



**SAFEGUARDING  
RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE**  
**Minister, Superintendent,  
District Chair, Line Manager**



## 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:

- Where a person who is engaging with the Methodist Church in your location is the subject of a Connexional Risk Assessment
- Where you are asked to undertake a role such as local liaison or representative of the District Chair as part of the risk assessment process
- Where you are providing oversight to colleagues who are part of a risk assessment process.
- Where you are involved in implementing or responding to the outcome of a Safeguarding Panel
- Where you are asked to arrange pastoral support for a party subject to a connexional risk assessment or a member of their immediate family.

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 a person who is engaging with the Church in some way. 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 could relate to a current or past concern. 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. Preparatory discussions between the District Safeguarding Officer and the Connexional Safeguarding Team will have taken place prior to any decision made to undertake this form of risk assessment.

## What will be expected of me during the Connexional Risk Assessment Process?

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. On some occasions, personal loyalties and feelings about a situation may make this more difficult. It is important that anyone involved in the process considers the impact of their words and actions on other parties with whom they are in contact.

### Oversight

In most cases, ministers and line managers will become aware of a connexional risk assessment process due to their oversight of the party involved or the location in which the person engages with the Church. Those carrying leadership responsibilities can feel isolated when facing the challenges of distressed congregations, uncertainty, working with statutory agencies and sensitive communications within the Church and outside. It is not expected that you manage these issues alone and your needs, as an individual, must be considered alongside those you are trying to support. Support is available from a variety of sources including the District Safeguarding Officer, Connexional Safeguarding Team, Connexional Communications Team, Conference Office and the Connexional Wellbeing Officer. Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) and the Methodist Church Safeguarding Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures are also key sources of additional information, which may help you to respond to local queries.

You may find that you are approached to become the pastoral supporter for someone involved in a Connexional Risk Assessment. Please read the leaflet for pastoral supporters **prior** to agreeing to undertake this role, as not everyone is in an appropriate position to provide support in this way.

### 1. Liaison Minister

The District Safeguarding Officer in consultation with relevant ministers will identify a minister who can act in a local liaison capacity during the process. The District Chair or Circuit Superintendent may choose to undertake this role or delegate this to another colleague. The liaison minister may be asked to undertake the following activities:

- Provide information to the commissioning teleconference about the circumstances from a local perspective
- Assist the District Safeguarding Officer in making relevant arrangements in support of the risk assessor.
- Identify suitable people to provide pastoral support for a party involved in the risk assessment on request.
- Make contact with those likely to be spoken to during the risk assessment to request their involvement and get their permission to share contact details with the risk assessor and Connexional Safeguarding Team. This activity may be shared with the District Safeguarding Officer, depending on their respective knowledge of the person and contact information already held.

- Make a pre-assessment visit to the subject of the risk assessment either on behalf of or with the District Safeguarding Officer to provide information, complete required forms and respond to any questions.

Further information about the details of these activities are contained in the Methodist Church Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures.

## **2. District Chair's Representative at a Safeguarding Panel**

The District Chair is invited to contribute to any Safeguarding Panel to provide a local perspective. This may be in person, by telephone or in writing, depending on the type of panel taking place and the preference of the Chair. Alternatively, they may also choose to appoint a representative to do this role, which is most likely to be the District Safeguarding Officer but could be another suitable person.

Please let the Connexional Safeguarding Team know if you need any additional facilities or support to take part.

(see also *What happens at a Safeguarding Panel?*)

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## **What do I need to know about the risk assessment process?**

- The subject will be advised why a Connexional Risk Assessment is required and the reasons for this. This may be done by personal visit, in addition to written notification.
- A risk assessor will be identified by the Connexional Safeguarding Team who will have relevant experience and no direct, prior involvement with the circumstances. The assessor will offer the subject an opportunity to meet with them, to discuss the circumstances.
- Additional support arrangements may be put in place to ensure that the subject is able to engage fully in the process. This may include specialist advocacy.
- The subject's participation in the process at any stage is voluntary but highly recommended. If they choose not to participate the process will continue and they will be provided with details of the outcome and a copy of the risk assessment.
- A telephone conference will be arranged between the liaison minister, DSO, risk assessor and caseworker prior to formal commissioning of the assessment. This will identify actions that need to be done prior to the risk assessor meeting with the subject and to consider local circumstances that may affect the assessment.
- The District Safeguarding Officer, risk assessor or Connexional Safeguarding Team should be informed of any concern about the subject's health or welfare that may become evident during the process at the earliest opportunity.

## What happens next?

- A Safeguarding Panel will be arranged to consider the report and the subject's comments.
- The panel will then discuss the report by phone or in person (depending on circumstances).
- At the conclusion of the Safeguarding Panel, the outcome will be shared with the subject of the assessment, District Chair, District Safeguarding Officer, Circuit Superintendent and line manager (where applicable).
- A copy of the full risk assessment report will be supplied to the District Safeguarding Officer and a summary document will be sent to the District Chair, Circuit Superintendent and line manager (where applicable).
- There is a right of appeal in limited circumstances (see Standing Order 233) against the Safeguarding Panel findings. This will be covered in the outcome letter if applicable.
- No action to implement the recommendations and directions of the Panel should be undertaken until the completion of the period in which the subject can appeal.
- Implementation of the recommendations and directions of the Panel will be undertaken via consultation with relevant parties. The District Safeguarding Officer will have responsibility for overseeing the implementation of recommendations.
- They will provide a copy of the relevant summary of the risk assessment report to any Monitoring and Support Group as part of preparations for setting up a group and provide the full report to a line manager within the Church (where applicable).

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## For further information about the risk assessment process

Please contact your local District Safeguarding Officer

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The Connexional Safeguarding Team:

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

020 7467 5189

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