Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Connexional Team

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	To approve the acceptance of the nomenclature and related structures originally presented to Council in April 2008.
Draft Resolution	1. The Council agrees that the nomenclature and ways of working adopted by the Team since April 2008 and mentioned in Section 1 of this document should be formally adopted as baseline standards for the future functioning of all groups and committees, and that appropriate recommendations to that effect be made to the Conference. 2. The Council requests that the final stage of the review should consider whether any new categories of groups or committees might be required.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This document aims to update the Council regarding the Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that support the Connexional Team. It also makes recommendations as to how the work may be satisfactorily completed by August 2010.
Main Points	The review initially reported to Council in April 2008. It specified a new nomenclature and new ways of working for groups and committees. Over 100 groups have been through the review process and the review considers that the new framework has been successfully trialled. But the nomenclature was not taken to Conference in 2008 or 2009. The review recommends that it should now be formally adopted.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Methodist Conference 2007 (Resolution 41/4) directed Council to oversee a review of all groups that support the work of the Connexional Team. The Reference Group formed to undertake this review reported to Council in April 2008 (MC/08/49). Based on analysis of 78 groups and committees, it recommended specific changes to an initial 16 groups, and proposed new nomenclature and new ways of working. Between April 2008 and August 2009 the review identified and reviewed nearly 50 more groups. The Council has given the authority to determine future outcomes of the groups to the Secretary for Internal Relationships unless it involves a matter of substantive principle.
Consultations	The Connexional Team and all groups supporting the work of the Team.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	It is likely that future structures for several groups and committees will result in the proposal of Standing Order changes.
Financial	Re-structuring groups to maximise their effectiveness in fulfilling their functions promises to have various positive financial consequences.
Wider Connexional	By increasing efficiency the Review of Committees will cut down on unnecessary travel, thus promoting the ecological strategy embodied in Hope in God's Future
Risk	Failure to complete this work by August 2010 risks hindering the effective work of groups and delaying cost savings.

Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups: update for Feb 2010 Council

1. Background

1.1   The report to the Methodist Council April 2008 on the Review of Committees [MC/08/49], which concluded the first phase of this work, advised that its recommendations be implemented by the end of August 2009. The review has proved a much larger task than originally foreseen. This work has been demanding both for the Connexional Team (Team) and the many volunteers who serve on groups and committees with which it interacts. It has also proved highly productive and valuable in highlighting how essential these groups are, and how much they are valued by the Team.

1.2   The 2007 Conference [Resolution 41/4, Daily Record 7/22/10] directed the Methodist Council "... to oversee a review of all committees, advisory groups and reference groups which relate to the work of the current Team. The Council set up a Reference Group to address the matter. The Reference Group reported to the Council in April 2008 (as noted above). It proposed a new set of definitions for the different types of group:
(a) Decision-making **Committees** appointed by the Conference or the Council
(b) **Reference Groups** appointed by the Conference or the Council
(c) **Scrutiny Groups** appointed by the Council
(d) **Stakeholders Forums** appointed by the Council
(e) **Practitioners Forums** appointed by the Council
(f) **Resource Groups** appointed by the Connexional Team
(g) **Open Networks**

   (A longer explanation of these categories can be found in Appendix 1)

1.3   The Reference Group also implicitly identified a distinction between bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council (and which are normally established in Standing Orders), and bodies which advise the Conference and the Council and/or support the work of members of the Connexional Team (to whom any decision-making authority has been delegated by the Conference or the Council). The former are likely to fall under heads (a), (b) and (c) in 1.2 above; the latter under heads (d) to (g) inclusive.

1.4   The Reference Group reported on a preliminary review of 31 groups which fell in that latter category. This meant that the emphasis in the preliminary stages fell on those bodies which advise the Conference and the Council and/or support the work of members of the Connexional Team. Perhaps for that reason the new terminology or definitions for the various types of group was not placed before the 2008 or 2009 Conference for approval.

1.5   The progress made by the Council was reported to the 2008 Conference as an appendix to the *Team Focus* report [Agenda item 37]. There were no resolutions attached to it. A further report on progress was received by the 2009 Conference

[Agenda item 41 as amended by the Conference – see Daily Record 8/12]. The report indicated that any proposals for amendments to Standing Orders would be brought to the Conference in 2010.

1.6 Work done to date has still had a predominant emphasis on those groups which have previously advised the Conference and the Council and/or supported the work of members of the Connexional Team, or which it is judged should do so in the future. This work has refined the Team's understanding of how such groups and the Team can best cooperate to serve the Connexion. The vesting of authority in designated officials ensures accountability, transparency and effective implementation of priorities. But the Team cannot make its work representative and fitted to local contexts without the support of groups with specialized knowledge. This ways of working, nomenclature for groups (Appendix 2) and other outputs from the first phase of this work aim to ensure that these objectives which were central to Team Focus are embodied in the ongoing work of committees and the Team.

1.7 Between April 2008 and the present time, the Team has prioritised the task of identifying all groups with which it interacts, embedding the ways of working in new and existing groups. During this process, it became clear that the most useful way of viewing the first phase of the review was as a 'trial-run' of the principles embodied in the nomenclature, ways of working etc. first proposed in the April 2008 Council report. In addition the review has been extended beyond the 31 groups noted in that report. The Team has now initiated a review of all but 4 of the 100 groups with which it interacts, but some aspects of the whole review are yet to be formally completed.

2. Findings

2.1 The nomenclature and ways of working have proved extremely useful. Groups and Team members should view them as tools to ensure productive working relationships, rather than as straightjackets. But to enable the Team to proceed with confidence in completing the review and laying a foundation for the future functioning of groups and committees, it would now be helpful for the nomenclature and ways of working recommended to Council in April 2008 to be formally adopted by the Connexion as the methodology for ensuring a productive 'fit' between groups and the Team.

2.2 As well as supporting the initial findings, subsequent work in 2008-2009 has shown that the review process needs to focus on the fundamental principles behind these tools. The purpose of the review is to develop an efficient, effective and just structure of groups and committees. Work following the successful trial of these methodologies on the initial 31 committees has not identified any essential gaps in the original structures (Committees, Reference group, Stakeholder forums etc). But the final stage of review and ongoing assessment should ask whether these principles need to be expanded; and groups must be free to suggest changes, if they believe that a suggested or already adopted structure needs to be adapted.

2.3 The Review of Committees emerged from Team Focus and inherited its drive towards guaranteeing cost effectiveness and good stewardship. The current

expense to the Connexion of groups and committees is estimated at £650,000 per annum. Initial figures suggest that up to £200,000 of this can be attributed to travel expenses. Groups requiring substantial travel to physical meetings risk exclude individuals without the time and mobility to travel across Britain. As well as cost, this has environmental implications, and must be addressed as part of the agenda embodied in the *Hope in God's Future* report.

2.4 In the present budgetary climate, a substantial - e.g. 50% - reduction in the overall expense of groups would help preserve other areas of work. However, at present there is no precise breakdown of the costs of individual groups and committees. The Team is developing the practice of embedding results analysis into ongoing work. The Review of Committees in its narrower sense will be completed this year, but the Team's work on evaluation tools should enable future assessment of the new structure of groups as it develops in the next few years.

3.   Current Picture

3.1 As noted in 1.7 above, the review has now extended beyond the original 31 groups. At the end of the Connexional Year 2008-2009 the Team was aware of 121 groups with which it interacts. Most of these are in the category of bodies which advise the Conference and the Council and/or support the work of members of the Connexional Team, but some are bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council.

3.2 Of these 121 groups, 7 have been disbanded, 14 are Trustee body not directly linked to the Team and the remaining 100 interact regularly with the Team. (These numbers are in flux, but a more detailed breakdown will be provided for the Council Meeting in April 2010).

3.3 All groups that will still exist by the end of this Connexional Year, except for 4 cases which have been delayed due to difficulties in arranging meetings to discuss the change, have been reviewed. Most either have a natural transition to a new scenario, or are coming to an end. Clusters are ensuring that newly formed groups have embedded the ways of working in their structures.

3.4 No groups or committees have reached formal completion of their review since the original work prior to April 2008. The reason for this is that the majority of groups requiring substantive change are also those whose work interacts with parts of the Team undergoing major internal change and development, and which may also require Standing Order (SO) changes.

3.5 It is hoped that it will be possible to bring to the April Council lists of all those groups which it is proposed be identified as bodies which advise the Conference and the Council and/or support the work of members of the Connexional Team, together with recommendations about whether they are to be designated as Stakeholders Forums appointed by the Council, Practitioners Forums appointed by the Council, Resource Groups appointed by the Connexional Team, or Open Networks. Where this involves a change to what is set out in Standing Orders, appropriate amendments to Standing Orders will be proposed.

3.6 With regard to bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council, any proposals for change will require the Council to recommend that the Conference make a decision of

principle in each instance, and then adopt appropriate amendments to Standing Orders to effect them. Any proposed recommendations will therefore be brought the April or subsequent meetings of the Council for submission to the 2010 or subsequent Conferences, as appropriate.

4. Recommendations

1. That the nomenclature and ways of working adopted by the Team since April 2008 and mentioned in Section 1 of this document be formally adopted as baseline standards for the future functioning of all groups and committees.

2. That the final stage of review should consider whether any new categories of groups or committees might be required.

APPENDIX 1:   NOMENCLATURE

(a) **Committees** appointed by the Conference or the Council

Committees are standing groups appointed by the Conference or the Council and delegated to make decisions on its behalf. The decision-making remit means that Committees benefit from face-to-face meetings; however, some contact can be undertaken electronically.

(b) **Reference Groups** appointed by the Conference or the Council

Conference Reference Groups are likely to have one representative from each of the districts and other main constituencies of the Conference membership. They are asked to explore issues in a complex Conference report and make their own report to the Conference to expedite the Conference's work.
Reference Groups are appointed by Council or Conference.

Council Reference Groups usually have five members. Their role is to consider in detail reports to the Council on complex issues from any part of the Connexional Team or a working group that reports to the Council; and make recommendationsto the Council as a whole.

(c) **Scrutiny Groups** appointed by the Council

Scrutiny Groups are appointed by Council to undertake detailed analysis of reports on its behalf on matters relating to formal processes, trusteeship and finance. Scrutiny Groups comprise of 3-4 persons with appropriate experience and include within their membership one person who is independent of both the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee.

(d) **Stakeholders Forums** appointed by the Council

Stakeholders' Forums are appointed by Council and comprise a maximum of 12 persons with experience and expertise in a particular area of the Church's work (for example, Methodists within Higher Education and students). They will include Church practitioners from that area of work. The Stakeholders' Forum facilitates discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from the Stakeholders' Forum and assess its priority within the

Connexional Team's work. Stakeholders' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.

(e) **Practitioners Forums** appointed by the Council

Practitioners' Forums are appointed by Council and comprise of practitioners with similar responsibilities within the Church, (for example, Higher Education Chaplains). The Practitioners' Forum facilitates learning and development, fellowship and discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from Practitioners' Forum and assess its priority within the Connexional Team's work. Practitioners' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.

(f) **Resource Groups** appointed by the Connexional Team

Resource Groups are authorised and appointed by the Connexional Team, committees or forums to undertake a clearly defined time-limited piece of work on its behalf. (For example, provide a resource pack, provide advice on a new initiative, and undertake a piece of consultation with the wider network.) Resource Groups comprise of a maximum of 12 persons with appropriate experience and expertise, and are likely to be recruited from existing forums, committees and networks. Accountability for a Resource Group remains with the authorising body. Connexional Team support for the Resource Group (financial and HR) is to be agreed with the Team or directed by Council or Conference.

(g) **Open Networks**

Open Networks are groups of persons with an interest and varying degrees of experience in a particular area that communicate electronically in an ad hoc manner to share information and experience, hold discussion, explore new ideas and provide mutual support. Members of Networks need not be in direct contact with each other.