Interim Supervision Policy 2017-2020

# Introduction

1.1 Scope

This Interim Supervision Policy provides a framework for and outline of the requirements for supervision for all ordained ministers in the active work in order to ensure that there is greater accountability and support for ministerial practice. This policy is intended to include Chairs of District, all ministers appointed to circuit and district appointments and supernumeraries undertaking roles under SO 792(2). The policy will be implemented in the districts according to the timeline set out in an appendix to the Report from the Supervision Working Group with the intention that all ordained ministers appointed to the circuits and districts should be in supervision by the Conference of 2019.

Within the lifetime of the policy it is envisaged that following further consultation supervision will be extended to apply in an appropriate form to ordained ministers in the Connexional Team and in the Conference Office, to ministers in appointments outside the control of the church and to authorised ministers. This policy does not currently extend to lay employees in pastoral roles but districts and circuits are encouraged to explore ways of achieving this as soon as practicable.

It is acknowledged that implementing this policy is a major undertaking. For this reason it is an Interim Supervision Policy that is proposed in order to allow time for supervision to be experienced by all ordained ministers before a further audit is taken and final recommendations are made. It is anticipated, for example, that further work will be needed on the future shape of Superintendent ministry as a result of the implementation of this policy. It is hoped that a more extensive use of group supervision than is recommended here might be possible once there is more experience and expertise within the connexion of the processes and methods appropriate to it.

1.2 What kind of supervision?

Whilst the word supervision has many different meanings and usages, supervision as it is being adopted by the Methodist Church is understood as an exploratory and reflective process in which one or more ministry practitioners meet together with a trained, resourced and approved supervisor to reflect on their vocation and practice. The intention of such regular and focused reflection upon practice is to support a change of culture in the life of the church from one of isolated and vulnerable practice, to one of accountability, support and more safety for ministers and for those amongst whom they work.

Whilst this supervision policy has arisen directly out of the recommendations of the Past Cases Review of 2015 there has been a growing sense over many years of the need for structured supervision for all those engaged in pastoral work and particularly for ordained ministers because of the responsibilities they carry. Structured supervision is now being introduced for deacons and presbyters across the church as a realistic expression of the covenant between ordained ministers and the Conference. This covenant implies a duty of care on behalf of the Conference, and a willingness on the part of those ordained for their ministry and character to be overseen by those appointed by the Conference to do so as already set out in Standing Orders.

The experience of those who have reflected on the impact of the supervision they received during the pilot phase of the implementation is that it has operated as both a redemptive structure - a practice that shapes the encounters and interactions that happen within it in ways that promote human health and wellbeing in the light of God’s self-revelation (not only for those present but for those amongst whom ministers work)[[1]](#endnote-1) - and as a means of grace[[2]](#endnote-2) in which God’s transforming presence may be encountered. Further information is offered about the findings from the pilot in the SWG Report.

1.3 The functions of supervision

Supervision in the Methodist Church, then, has three main functions:

* to support the minister in their vocation and practice and its development;
* to safeguard the interests of those amongst whom ministry is practised including those of children and vulnerable adults;
* to ensure that the ministry offered in the name of the Methodist Church is collegially and accountably reflected upon in the light of God’s mission and the purposes of the Methodist Church.

Effective supervision in this context rests on three pillars[[3]](#endnote-3):

**Normative:**

* Shared theological reflection on the practices and vocation of ministry within the horizon of God’s mission and within the Methodist Church’s code of conduct;
* The shared identification of risks to self and others and the identification of steps to ameliorate those risks.

**Formative:**

* Support for life-long learning, formation and development in ministry through shared reflection;
* The exploration of creative approaches to demanding issues of ministry and relationships as they arise.

**Restorative:**

* Ensuring that the vocation and work of the minister is shared, valued and nurtured;
* Ensuring that that health and wellbeing issues for ministers are addressed.

1.4 The process of each supervision

Whilst exploratory supervision draws on many generic skills - like active listening - that can be transferred, it is a particular discipline that requires training and practice. The process of supervision adopted under this policy is presented in summary as the Greenwich Foot Tunnel Process[[4]](#endnote-4). This picture offers a structure for supervision and a way of conceptualising the journey of supervision that echoes John Wesley’s approach to pastoral visiting, involving constant prayer (before, during and at its conclusion) and a series of key questions to be asked. Training and assessment by a process approved by the Supervision Reference Group will be required of all those nominated to supervise as part of this policy in order to assure the quality of the supervisory experience for supervisees and to ensure that supervision meets the desired outcomes.

Each supervision should provide opportunity for:

* An update on agreed actions from previous supervision.
* Attention to risk in relation to potential harm to self or others (whether or not this becomes the focus of the session).
* The recording of explicit actions in relation to safeguarding, fitness to practice and any other matter for referral

Over time a series of supervisions should provide for rounded attention to the whole ministry practice of the supervisee including:

* The vocation and vision of ministry of the practitioner
* The minister’s aims and priorities in the ministry context
* Key relationships in the ministry context and the minister’s approach to them
* The health, resilience and well-being of the minister
* Equality and diversity issues.
* Learning, development and support needs
* The supervisory work in which the minister is engaged both under this policy and more informally

Issues for exploration in supervision can be raised by either the supervisor or the supervisee, and may be drawn to the attention of either by the minister in oversight if he or she is not the supervisor.

1.5 Supervision and Oversight

Supervision in the Methodist Church is being introduced as a collegial and accountable process that is supportive of life-long learning in ministry and is a realistic means by which Christians in ministry can ‘watch over one another in love’ for the sake of everyone involved.

This ‘watching over one another’ is the means by which the members of the body of Christ remain true and faithful to the calling of the Church. In the British Methodist context it is a corporate and shared activity undertaken by the Conference and by groups and individuals working on behalf of the Conference that is commonly referred to as ‘oversight’.

Oversight in the circuits and districts is exercised corporately by bodies like circuit meetings and church councils. At the same time ordained ministers have particular responsibilities for the oversight of the life of the church. This is particularly visible in the roles of Superintendent Ministers and District Chairs/the Warden of the MDO who are to oversee the work of the circuits, and the character and fidelity of ordained ministers, respectively.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Ministers with such oversight responsibilities are to ensure that those they oversee receive regular, structured supervision according to this policy. It is not necessarily the case that every ordained minister will receive supervision from their minister in oversight. It is necessarily the case, however, that all ministers in oversight will receive Agreed Records of all supervisions, stating the topics covered and recording any issues for referral that relate to safeguarding, to fitness to practice or to any structured support that should be considered to enable the minister to function effectively. Ministers in oversight, whether or not they are in a particular instance, the supervisor, also have the responsibility to ensure that issues of importance that they are aware of are brought to the attention of the minister concerned for exploration in supervision.

By this means supervision is intended as a contribution to effective oversight. Its main contribution is through the open exploration of the work of the ordained minister, providing support, collegiality and the broader and deeper perspectives that come from intentional and shared reflection and discernment. In its restorative and formative functions it is an expression of the duty of care that the Conference has for those with whom it has entered into a covenant. In its formative and normative functions it is a means of accountability for all ordained ministers and a contribution to the processes by which the Methodist Church oversees the ministry exercised in its name. To be accountable through supervision is literally to share an account of what is happening in ministry (like the apostles in Mark 6.30 who after they had been sent out gathered around Jesus and ‘told him all that they had done and taught’) at a sufficient level of detail and, over time, in a sufficiently rounded way, for a supervisor /minister in oversight to be confident in the practice, self-awareness and wellbeing of the minister concerned. This is not about ensuring perfect practice from perfect practitioners. It is about ensuring good-enough practice amongst well-enough supported practitioners.

**Figure 1: Diagram of Oversight and Supervision in relation to the office of District Chair**

Conference

Duty of Care

Accountability

Secretary of the Conference

District Chair

\*Those supervising District Chairs are approved external supervisors. Their responsibilities are to provide exploratory supervision to the Warden of the Diaconal Order and to the District Chairs, that is normative, formative and restorative, and to report to the Secretary of the Conference, by way of an Agreed Record, key issues that belong in the realm of oversight.

**Figure 2: Diagram of Oversight and Supervision in relation to the office of a Circuit Minister**

Conference

Duty of Care

Accountability

Chair/Warden of MDO

Superintendent

Circuit Minister

\*\*Those supervising Circuit Ministers may either be their own Superintendents or another ordained minister or suitably qualified and approved supervisor. Their responsibilities are to provide exploratory supervision to Circuit Ministers, that is normative, formative and restorative, and to report to the Superintendent, by way of an Agreed Record, key issues that belong in the realm of oversight.

# Implementing Supervision in Circuits and Districts

2.1 Who will be approved to supervise?

Whilst it will not necessarily be the case that every District Chair or Superintendent will act as a formal supervisor under this policy, it will often be the case that these are the officers best placed to do so. Future appointments of District Chairs, Superintendent Ministers and other ministers in oversight should bear this in mind as part of discernment and selection. In most districts and in some circuits it will be necessary for additional supervisors to be appointed to share in this work. It is not recommended that any supervisor should undertake a one to one supervisory or line management relationship with more than eight people. This includes the supervision of ministerial colleagues and the line management of lay employees.

Because supervision involves a significant exercise of power on the part of the supervisor and the appropriate handling of Agreed Records not only by all supervisors but all ministers in oversight, bespoke training will be offered to all District Chairs, Superintendent Ministers and Nominated Supervisors. Only those who are suitably trained and assessed will be approved to supervise under this policy.

2.2 Handling the relationship between supervision and oversight

Whilst this Interim Supervision Policy allows for some local flexibility resulting in a connexional pattern of supervision in which some will be supervised by their minister in oversight and others not, consistency will be expressed through the embedding of the following principles:

* Anyone who supervises will be in supervision with a Methodist Church (MCB) approved supervisor who has either completed the approved training and been assessed as ready to practice, or who has the qualifications to act as a professional pastoral supervisor and who has signed a contract to supervise under this policy.
* A covenant will be made between the supervisor and the minister to ensure that the boundaries of the supervision space are understood and respected by both parties.
* The supervision process shall be exploratory and happen as far as possible in an atmosphere of trust, where normative as well as formative and restorative dimensions of the work can be explored without fear of presumptive action being taken by any minister in oversight. Any action to be taken by the minister in oversight that has arisen from a discussion in supervision should be recorded on the Agreed Record (this is true whether or not the minister in oversight is acting as supervisor in order that appropriate boundaries for the supervisory space are maintained).
* Where such trust is not possible an alternative supervision arrangement should be considered with the approval of the appropriate district/connexional officer and any such arrangement noted on the district supervision plan.
* A minister who already receives external supervision may apply to continue in this arrangement provided that:
  + The supervisor is suitably qualified and insured
  + The supervisor agrees a contract with the Methodist Church to supervise according to this policy
  + The minister in oversight is in agreement
  + The expense is born locally either by the minister or by the circuit/district
  + The arrangement is noted on the district supervision plan
* Agreed Records should only contain the information necessary for oversight responsibilities to be exercised, recording
  + That the supervision has happened
  + A list of the topics covered
  + Any issues of risk/safeguarding named
  + Any issues to be referred outside the supervision process i.e. of which the minister in oversight and/or another party needs to be aware or upon which the minister in oversight needs to act.
* Anything on the Agreed Record can be appropriately raised by the minister in oversight with their colleague.
* Anything which the minister in oversight, or the nominated third party, notes has not been covered in the Agreed Records can be referred by them or brought to the supervision. For example, if safeguarding has not been considered for some time.
* Nothing should be written on the Agreed Record that could identify a third party.
* Agreed Records are to be kept according to the provisions of the data protection act as sensitive documents. They are not confidential as:
  + A copy will be routinely sent to the minister in oversight/nominated third party
  + Copies are to be passed on to a new supervisor when either the supervisor or the minister moves on.
  + Copies are available for use in other formal processes e.g. a safeguarding enquiry; a competence process; a complaints process.
* Beyond those matters recorded on the Agreed Record the supervision is confidential to the supervisor and the minister concerned except that the supervisor is expected to take issues arising to their own supervisor for reflection. This is a safeguard for all concerned and would not require the disclosure of names or places.
* There should be no closed loops that might allow any inappropriate pressurizing of ministers through supervision by those in oversight – this should be monitored in the supervision of those supervising and through the appointment of a Nominated Third Party to receive the Agreed Record. In the case of those not being supervised by their minister in oversight the Agreed Record will go to the minister in oversight. Where the minister in oversight is the supervisor an appropriate officer should be appointed to receive and monitor the supervisory process (this person should be named in the District Supervision Implementation Plan). In the case of probationers, for example, the appropriate officer to receive such records would be the District Probationer’s Secretary.
* Oversight is also maintained by ensuring that a report of the supervisory process goes annually to the minister in oversight *and* the lay representative in the MDR process and a report of the development outcomes goes from the MDR to the supervisor for implementation and monitoring. Suitable proformas will be provided.

2.3 How will the pattern of supervision be determined for each District/Circuit?

Under this policy each district will need to complete a Supervision Implementation Plan. This document should be completed in consultation with the Superintendents in the District and with the connexional officer appointed to oversee this work. An approved plan will articulate:

1. The normative pattern of supervision for those in circuit and district appointments
2. An appropriate plan for the supervision of ministers in appointments outside the control of the church
3. The names of those nominated to supervise and the dates of their training and approval
4. The noting of any exceptional arrangements
5. The noting of those Nominated Third Parties who will receive and monitor the Agreed Records of supervision where the supervisor is the minister in oversight.

Each district will be asked to select a pattern of supervision from the following options:

A All ministers to be supervised by their minister in oversight

B All ministers to be supervised by their minister in oversight or a nominated alternate

C All ministers to be supervised by a minister other than their minister in oversight

In most districts Pattern A will not be practical in its entirety as numbers of circuit staff vary considerably. Districts will be asked to articulate their own pattern using A, B and C above. For example:

A+B: in District X there are 8 Superintendents who will all be supervised by the District Chair (Pattern A); because of variations in circuit staffs, the superintendents will each supervise their own ministerial colleagues except where numbers make this difficult. In this case some ordained ministers will be supervised by a colleague from a neighbouring circuit (Pattern B).

B+C: In District Y there are 12 Superintendents. These will be supervised by the District Chair and by a nominated alternate who is supernumerary (Pattern B). The remaining 40 ordained ministers will be supervised by a ministerial colleague who is not their own Superintendent. 10/12 of the Superintendents will be nominated for this work, taking 4 supervisees each in addition to any lay employees they already supervise or manage (Pattern C).

C: In District Z there are 12 Superintendents and a further 36 ordained ministers. 12 people will be nominated from the District, including the District Chair, 8 Superintendents and 3 lay people with suitable experience and skills. Each of these will supervise 4 ordained ministers each. (Pattern C)

The pilot has demonstrated that there are different advantages and disadvantages associated with being supervised by the minister in oversight and by someone else. Being supervised by someone outside of the oversight structure perhaps gives more freedom for difficult issues to be explored; on the other hand, those who have experienced effective supervision from their ministers in oversight have valued the increased sense of collegiality this has brought.

During the period governed by this interim policy, all three patterns will be permitted and any combination of them as approved by the responsible connexional officer through the mechanism of the District Supervision Implementation plan.

# Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 A Supervision Reference Group shall be appointed for the period 2017-2020 to:

* 1. Monitor implementation
  2. Identify policy gaps
  3. Bring a report to the Council of January 2019 concerning the supervision of ordained ministers in the connexional team and the Conference Office, ministers in appointments outside the control of the church; ministers of other churches.
  4. Bring a report to the Conference of 2020 reviewing the implementation of the policy and making further recommendations in the light of experience concerning the supervision of ordained people, the use of group supervision and the supervision of lay people with significant pastoral responsibilities.

3.2 An appropriately qualified and experienced consultant should be engaged for the period 2017-20 in order that the following key responsibilities can be discharged:

* To advocate for supervision and support its development as a core practice within the MCB
* To co-ordinate the supervision of District Chairs and other senior officers who receive external supervision
* To oversee the initial training and assessment of those who will supervise in the districts and circuits
* To work with the District Chairs on the implementation of the interim policy in their districts through the mechanism of Supervision Implementation Plans
* To manage the connexional aspects of the budget for supervision
* To work with the Supervision Reference Group to:
  + Monitor implementation
  + Identify policy gaps
  + Bring a report to the Council of January 2019
  + Bring a report to the Conference of 2020

3.3 Chairs of District are responsible for:

* Ensuring that Superintendent Ministers are fully aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to this supervision policy and that supervision is provided in accordance with the Methodist Church policy on supervision.
* Ensuring that ordained ministers in District appointments receive regular supervision.
* Leading developments in supervision practice in the District.
* Ensuring that ministers serving in District and Circuit appointments receive supervision in line with the Methodist Church policy on supervision and taking action to address this if this is not the case.

3.4 Superintendent Ministers are responsible for:

* Ensuring that all deacons and presbyters in circuit appointments are fully aware of their role and responsibility in relation to supervision and that supervision is provided in accordance with this policy.
* Leading developments in supervision practice.
* Ensuring that they receive supervision in line with this policy and taking action to address this if this is not the case.

3.5 All ordained ministers are responsible for:

* Ensuring that they receive supervision in line with this policy and taking action to address this if this is not the case.
* Ensuring that Agreed Records of their supervision are provided regularly to their minister in oversight on the Connexional Proforma.

# Practicalities

4.1 Every ordained minister governed by this policy should be supervised 1:1 six times in each year. Additional supervisions may be arranged where either party feel this is necessary - up to 8 times in each year.

4.2 Each supervision should last 1.5 hours (including time for arrival and departure)

4.3 MDR meetings are in addition to this. A short report should be made from the supervisory process to the MDR process on the form provided, and from the MDR process to the supervisory process at its conclusion naming any issues to be taken forward/monitored in supervision.

4.4 At the first supervision a covenant should be made on the Connexional Proforma in order to establish common expectations. Copies should be retained by the supervisor and the supervisee and sent to the minister in oversight/nominated third party for their information. The covenant should be reviewed annually to give opportunity for both parties easily to name what might need changing.

4.5 Some supervisions may be conducted by skype or telephone. At least two supervisions each year should be face to face.

4.6 All supervisions should be conducted in confidential space, free from interruptions. The use of skype or telephone requires both parties to think carefully about how to protect the space and time from other distractions.

4.7 Dates and venues for supervisions should be agreed in advance with more than one in the diary. The earlier dates are fixed the easier it is for everyone to honour the commitment. Except in the case of emergency, supervision dates are to be considered a priority and may only be changed by mutual consent.

4.8 At the conclusion of each supervision an Agreed Record Form should be completed by the supervisor and the supervisee. Copies should be kept by both parties for reference and a copy sent to the minister in oversight/nominated third party for their reference. Supervisors and supervisees may wish to keep more detailed notes for their personal reference.

4.9 All Agreed Records should be kept either in locked cabinets or electronically in a safe format to which others do not have access.

4.10 The provision of group supervision is at the discretion of the circuit/district concerned and may be offered only *in addition* to individual supervision and used in the following ways:

* As peer supervision in staff meetings
* In groups of peers, e.g. of District Chairs, with a facilitator present
* Group supervision should not be a context in which team issues are discussed except in the presence of an external supervisor
* Records need not be kept though supervisees should be responsible for reporting any issues for referral identified to their supervisor/minister in oversight.

4.11 Those engaging in group supervision are encourage to use the tools for supervision learned in the training in order to develop structured and intentional use of the time. The further use of group supervision will be subject to review once more experience of supervision has been gained by the connexion as a whole.

# The supervision of probationer ministers and those new to the Methodist Church in Britain (The MCB)

It is envisaged that by 2020 all probationer ministers and those new to the Methodist Church in Britain will be supervised by those who have been trained and assessed and approved under this policy. In addition to this training those supervising probationers will be required to undertake a briefing about the particular issues pertaining to the supervision of probationers including:

* Frequency
* Supervision of those new to ministry
* Benchmarks for ordination
* Oversight in relation to probationers
* Evidential report writing

Those supervising ministers new to the Methodist Church in Britain should receive briefing in relation to

* Frequency
* Cross cultural supervision and ministry

In the meantime the current courses preparing supervisors for probationers and ministers new to the MCB will continue to run using materials in common with the approved connexional supervision training. Those running these courses will need to be sensitive to the timeline for implementation and the fact that districts will not all receive the approved connexional supervision training at the same point. Discretion will need to be exercised about the appropriate training for those who have received the approved connexional supervision training early in the cycle.

The supervision of probationers and those new to the MCB is subject to this policy in all other respects, e.g. the keeping of Agreed Records; the need for a Nominated Third Party to receive the records.

# Necessary Paperwork

The following documents are necessary for the implementation of this policy and are available to download at: (web address to be supplied)

* Covenant Form
* Agreed Record Form
* MDR Report Forms A and B
* Supervision Implementation Plan

# Addressing problems with the supervision process

6.1 If any supervisee is unhappy with the supervision they are being offered they should in the first instance discuss the matter with their supervisor and secondly with those responsible for their oversight in the Circuit/District

6.2 In cases where the matter cannot be resolved within the District, the connexionally appointed officer responsible for supervision should be consulted.

6.3 Concerns about policy issues should be addressed to the connexionally appointed officer responsible for supervision or to any member of the Supervision Reference Group.

\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS

1. Edward Farley, Interpreting Situations: An Enquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology, reprinted in Woodward and Pattison, 1999, The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology, Wiley-Blackwell [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. John Wesley, 1786 Sermon On Visiting the Sick. ‘On Visiting the Sick’. Available at: http://wesley.nnu.edu/johnwesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-98-on-visiting-the-sick [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from Inskipp & Proctor, 1995, Art, Craft and Tasks of Counselling Supervision: Professional Development for Counsellors, Psychotherapists, Supervisor and Trainers Pt.2: Becoming a Supervisor, 2nd edition: Cascade. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. For the processes of supervision summarised in this model see Leach & Paterson, 2015, Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook, London: SCM chapter 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Responsibility for the character and fidelity of deacons lies with the Warden (SO754.2) whilst for those in circuit appointments responsibility for their work lies with the Superintendent. (According to SO 520.2 ‘It is the duty of the Superintendent appointed to each Circuit to enable the relevant courts, officers and ministers to fulfil their specific responsibilities under Standing Orders and to ensure that they do so.’) Similarly responsibility for the character and fidelity of presbyters in circuits lies with the District Chair but responsibility for the work lies with the Superintendent. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)