

Proposal for the setting up of a Working Group to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	83/1. The Council receives the report. 83/2. The Council appoints the membership of the working group to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care, as follows: (names to be presented to the Council).
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	N/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The paper sets out the proposed membership and terms of reference for a Working Group on Covenants of Care.
Main Points	Proposed categories of membership Terms of reference
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	The paper is the result of memorial M35 to the Methodist Conference 2014.
Consultations	The PCR Implementation Group

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	N/A
Faith and Order	N/A
Financial	N/A
Personnel	N/A
Legal including impact on other jurisdictions	N/A
Wider Connexional	Districts will be part of the consultation.
External (eg ecumenical)	It is proposed that a member of the Church of England Safeguarding Team be invited to be a member.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 2014 Conference accepted Memorial 35 from the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod:

M35 Covenants of Care

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (R) (Present: 125; Voting: 124 for, 0 against) expresses appreciation for the work undertaken by the staff with responsibilities for safeguarding in the Connexional Team. However we are concerned that, with the pressure of urgent cases, reviews of 'Covenants of Care' where offenders have cooperated with the arrangements for their participation in church activities, have taken an unreasonable amount of time to process.

The Synod calls upon the Conference to review the present arrangements and to create a method by which, using the experience and expertise in Districts, such reviews can be carried out within three months of Circuits requesting such a review.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod for its memorial. It notes the pressure of work in the Connexional Safeguarding Team as a result of dealing with urgent work.

The Conference notes that there is currently no established procedure for the review of Covenants of Care unless they have been set up by a Safeguarding Advisory Panel which has requested such a review. The Synod has helpfully alerted the Conference to the need for thought to be given to the establishment of more formal arrangements for Covenants of Care. These might include a connexionally held register and a procedure for reporting and reviewing.

The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Methodist Council and requests that the Council establishes a working group to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care and to formulate proposals. The working group should draw on the experience of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel and expertise within Districts, together with lessons learnt from the Past Cases Review, which is due to report to the 2015 Conference. The Conference requests that the Council report the conclusions of this review to the Conference no later than 2017.

2. This paper sets out the proposed membership by category and proposed terms of reference of the working group. The names will be placed before the Council.

3. Proposed membership

- A District Safeguarding Officer
- A District Chair
- A member of the Safeguarding Committee

- A person who has been subject to a Covenant of Care (or consultation with a range of people)
- External expert eg from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation
- Connexional Safeguarding Adviser (Convener)
- A Safeguarding Colleague from the Church of England

4. Terms of reference

i. To review the overall arrangements for Covenants of Care and report to the Methodist Conference no later than 2017.

ii. Through its discussions the working group shall:

- Draw on the experience of the Safeguarding Committee; District Safeguarding Officers and others implementing Covenants of Care; the Connexional Safeguarding Team; those subject to Covenants of Care; the lessons of the Past Cases Review.
- Hold in tension the desire for safer spaces in our churches and the church's mission to welcome those who may pose a risk but have expressed a commitment to change.
- Evaluate the development of Covenants of Care since they were first introduced - in particular their use for non-sexual offences and arrangements for reviewing Covenants of Care.
- Draw on current research concerning the rehabilitation of those who have harmed others or who may pose a risk.
- Build on the work begun by the Connexional Safeguarding Team in setting up a Connexional Register of Covenants of Care.
- Consider the suggestion that there should be the possibility of discharging Covenants of Care.
- Liaise with the Law and Polity Committee.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

83/1. The Council receives the report.

83/2. The Council appoints the membership of the working group to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care, as follows: (names to be presented to the Council).