

# Proposal to disband the Medical Committee

MC/23/66

Date of meeting	19-20 October 2023
Contact name and details	Joanne Anderton, Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice Laura Kent, Legal Counsel <a href="mailto:lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk">lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk</a>
Action required	Decision
Resolutions	66/1. The Council receives the report. 66/2. The Council recommends to the Conference that the Medical Committee of the Methodist Council should be disbanded, and asks the Law and Polity Committee to advise on and prepare the Standing Order amendments needed to effect this change.

## Summary of content

Subject of aims	To seek the Council's approval to disband the Medical Committee of the Methodist Council.
Main points	1. The Medical Committee's role in assessing the health of candidates and ministers is no longer appropriate in today's legislative environment and has been replaced by an external occupational health advisory body. 2. The Medical Committee therefore requests the Council's permission to be formally disbanded.
Consultations	The Medical Committee, the Connexional Wellbeing Team, the Ministries Committee and members of the Law and Polity Committee. External legal advice has also been obtained.

## Summary of impact

Standing Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 71</b> (Presbyteral and Diaconal Candidates) and <b>Section 73</b> (Transfer and Recognition) of Standing Orders have already been amended to remove the Medical Committee's involvement in the ministerial candidating and transfer process.</li> <li>• Standing Order <b>212(5)</b> (Council appointment of Medical Committee) should be deleted.</li> <li>• Standing Orders <b>761</b> (Reinstatement...) <b>790</b> (Application to become Supernumerary) and <b>793</b> (Return to the Active Work) require amendment.</li> <li>• Other consequential amendments to CPD may also be required, in particular <b>Part 5 of Book VII</b> (Ministers Affected by Impairment: a Guide to Good Practice).</li> </ul>
Financial	The cost implications of using an external company to produce occupational health reports for candidates and ministers have already been considered and taken into account in the connexional budgeting process.

## Proposal to disband the Medical Committee

- 1 In the past, medical assessments for Methodist ministers and ministerial candidates have been carried out by the Medical Committee appointed by the Methodist Council under Standing Order 212(5).
- 2 However, the Medical Committee's role has changed over time with changes to legislation such as the Equalities Act 2010.
- 3 In 2021 it was recognised that the Medical Committee's main purpose of conducting medicals for prospective presbyteral and diaconal candidates and ministers transferring from other churches needed to be reviewed in light of such legislation. This review was incorporated into the review of the candidating process as a whole, and legal advice was obtained.
- 4 The 2022 Conference approved the new candidating process, and Standing Orders were amended in 2023, such that the Medical Committee's role in assessing the health of prospective candidates and ministers transferring from other churches has now been taken over by an independent occupational health firm. The involvement of an independent health assessor means that the church's candidating and transfer process is accountable and compliant with current occupational health and equalities legislation.
- 5 Similarly the Medical Committee's role in advising on the wellbeing of presbyters and deacons, ill-health retirement and pensions has now been taken over by an independent occupational health firm. In addition, the Committee's role acting in an advisory capacity to the connexional Wellbeing team has also been replaced by independent occupational health advice.
- 6 Having served the church for many years, the Medical Committee now considers itself no longer fit for purpose and has therefore requested that it be disbanded.
- 7 Now that the new candidating process has been put in place and approved by the Conference with new Standing Orders, and in light of the proposed changes to the connexional Committee structure taking place in 2024, now is the right time to ask the Council to agree to the formal disbanding of its Medical Committee.
- 8 Further amendments to Standing Orders will be required to effect this change, and the Law and Polity Committee is asked to advise on what those amendments should be.
- 9 The Council will wish to thank the Medical Committee for the time, commitment and expertise that it has provided to the Methodist Church over the years.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTIONS

- 66/1. **The Council receives the report.**
- 66/2. **The Council recommends to the Conference that the Medical Committee of the Methodist Council should be disbanded, and asks the Law and Polity Committee to advise on and prepare the Standing Order amendments needed to effect this change.**