

Sir

Members will know that, following a complaint made against me by a parishioner, I have been subject to a Code of Conduct investigation for the past few months.

The complaint included a number of unsubstantiated allegations against me, including slurs on my person and character. I am pleased to say that these were all dismissed by the Panel. Members will know that I have always acted with integrity, and the Panel's judgment has upheld my good character.

However, the Panel did find that section 19 of our Code, in respect of data protection, was breached. They found that this was a minor breach and have issued a caution accordingly.

The matter at the heart of this is the disappearance of a constituent's paperwork which had gone missing in transit back to him whilst I was responsible as the data controller. I was the last person to admit that I had handled the paperwork, and so the data protection buck stopped with me. I have done what any responsible States Member would do – I have taken responsibility; I have submitted myself to due process; and I have gone beyond the call of duty in trying to help the complainant reconstitute his paperwork.

As the Code of Conduct process is now completed, I wish to take the opportunity to share my experience and put a few important matters on the record. I trust States Members will hear me out with the same patience they've shown to others who have gone through this process this term.

Sir, there is a growing recognition among States Members that our exposure in respect of data protection is wholly unacceptable, and the support available to us is entirely lacking. I have found this out at substantial personal cost to myself and my family over the past two years.

What States Member has not had the experience of a parishioner wanting to share their story with them, and shoving some paperwork at them, pleading for help?

For me, this incident began in December 2016, just two months after I started as Disability Champion, and just 8 months after being elected. There was nothing that could have prepared me for what the last 2 years has brought me. The induction was completely inadequate. The section on data protection dealt only with digital safety, nothing about the physical handling of paperwork.

New Members of the States could not have fully understood that, although the civil service is there to support us in our Committee roles, we are completely on our own when it comes to constituency work. Neither the civil service nor the other extensive resources of the States are available to support us in our parliamentary and parish duties, except where they touch on Committee matters. So much so that I have had to rely on independent legal support throughout the period of the data protection complaint, because I could not use the advice of the Law Officers.

After all I have been through in the past two years, what I am forced to say now, is that I cannot continue to take on the responsibility. In what business would a person take on a job where they become personally liable for system failings in the business? In which they cannot rely on the business for support, because in some of their important functions they are treated as a third party, an independent? It is not an acceptable position.

This experience has taken its toll on me and my family. I feel I have been harassed and intimidated throughout the period of the complaint. I have had to recognise the damage it has done to my mental health. I have been reluctant to say that out loud. We send the message out to the community that Mental Health Issues shouldn't stigmatise people and follow policies which support

mental health first aid being just as important as first aid for your physical health, but in the highly charged atmosphere of politics we hold ourselves to a different standard. We have to take more care with each other.

The exposure and lack of support for deputies completing parish work is very real and in light of my experience I have scaled down the individual casework I am able to take on while States Members continue to be exposed to an unacceptable level of personal risk in the management of such cases.

For the last two years, I feel the complainant has pursued grievances against me through every channel available. I fear that this will continue. I have been left without support and I am still dealing with the fallout. But I have used my experience to try and improve matters for fellow States Members and to leave a better legacy for 2020. I have provided feedback to the civil service and to SACC on processes, on training and on support. Some improvements have already been made. The need for others has been recognised. The Code of Conduct Panel has found no bad motive or bad character on my part, and I hope that is where this matter will finally end.

I am grateful for the opportunity to put this clearly on public record today.

(ends)