



# **SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE**

## **The Subject**



The **Methodist** Church 

## Introduction

The Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe environment in which all may flourish and develop through their engagement with the Church. The Church has a responsibility to make sure that all activities and locations are safe for everyone to access worship and leisure, by implementing safeguarding practice. Risk assessment plays a key role in that process in ensuring that fair, informed and proportionate decisions are made for the safety of all.

This leaflet may be a useful resource in the following circumstances:

- You have been told that you are going to be subject to a Connexional Risk Assessment.

Further details are contained in the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures, which can be found on the Methodist Church website. There are additional information resources available for pastoral supporters, members of congregations and subjects of assessments.

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## Why does a Connexional Risk Assessment take place?

The Methodist Church Connexional Safeguarding Team will have received information about your current or past circumstances that have suggest that there is a safeguarding concern. The Safeguarding Adviser will have considered the circumstances and deemed that a Connexional Risk Assessment is necessary in this case. This information may have come from a variety of sources including a blemished criminal record, statutory agencies and from districts, churches and circuits. It may have arisen due to a referral relating to the Complaints and Discipline process or an appeal arising from automatic prohibition of appointment under Standing Order 010.

The Connexional Safeguarding Risk Assessment process does not make findings of fact or determine guilt or innocence but considers whether on the balance of probabilities, safeguarding risks are present and looks for solutions with which to manage such situations. In most cases, the assessor will aim to complete their work in 4 weeks. However, this will depend on the availability of those engaging in the process and any unexpected issues that may arise.

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## What happens next?

A risk assessor will be identified by the Connexional Safeguarding Team who will have relevant experience and no direct, prior involvement with the circumstances. They will review relevant documentation and speak to you and other parties who may have relevant information. This could include church personnel or statutory services, such as social care, probation and police, where relevant. The risk assessor will compile a report, which will evaluate any safeguarding risks related to your engagement with the Church and propose measures that may address those risks.

This report will be considered by a Safeguarding Panel (by phone or via a meeting) who will provide guidance and directions as to how the circumstances should be managed. The Safeguarding Panel will be made up of three people, drawn from an approved list who either have an expert knowledge of safeguarding matters or have held a senior position in the Methodist Church

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## What support will be available for me?

Anyone subject to a Connexional Risk Assessment may have a pastoral supporter to walk with them through the process and provide support at meetings. You may choose this person yourself or ask your District Safeguarding Officer/minister in pastoral charge to arrange this for you. Not everyone is an appropriate person to undertake this role and therefore you should read the **Risk Assessment Guide for Pastoral Supporters** before making your choice. This leaflet also explains their role in the process.

If you feel that there are any issues that may affect or are affecting your health, wellbeing or ability to take part in the process, please raise them as soon as possible with the District Safeguarding Officer, your pastoral supporter, minister in pastoral charge or line manager (where appropriate) so that further support can be arranged. This may include specialist support with communication, arrangements to support mobility needs so you can attend meetings or provision of materials in specific formats.

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## How will I be involved in the process?

You will be informed by letter of the reason why a risk assessment of this nature is necessary. The letter will provide information about how information about you will be used, shared and stored. You will be asked to sign a form acknowledging receipt of this information and clarifying your preferences for future communication.

You will be offered the opportunity to meet with the assessor during the process to discuss the circumstances and provide your point of view. If a face-to-face Safeguarding Panel meeting is held you will be invited to attend and provided with an additional guide, **What Happens at a Safeguarding Panel?** Your participation in the assessment is voluntary but highly recommended to ensure your view is reflected in the final report. If you do not wish to participate, the risk assessment will continue and you will be provided with copies of the final report and outcome letter.

It is expected that all parties will demonstrate respect and consideration in their communications with others, even where there may be differing perspectives or strongly held views. It is understandable that you and those closest to you may be feeling anxious at this point and at times during the process. Discuss your concerns with those supporting you and raise any queries

or anxieties to the risk assessor, Connexional Safeguarding Team Caseworker or DSO so that further information, advice or support can be given.

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## What happens when I meet with the risk assessor?

The risk assessor will meet with you at a mutually convenient time and location. They may bring someone with them to take notes. This is most likely to be a District Safeguarding Officer or other member of the Connexional Safeguarding Team who will respect the confidentiality of the process. Your pastoral supporter may be present at any meeting with the risk assessor.

The risk assessor will ask you questions about your circumstances, and the issue(s) which have led to the assessment taking place. It is likely that you will be asked some questions about your personal history, your current situation and your wish to be involved in Methodist Church life. The risk assessor's initial questions will be led by the information supplied by the Connexional Safeguarding Team, but your answers may prompt more questions. The assessor will consider how other people in the church could be impacted by your involvement in church activities and the issues that have been raised. They may need to make further contact with you to clarify details, as they progress with their report.

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## What happens next?

When the assessor has drawn up a draft report, they will send you a copy and ask for your comments within 14 days. You may wish to share the risk assessment with a named person, who can also help you prepare any comments you wish to make. We ask you to share the document with only one other person in order to ensure confidentiality.

On receipt of your response, the assessor will correct any factual inaccuracies. They will reflect on other matters raised and may choose whether to amend any differences in perception or judgement. Your original comments will be supplied to any Safeguarding Panel so that they can see any issues you have raised in your own words. They will also be retained with the final copy of the risk assessment.

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## Can I appeal?

In limited circumstances, there is a right of appeal in relation to the Safeguarding Panel findings within 14 days of receipt of the outcome letter. Further details are contained in Standing Order 233 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church. You will be advised in the outcome letter as to whether there is a right to appeal. No action to implement the recommendations and directions of the Panel should be undertaken until the completion of the

period in which you can appeal, unless you have already indicated in writing to the Connexional Safeguarding Team caseworker that you do not wish to take appeal.

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## Putting arrangements in place

The District Safeguarding Officer will be responsible for putting in place the directions and recommendations of the Safeguarding Panel. They will work closely with the local church, circuit and your line manager (where applicable).

Where a Safeguarding Contract and Monitoring and Support Group are required, this will be set up by the District Safeguarding Officer who will be responsible for providing the members of that group with a summary of the risk assessment.

All parties are expected to commit to putting the required arrangements in place as quickly as possible.

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## For further information about the risk assessment process

Please contact the Connexional Safeguarding Team:

[safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk)

020 7467 5189

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