

28. Implementation of Review of Part 11

Contact name and details	The Revd Michaela Youngson, Assistant Secretary of the Conference. ASC@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	28/1. The Conference received the Report. 28/2. The Conference directed the Law and Polity Committee to undertake further work on Recommendation Seven from the Review of Part 11 adopted by the 2024 Conference.

Summary of impact

Financial	None beyond already budgeted expenditure
Potential impact on local churches, circuits and districts	Greater confidence in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Part 11 processes around complaints and discipline.
Risk including safeguarding implications	Reduction in risk because of increased information sharing between Complaints and Discipline, Safeguarding and DARS

Background to the work

Background references or documents	32. Part 11 review Report to the Conference of 2024 (https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/32. Part 11 review.pdf)
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Introduction

1. The Conference of 2024 received the report '[Review of Part 11 of Standing Orders](#)' and adopted the eighteen recommendations therein. Those recommendations are listed within this report, including details of how they have been or are in the process of being implemented. The supporting Resolutions from the Conference of 2024 are included in italic type.
2. Following the Conference a Part 11 Implementation Group was convened by the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and consisted of members of the Connexional Team with responsibilities for complaints and discipline, safeguarding, IT development, EDI matters, legal and constitutional practice, the Learning Network and the Ministries Team. Also part of the group was Miss Elizabeth Ovey representing the Law and Polity Committee and Mr David Orford, independent consultant. This group has met on at least a monthly basis to implement the resolutions of the Conference.
3. It is expected that members of the Implementation Group will continue to meet as necessary into the next Connexional year to ensure the establishment of systems, the development of guidance and training for those involved in the Part 11 processes and the embedding of the new ways of working within the life of the Church.

Update on Recommendations

4. **Recommendation One** - The current definition of a "complaint" in Standing Order 1101(i) should be improved. Part 11 should be amended to clarify what Part 11 may not be used for, or to indicate alternative procedures for certain complaints

Resolution 32/2: The Conference adopts Recommendation 1 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft wording for the definition of a complaint to ensure that it covers the behaviour of a respondent and is limited as in Appendix C.

The Law and Polity Committee has drafted the wording for the definition of a complaint and this is included in its separate report to the Conference on the draft Standing Orders required.

5. **Recommendation Two** - Guidance should be drafted to assist the identification of alternative resolution approaches where reconciliation may not be appropriate. The guidance to include suggested timescales, and pathways for support that may be available to any member with specific needs or vulnerabilities.

Resolution 32/3: The Conference adopts Recommendation 2 and directs the Connexional Team in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to produce guidance.

This guidance is being drafted and will be published as soon as it is available.

6. **Recommendation Three** – The title and role of “Local Complaints Officer” should be changed to “Local Resolution Officer” with other appropriate amendments to Standing Orders and guidance where required

Resolution 32/4: The Conference adopts Recommendation 3 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

Following consultation with Chairs of District and others involved in Complaints and Discipline processes, what was envisaged to be the title and role of Local Resolution Officers will become ‘District Resolution Officers’ (DROs). Districts will be able to appoint more than one DRO according to need. This moves away from the need for such an officer in each Circuit and from the default of superintendents taking on the role when others are not willing or able. A smaller group of Resolution Officers allows for the development of expertise in case handling and reduces the number of people who will require training for a role which in many cases may never be needed. This approach also allows for a reduced number of people to require access to the reporting section of the proposed Connexional Case Management System. At present a default provision is included in the proposed Standing Orders whereby if no DRO is available a superintendent will take on the role in their own Circuit. Need for this provision will be kept under review.

A Person Specification and a Role Description for District Resolution Officers have been developed and, subject to the Conference agreeing to the Standing Order changes presented by the Law and Polity Committee, these will be sent to Districts following the Conference to allow recruitment to those voluntary roles.

7. **Recommendation Four** - All complaints should be categorised and recorded at connexional level to assist with oversight, scrutiny, and improvement. This has already commenced following a request from the Assistant Secretary to Districts in December 2024.

The new system to be supported by changes to Standing Orders will support this way of working, whilst retaining the focus on local resolution wherever possible.

8. **Recommendation Five** - The Church should adopt a records management system for storing all complaints data in line with the Church’s overall records management strategy.

The current review of records management across the Connexional Team includes the implementation of appropriate retention schedules, data storage and access of and to complaints records.

9. **Recommendation Six** - The Church should adopt an appropriate case management system (CMS) for recording complaints, including a formal process for review, oversight and scrutiny.

Since the appointment of the new Connexional Complaints Support Manager, case details have been migrated to a safe interim storage and management system, pending the development of a new system. The specification for the new CMS has been developed and it is hoped that this will be set up and tested in time for implementation in the new connexional year. This work has taken longer than was originally hoped for due to a lack of IT capacity and the complex nature of system development.

Ongoing quality assurance is provided by an independent, external reviewer, who is also able to offer in-depth scrutiny of particular cases where learning may inform future practice.

Fortnightly meetings of the Complaints and Safeguarding Strategy (CASS) group, made up of

Connexional Team members representing the Secretary of the Conference, Safeguarding, Complaints, Legal and Constitutional Practice and Communications, contribute to the review, oversight and scrutiny of this work.

10. **Recommendation Seven** - The Church should adopt a holistic anonymous reporting system to capture concerns from all individuals who wish to raise them.

The opportunity for concerns to be raised in a way that protects individuals who feel vulnerable for whatever reason is important and requires great care, and further work is needed to consider how a system of anonymous reporting can relate to the Church's Complaints and Discipline processes which are built on the basis of natural justice, where all parties are aware of the nature of a complaint and able to answer for their role in that. Some provisions for anonymous reporting are already included in the proposed Standing Orders, but the Law and Polity Committee proposes to undertake further work to address the principles of this Recommendation in consultation with the connexional Safeguarding team and the Connexional Complaints Support Manager, and to report back to the Conference of 2026.

Resolution 32/5: The Conference adopts Recommendations 4, 5, 6, and 7, and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.

11. **Recommendation Eight** - The Church should adopt a simplified three tier model for addressing complaints which better aligns with safeguarding practices.

Resolution 32/6: The Conference adopts Recommendation 8 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

The Standing Order revisions in the separate Law and Polity Committee report adopt this model of working.

12. **Recommendation Nine** - The Church should ensure that these recommendations are adequately resourced to ensure that capability matches anticipated future demand.

The increase of resources devoted to this work includes the appointment of a full time Connexional Complaints Support Manager, ongoing investment in IT support, the work of the Part 11 Implementation Group and use of an independent consultant for quality assurance and occasional case review. The Learning Network is also resourcing the work, through the development of a matrix of training and development resources to support those involved in processes at any point in the Complaints and Discipline system. These resources include existing training modules as well as bespoke elements to help those with particular roles understand their responsibilities and feel confident in carrying them out.

13. **Recommendation Ten** - The Church should introduce a post of "Connexional Complaints Support Manager" to replace the current post of Connexional Complaints Worker. Standing Orders should be amended to give the post appropriate decision-making powers related to the management of complaints.

Resolution 32/7: The Conference adopts Recommendations 9 and 10 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.

Ms Rachel Settatee was appointed to the new role of Connexional Complaints Support Manager in October 2024. The Standing Order revisions contained in the separate report of the Law and Polity Committee provide the Connexional Complaints Support Manager with appropriate decision-making powers related to the management of complaints, as envisaged in the 2024 report.

14. **Recommendation Eleven** - The Church should ensure that there is an independent review capability to ensure confidence in the system for all parties.

Resolution 32/8: The Conference adopts Recommendation 11 and directs the Connexional Council in conjunction with the Law and Polity Committee to oversee implementation.

Mr David Orford, independent consultant to the original Part 11 Review, has been contracted to offer quality assurance in regard to cases managed by the new system and to offer independent in-depth scrutiny of particular cases. This arrangement continues until the end of April 2026, prior to this a sub-

group of the Implementation Group will review the way of working and consider if this approach meets the aspiration of confidence in the system for all parties. There has been no need to involve the Law and Polity Committee in the implementation of this Recommendation.

15. **Recommendation Twelve** - Standing Orders should be amended to align the rights of appeal for complaints to ensure proportionality, including altering the rights of appeal for certain complaints at appropriate levels.

The Standing Order changes to be brought by the Law and Polity Committee in their separate report make provision for amendments to rights of appeal.

16. **Recommendation Thirteen** - The act of "Suspension" should be amended to describe more adequately the temporary duties to be carried out by members who are respondents to a complaint. Suspension should only be used in circumstances where the respondent is required to temporarily cease and desist from any and all activities associated with the Church and may not in any capacity exercise their role.

Resolution 32/9: The Conference adopts Recommendation 12 and 13 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

The word "suspension" should only apply in cases where the respondent is required to temporarily cease and desist from any and all activities associated with the Church. The Report envisaged that in all other cases restrictions may be placed on some activities undertaken by the respondent but this should not be described as suspension.

Existing Standing Orders have been amended to reflect this change in terminology. Members of the Chairs and Warden of the Order Meeting and others involved in Complaints and Discipline and Safeguarding will have met in May 2025 to consider what guidance needs to be developed to support those making decisions about restricted activities and suspensions. It is anticipated that this guidance will be drawn up early in the connexional year 2025/26.

17. **Recommendation Fourteen** – The Church should formalise the risk and information sharing conversations that take place between complaints and safeguarding staff. It is recommended that this is undertaken through regular strategy meetings.

Resolution 32/10: The Conference adopts Recommendation 14 and directs the Connexional Council to oversee implementation.

Prior to the Conference of 2024 some case conferencing did take place between complaints and safeguarding staff. Since the Conference, the Secretariat has instigated fortnightly meetings of what is now called the Complaints and Safeguarding Strategy group (CASS). In addition to this, protocols are being developed to ensure appropriate information sharing at the point when a concern or complaint is raised and this also links with reports which come through the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service (DARS).

18. **Recommendation Fifteen** – Standing Orders should be amended to remove the requirement for the Safeguarding Committee to act as a Local Complaint Officer.

Recommendation Sixteen – The Conference should recognise that through shared decision making processes there may be occasions where complaints and safeguarding processes take place in parallel and direct that Standing Orders enable this to happen

Resolution 32/11: The Conference adopts Recommendation 15 and 16 and directs the Law and Polity Committee to draft the necessary Standing Orders.

Recommendations Fifteen and Sixteen have both been addressed in the proposed Standing Order amendments contained in the separate report of the Law and Polity Committee.

19. **Recommendation Seventeen** – The Church should maximise the use of its current Learning Network to assist with developing the best skills in all members who may be required to undertake roles within the Complaints and Discipline process.

As noted at paragraph 12 above, the Learning Network is developing a matrix of training and guidance resources to support those who undertake roles within the Complaints and Discipline processes.

20. **Recommendation Eighteen** – The Church increase the involvement of its Communications function within the Complaints and Discipline processes in order to provide advice, guidance and assistance with internal and external communications.

The Director of Communications attends the CASS meetings and is in regular contact with the CCSM.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/1. The Conference received the Report.

28/2. The Conference directed the Law and Polity Committee to undertake further work on Recommendation Seven from the Review of Part 11 adopted by the 2024 Conference.