

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROPOSED STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE TO DELIVER EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY (E&D) WORK WITHIN THE METHODIST CHURCH

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	The Council recommends that the proposals for the architecture that will deliver E&D work including the policy and theology are implemented as soon as possible. The Council adopts the principles underlying the indicative Standing Orders outlined in the report, and directs that, after consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, detailed proposals to effect them be presented to the Conference.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Proposals which describe the architecture needed to support E&D work for the future. Aims to convey context, principles and reasoning behind the proposals.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed proposals for the architecture • Reference ecumenical partner work • Transition of the old committee structure to new ways of working • Interim E&D policy
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	E&D report to Methodist Conference 2008, MC/10/22 initial proposals for E&D work E&D report to Council February 2010. MC/10/22
Consultations	

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	SO's 102, 336, 361A all to be amended
Faith and Order	
Financial	
Personnel	
Legal	
Wider Connexional	Wide consultation to ensure best possible end results for the architecture will follow.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Further development of work with ecumenical partners
Risk	Delay in accepting these proposals could further delay the theology and final policy statements

Report to the Council on the development of a proposed structure and purpose to deliver Equalities and Diversity (E&D) within the Methodist Church

1. Background

The Team Focus process established a structure for E&D within the Connexional Team to create an integrated approach to E&D work across the Connexion. The 2008 Conference report also established the principles of a Stakeholders Forum to work with the E&D Officer to deliver an equalities strategy for the Methodist Church in Britain. This illustrates a fundamental commitment to E&D; setting it at the heart of the Church's work and recognising that the detailed ramifications of this would follow through in a holistic E&D strategy.

Introduction

- 1.1 This report comes at point when the old ways of working of the two Conference-appointed Justice Committees (Gender Justice and Committee for Racial Justice) are on the threshold of change into the new way of working. This report gathers together all the previously Conference agreed changes and gives more detail for the new structure for delivery of E&D work.
- 1.2 Following the task of reviewing of committees there is a distinct move away from discreet committees into a more flexible, efficient and inclusive movement for E&D and this report looks at how we can best do that.
- 1.3 In making these proposals we are seeking to achieve a fair and just Church community for the British Methodist Church where our diversity is recognised and valued and all church communities actively and with commitment reflect that we are all one in the heart of God. These principles form the basis from which a much wider strategy for E&D in the British Methodist Church will be developed during the following two years. The strategy will equip and enable all parts of the Methodist Church to live up to their high calling that all are welcome in God's Church and each one adds value to who we are as Methodist people. The aim of all E&D work is to build up our strengths as a diverse community of Christian believers and to provide a vision for a whole Church that respects diversity.
- 1.4 This paper proposes the architecture for implementation of all E&D work and its delivery as requested by the Methodist Council following the Equalities and Diversity Report for Council February 2010 (MC/10/22). The underlying principle is to be inclusive, allow people's voices to be heard and to be effective in delivering real change and improvement to the Church.
- 1.5 As an interim measure we propose the following as a statement of intent while the policy and theology statements are being prepared:

The Methodist Church, in living up to its high calling to seek God's justice for all people and recognising the value of human diversity, seeks to create a place for all who search for nurture and sanctuary and who wish to live their lives in community witnessing to the gospel. To support church communities we will develop strategies based on real experiences and sound knowledge that will encourage and equip the Methodist Connexion to place God's justice at the heart of its life.

2. The detailed proposals

The architecture for developing E & D work, and specifically the policy and theological statement

- 2.1 The purpose for this architecture is to ensure clear accountability and visibility for the work, to mainstream E&D in the life, work and worship of the Methodist Church, to ensure the work undertaken meets the needs and requirements of the local church and to be efficient, effective and just in all that is done in the name of E&D. Consideration has now been given as to how this might best serve the development of E&D within the Church.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the Methodist structure will consist of a Connexional Stakeholders Forum with experience and expertise in each of the equality strands. It will function:
- under the direction of the E&D Officer to assist with the development of strategy
 - as a think tank, assisting the work and discerning emerging issues
 - supporting the policy development process
 - as an expert sounding board in the development of ideas and initiatives
- 2.3 It will be led, managed and chaired by the E&D officer. The operation of the forum will be a key integral role of the E&D officer, who will facilitate and enable people across the Connexion. It will include Ecumenical partners, representatives from Law and Polity, Faith and Order, Development and Personnel, Training Officers, the Youth Participation Scheme and the Belonging Together Project thus making it widely owned and consulted with across the Connexion. The E&D officer will assess suggestions from the Stakeholders' Forum and under the direction of Council and Conference will prioritise and action them.
- 2.4 This Forum will be working for community cohesion within the Methodist Church and will be supported by a wide ranging network where knowledge and expertise will be held from all the equality strands. The Network will work flexibly and efficiently, feeding into the Stakeholders Forum with key information and making use of contemporary messaging facilities. They will have an interest and experience in the strands of E&D and will communicate electronically in an *ad hoc* manner to share information, hold discussions, explore new ideas and offer mutual support

3. E&D Work in Other Denominations

- 3.1 A benchmarking exercise has begun regarding E&D activity with ecumenical partners. So far this has found that both the Church of England and some of the Free Churches have made some progress with developing work within the Equalities spectrum. This work will inform the developing E&D strategy for the Methodist Church. Conversations have already started with the Church of England, the URC, the Baptist Union and the Quakers. This work will inform the development of the E&D strategy for the Methodist Church

4. Transition from the old to the new

- 4.1 Whilst the Council has requested a review of all committees and asked for work to be done on the new architecture for E&D, there is a need for clear and sensitive management of the transitional period of handover from the old structures to the new.
- 4.2 The purposes of the original Committee for Racial Justice (CRJ), as laid out in SO's enabled that committee to produce a range of good resources and achieve valued work.
- 4.3 Women's Network of the Methodist Church is in a process of transition. The new organisation will be called "Methodist Women in Britain". An appropriate amendment to the Standing Orders concerning membership of the Conference is included below. Further amendments to the current Standing order about Network (SO 350) will be presented to the Conference in due course.

- 4.4 However the new way of working and the implementation of this proposed architecture will mean that the existing Standing Orders will need to be amended in order to reflect these developments that support the Conference decisions of 2008. Indicative new Standing Orders and amendments to current ones to achieve this are as follows:

SO 352 Equalities and Diversity

The Methodist Church, in living up to its high calling to seek God’s justice for all people and recognising the value of human diversity, seeks to create a place for all who search for nurture and sanctuary and who wish to live their lives in community witnessing to the gospel. In seeking to encourage and equip the Methodist people to place God’s justice at the heart of its life the Methodist Council has instituted and will develop strategies and structures that will keep within their purview the concerns of particular communities and of the whole Church for:

(i) public policy affecting issues of ethnicity, gender and sexuality, age, poverty and access, disability and impairment;

(ii) the contribution of members of the relevant communities affected by those issues to the life of the Church and its varied ministries.

SO 102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies.

(1) The connexional committees, funds and institutions to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question:

<i>Body</i>	<i>Representation</i>
(i) Methodist Council	<p>(a) The chair of the council.</p> <p>(b) The lead connexional Treasurer.</p> <p>(c) The chair of the council’s Strategy and Resources Committee.</p> <p>(d) The Secretaries in the Connexional team (other than the assistant secretary of the Conference).</p> <p>(e) One minister who is a commissioned chaplain.</p> <p>(f) Two persons, each of whom is serving overseas under the direction of the council or is a minister or deacon whose ministry is based on an overseas District or is a lay person who is a member in such a District.</p> <p>(g) Six persons representing particular communities identified in Standing Order 352</p>
(ii) Faith and Order Committee	One representative.
(iii) Law and Polity Committee	One representative.
(iv) Stationing Committee	One representative.
(v) Racial Justice Committee	—Six persons, at least two of whom should be under the age of 26.
(vi) <i>[deleted]</i>	
(vii) Women’s Network of the Methodist Church Methodist Women in Britain	The president of Network. One representative

SO 336

~~Racial Justice. (1) The Methodist Council shall appoint as a Team member a secretary for racial justice and a Committee for Racial Justice, of which the secretary for racial justice shall be the convener.~~

For funds, see S.O. 361A

~~(2) The committee shall have within its purview the concerns of members of black and Asian communities and of the whole Church for:~~

~~(i) public policy affecting racial justice;~~

~~(ii) the contribution of members of black and Asian communities to the life of the Church and its varied ministries.~~

SO 361A Racial Justice.

~~(1) The Methodist Church believes that racism is a denial of the gospel. As part of the Church's witness to the gospel and in order to promote racial justice, provision shall be made from any appropriate funds the Methodist Church Fund and from any restricted funds raised for appropriate purposes for grants to Methodist and ecumenical bodies and projects and to other organisations (whether local or national) in order to support work against discrimination and marginalisation on racial grounds.~~

~~(2) To the extent that the trusts affecting the funds referred to in clause (1) above so require, grants may be made only to bodies having charitable status.~~

4.5 These purposes will continue into the new Network with the vision expanding to recognise and express value of the church's increasingly ethnically diverse community. The work plan will be developed to address issues, amongst other things of inclusion and diversity, training and development and marking the developmental progress of the British Methodist Church. This will be done in partnership with the recently established Belonging Together Project and the District Disability advisors.

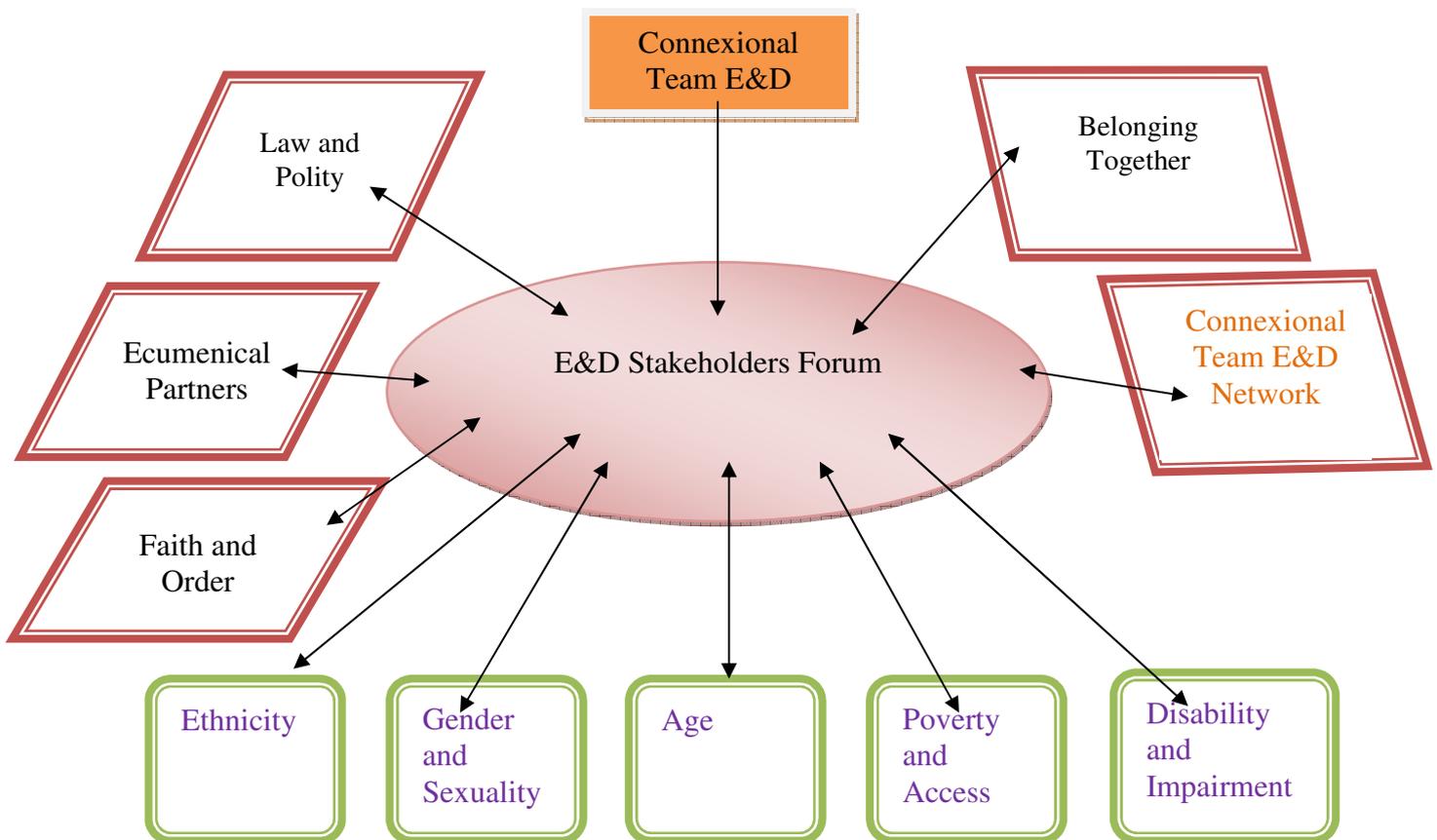
4.6 Similarly the terms of reference as agreed by the Methodist Conference for the Gender Justice Committee will also feed into the work plan for E&D. These terms of reference encouraged the committee to act as scrutineer for the Connexion in a variety of contexts, a point of contact for those in need of support, to develop theology, and be a conduit for information sharing.

5. Ways of Working

5.1 The E&D officer working with the Forum will set up, from time to time, project teams from within the Network to carry out specific pieces of work.

The proposed architecture and reporting arrangements are set out in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: The Proposed E&D Architecture



For a full description and terms of reference for these groupings see Appendix 1.

6. Developing the E&D Policy and Theology

6.1 The E&D policy and associated theology will be the first piece of work that the new architecture delivers and the process for doing this was outlined in the report to February 2010 Council. In addition it is intended that resources for churches, good practice guides, briefing notes on topical issues etc will be made available

7. Resolutions

1. The Council recommends that the proposals for the architecture that will deliver E&D work including the policy and theology are implemented as soon as possible.
2. The Council adopts the principles underlying the indicative Standing Orders outlined in the report, and directs that, after consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, detailed proposals to effect them be presented to the Conference.

Appendix 1

E&D Stakeholders Forum

The terms of reference for this group are:

- To discern emerging issues with regard to E&D from both inside the Church and wider society and think and plan strategically to work in response to them.
- To act as a think tank on E&D issues, providing ideas and feedback as well as be a sounding board for potential project work, initiatives and policy developments.
- To work towards mainstreaming E&D within the life of the local church and wider Connexion
- To draw together all the previous areas of equalities work into one place so that they are recognised and accessible.
- To build and facilitate two-way relationships with those undertaking E&D work within the wider Christian community in order to inform and enrich such work within each others' contexts.

How the Forum will work:

- The Forum will be chaired by the E&D officer and its membership will include:: one member from each of the five Equality Networks, one Training Officer, one member each of Faith & Order, Law & Polity, YPS and Development and Personnel, Ecumenical partners and a link with the Belonging Together Project.
- It will meet face to face at least once a year
- It will work electronically wherever possible, confirming to the Connexional Team's email policy.
- Will record the minutes of each meeting and communicate its work across the connexion via a range of media
- Intentionally acting to mainstream E&D within the life of the local church and of the wider Connexion
- Commission work that will be carried out by the Networks
- It will engage with national initiatives, particularly legislative developments *that will inform* the policy and practice of the Methodist Church
- Members will serve for an initial period of 3 years as volunteers

Accountability

The Forum will be accountable through the E&D Officer to the Director of Personnel and Development who reports to senior Connexional Team staff and the Methodist Council.

Skills and Experience required of Forum members:

- To be able to work collaboratively, recognising different working styles, preferences and beliefs and being able to work with them in an inclusive way
- Considerable experience and knowledge in Equalities and Diversity evidenced by professional work in the field, relevant roles held or initiatives taken in the local church and lived experience.
- To be able to empathise with the E&D agenda and be able to listen to the voices of difference in an unbiased way.
- To be able to write reports and other documents
- To be able to reflect theologically and bring rigour to the processes
- To be able to think and plan strategically and able to evaluate data and research
- To be respectful of difference
- To be part of the Methodist Church or in sympathy with its aims as expressed in "Our Calling" and "The Priorities".