report to the Charity Commission was in conformity with the legal advice that it had received.
- (iv) The debate relating to the appropriateness of a "LADO" referral is described in paragraph 6.51 of the Executive Summary. As that paragraph indicates, Scripture Union's experience supports the view taken by Titus Trust that no referral was required or even accepted by LADOs in relation to situations in which the person of concern was living overseas. Scripture Union has also now seen independent evidence that Titus Trust received legal advice that no such referral was required.

2. Concern for children outside the UK

Paragraph 6.49 of the Executive Summary refers to the letter from Mr Stileman in response to Scripture Union's request for confirmation that a LADO had been informed of the Smyth matter. It indicates that this reply implied that the risk to children outside of the UK was not a consideration. However, the quote attributed to Mr Stileman in that paragraph is not accurate. The relevant part of Mr Stileman's letter states that, *"A referral to a designated officer is relevant if there is a risk that the alleged abuser may pose a continuing risk to children, so that appropriate action may be considered. In this case, the alleged abuser*

¹ The Executive Summary correctly refers to Mr Stileman as the Operations Director of Titus Trust at the time of the relevant events but, in paragraph 6.39, mistakenly says that he was a trustee of Titus Trust. He was not.

lives outside the jurisdiction i.e. in South Africa. Appropriate action has been taken in reporting the alleged abuse to the police.”

As indicated above, this statement reflected Scripture Union’s understanding of the approach of the relevant authorities in 2015 and the letter from Mr Stileman is thus not indicative of a lack of regard for the position of children outside the UK. Furthermore, Scripture Union has now seen correspondence between Mr Stileman and the police in March 2015 in which Mr Stileman indicated that he wished to give assurance to a victim that the Smyth matter had been followed up overseas. He received the response that the police had taken action in relation to managing any risk Smyth might then pose. We thus acknowledge that Mr Stileman showed concern for children outside the UK.

3. Information provided to Scripture Union

There are statements in the Executive Summary relating to the information that was supplied to Scripture Union that are incorrect:

- (i) *The Ruston Report:* The Executive Summary states that the Ruston Report was shared by Titus Trust with Scripture Union in a significantly redacted form and that the unredacted document was not shared despite repeated requests (see, in particular, paragraphs 6.40 and 6.42 of the Executive Summary). However, this is not correct. The copy of the Ruston Report that was shared with it on 15th January 2015 (as referred to in paragraph 6.40) appears to be complete and unredacted and Scripture Union has no reason to suspect that it is not.
- (ii) *The Titus Trust Serious Incident Report:* The Executive Summary states that a copy of the Titus Trust serious incident report relating to the Smyth matter was not shared with Scripture Union despite it being requested (paragraphs 6.40). This is not correct. A copy of the report was among the documents which paragraph 6.40 indicates were shared with Scripture Union on 15th January 2015. This copy was heavily redacted but the covering letter indicated that the redacted material was regarded by Titus Trust’s lawyers as not being relevant to Scripture Union and, in his covering letter, James Stileman indicated that he was happy to discuss the excluded material if Scripture Union wished to do so.
- (iii) *The identity of victims:* The Executive Summary indicates that the identities of the victims and their disclosures were never shared with Scripture Union (paragraph 6.42). This is correct but Titus Trust and Mr Stileman have informed Scripture Union that (a) in 2015 they understood that the victims wished their names to be kept confidential (b) that, so far as they are aware, apart from Revd David Fletcher, at that time none of the Trustees of Titus Trust was aware of the identity of more than three victims and Mr Stileman was only aware of these three and one other and (c) that, in view of the wishes of the victims as then understood and an indication from the police that they did not want to be given the names of the victims, Revd Fletcher was not asked to divulge the names of other victims known to him. Scripture Union has no reason to doubt this.
- (iv) *Repeated requests:* The Executive Summary states that “*SU records indicate on six occasions between 16 March 2015 and 7 September 2015 that confirmation of a LADO referral being made was requested*” (paragraph 6.49). This may be understood to indicate that six different requests for such confirmation were made, which is not correct. We are only aware of one such request (being the request on 7th September 2015 referred to below).

The Executive Summary also refers to “*a sustained effort over nearly an eleven-month period*” by Scripture Union to clarify the information held by Titus Trust and seek full information sharing (paragraph 6.42). Scripture Union is aware of only three written requests for information:

- a request on 23rd December 2014 for a copy of the Stileman Report and the Titus Trust serious incident report to the Charity Commission (redacted copies of both of which were supplied by Titus Trust on 15th January 2015);
- a request on 13th January 2015 for a copy of the Titus Trust “dossier”, the contemporaneous notes made by Mark Ruston (the author of the Ruston Report) and the serious incident report to the Charity Commission and their response (a copy of the Ruston Report and redacted copies of the document mentioned above being supplied by Titus Trust on 15th January 2015); and
- a request on 7th September 2015, which sought confirmation of whether a LADO report had been made by Titus Trust and, if so, the outcome of that report, the Police case reference number, a copy of the report to the police and confirmation of whether the police were taking action (the police case reference number, an explanation as to why the police report was not provided and an explanation why a LADO report had not been made being provided in the response by Titus Trust on 23rd September 2015).

We are not aware of any other requests for information but we are aware that the sharing of unredacted material was also discussed between Titus Trust and Scripture Union in early June 2015, when Titus Trust explained its decision not to effect such sharing in the light of the legal advice that it had received.