

Retention schedules for Methodist Churches, Circuits, Districts and Connexionally Owned Properties

1. Introduction

a. What this document covers

This document is a revision to the existing 'Retention schedule for Methodist Records' and is prompted by the Data Protection Act 2018 which incorporates the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) 2018. This revised and updated version is intended to provide some brief practical notes and guidance to be used by ministers, church officers, and volunteer archivists who are involved in managing records on behalf of Local Churches, Circuits and Districts. The Data Protection Officer and the Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives can provide advice and guidance on the care of church records and archive material ranging from old to modern; contact details are given in the final section of this guide. Standing Order 015 in CPD provides a very useful introduction to Methodist Archives.

b. The importance of caring for our Church records

Local Churches, Circuits and Districts have a duty of care for their records; not only are they a valuable historic, financial, missional and social resource, but often contain the personal data of individuals who also expect the Church to protect their data efficiently.

Some of the reasons why the Methodist Church should care for our records include:

- Without proper organisation the sheer volume of paper and electronic information can become overwhelming. Well managed and organised records ensure that the right information is available to the right people at the right time.
- It forms part of the way the Church fulfils its responsibilities under data protection legislation. Many areas of Church activity are subject to external regulation. This includes safeguarding, finance, human resource management, Health and Safety to name but a few which makes it essential to maintain proper records.
- Good record keeping helps demonstrate that Local Churches, Circuits and Districts and the Methodist Church collectively cares about protecting individuals and their personal data as well as compliance with current data protection legislation.
- It ensures that records that will have archival or historical value in future, and which help tell the story of the Church locally, regionally and nationally, are identified and preserved.
- Our records tell the story of the people called Methodists – who we were, who we are and who we might become; they are a very important part of our Methodist heritage.

2. Records retention: how long do we need to keep records for

Records should be kept for as long as they are required for operational, legal, historical etc purposes. Records which are no longer required should be destroyed. Additionally,

under data protection legislation personal data¹ must only be retained for as long as is necessary to prevent a build-up of obsolete records taking up valuable storage space.

The schedules set out the necessary retention periods for the Church. The retention periods take into the consideration the requirements of data protection and other legislation. The retention schedule contained in this document indicates how long the different types of record at Local Church, Circuit and District level should be kept to meet business, statutory, fiscal and heritage requirements and when they can be disposed of.

Guidance is also given on which Church records should be deposited in local authority record offices for local and district archiving purposes on behalf of the Methodist Church.

Please Note:

- a) Further and more detailed information and guidance on best practice in managing Methodist records (print and electronic) to accompany this document will be issued in due course.
- b) For clarification, where 'Archive' is the final action, this indicates that the records should be deposited in the local authority record office. 'Destroy' means shredding securely paper records or permanent deletion in the case of personal data held on computers, which includes all backup copies.
- c) Start of a retention period – for correspondence files and where records are maintained in some form of a ledger or listing, the retention period should start from the date of the last entry.
- d) 'Weeding' is the technical term used to decide which documents should be archived and kept and those which are duplicates or are no longer relevant and do not need to be kept for historical, statutory, operational, and/or informational use can be destroyed.
- e) Title Deeds to Methodist Church Property. The current policy relating to the retention of Title Deeds is given in SO 903. Deeds currently required for Church purposes should be retained securely in the relevant local church or Circuit safe.
- f) Current safeguarding guidance is given in each of the sections dealing with Church, Circuit and District Archives. Where safeguarding records are concerned, it is the responsibility of the person archiving material with an external body to ensure that the retention period has been confirmed with that body.
- g) Please always refer to your District Archivist for advice. Further advice is available from the Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives and the Data Protection Officer.

¹ personal data' means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person

Church Objects and memorabilia

Objects are not archives but it is important that a full inventory of all Church objects is maintained as good practice and as a historical record. All Local Churches will have collections of objects and memorabilia which have been lovingly collected over many years and include church silver, memorials, banners, musical instruments and often unique furniture. These items are not normally accepted for deposit by local authority record offices. When a Local Church or a Methodist institution has been identified for closure the future of church objects and memorabilia should be discussed initially with the District Archivist. Further information is available from the Methodist Heritage website: <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/artefacts.htm>

War Memorials in Listed Church Buildings. Please note that War Memorials should not be removed from churches which are listed. If in doubt, please contact the Conservation Officer for advice (conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk)

Oversight (Church Membership)

With reference to Church membership records and the different types of membership records maintained including Members, Adherents, Pastoral Lists and Community Roll; further guidance will be forthcoming. Managing Trustees should always check with their Superintendent Minister if in doubt.

Section 1. Individual church records

1.1 Church meetings		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Church Council meeting minutes	Current Connexional year then refer to District Archivist (DA) or Recipient Archivist (RA) as appropriate. If minutes are required for reference purposes then these can be kept locally for a maximum of 5 years before archiving as above.	Archive pursuant to Standing Order 015 anything deemed worthy of permanent preservation.

Other committee meetings reporting to Church Council minutes	Current Connexional year then refer to District Archivist (DA) or Recipient Archivist (RA) as appropriate. If minutes are required for reference purposes then these can be kept locally for a maximum of 5 years before archiving as above.	Archive pursuant to Standing Order 015 anything deemed worthy of permanent preservation.
Meetings of youth organisations minutes	Current Connexional year then refer to District Archivist (DA) or Recipient Archivist (RA) as appropriate. If minutes are required for reference purposes then these can be kept locally for a maximum of 5 years before archiving as above.	Archive pursuant to Standing Order 015 anything deemed worthy of permanent preservation.

1.2 Employment		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Employee tax and insurance records	Current tax year +6 Statutory responsibility / retain for the duration of the employment contract	Destroy
Insurance records: employer liability	Current tax year + 40	Destroy
Pension contribution records	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Contracts of Employment	Current tax year +6	Destroy
Annual tax return	Current tax year +6	Destroy
Expenses claims	Current Tax year +6	Destroy
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion records	Refer any data collected to Connexional Team	Destroy after sending over data

1.3 Finance		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Annual Accounts	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Cash books	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Cheque Book / Paying in slips	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Financial statements	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Accounts of reporting organisations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not found in church accounts
Accounts of youth organisations	Current connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not found in church accounts
Rent ledgers	Current connexional year +6	Destroy
Standard Form of Annual Accounts	Current year +6	Destroy
Gift Aid Declarations	6 years after the end of the year or accounting period that includes the last donation to which they relate.	Destroy
Trust Deeds	Permanent retention	Keep securely in Church safe

1.4 Membership		
Type of record	How long to keep for	What to do with it
Church membership lists or directories	Review annually to ensure that they are current pursuant to CPD SO 015 and SO 054 and s10 of the Deed of Union	Archive at least one version of old directories for historical statistical purposes and destroy the remaining noncurrent lists

Church databases, mailing and contact lists ²	Retain for as long as consent has been given and review annually to ensure that they are current	Destroy non-current lists
List of adherents including databases, mailing and contact lists	Current year only CPD SO 015 and SO 054	Destroy non-current lists
Pastoral Lists	Current year only	Destroy non-current lists
General pastoral records, to include minutes of dates, venue and content of discussions	If no safeguarding aspect to the content – retain for 1 year from the last or anticipated late date of contact. If there is safeguarding content then pass to DA to review and pass to safeguarding for further guidance on retention as they may need to retain on file for longer.	Destroy after 1 year if no safeguarding aspect. Pass to safeguarding for further guidance on destruction if there is a safeguarding aspect.
Baptism registers	Permanent retention whilst register or church is in use CPD SO 015	Archive to Local Record Offices. 75 years closure period
Marriage registers	Permanent retention. New arrangements for marriage registration in force from May 2021. One copy of Marriage Register to be retained by Church	Archive

Church Directory	Review annually.	Superseded copy to Archive.
Sunday School rolls and registers	Permanent retention	Archive to Local Record Offices. 75 years closure period
Preaching plans	Permanent retention for historical purposes	Archive

² Where consent is required, evidence should be retained as long as the person is a member (or withdrew consent) then deleted.

1.5 Property		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Title Deeds including Title Registration, Deeds of Covenants, Deeds of Release, Memorandum of Overage, Deeds of Easements etc.	Permanent retention in Circuit Safe when property is owned by the Church, and for 12 years after the property is sold	Retain until a church building is sold, and for 12 years thereafter
Burial grounds Title documents	Permanent retention	Keep securely in the Circuit Safe
Insurance policies	Retain for 40 years, Commercial practice	Destroy
Claims correspondence	3 years after last action	Destroy
Property agreements and leases	6 years after end of agreement. Commercial practice	Archive
Licences for use	3 years after end of agreement. Commercial practice	Destroy
Records of lettings and use by external bodies	3 years. Commercial practice	Destroy
Methodist property logs	Retain whilst log or church is in use.	Archive any logs containing copies of listed building and conservation area works. Destroy non listed or conservation logs.
Quinquennial inspection reports	Hold in property log,	Destroy if property no longer owned by church
Records of building schemes	Last action + 5 years	Archive
Burial Registers / Records of graveyards including plans of graves	Permanent retention	Keep securely in Circuit Safe

1.6 Health and Safety		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Accident reporting sheets or book – for adults	Date of incident plus 3 years. SI 1995/3163	Destroy

Accident reporting sheets or book – for reporting COSHH or asbestos accidents	40 years from date of report	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – for children	Date when the child attains the age of 21 plus 3 years SI 1995/3163	Destroy
Records documenting external Inspections	Date of last inspection + 3 years. Good practice	Destroy

1.7 Safeguarding

As part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, there is currently a legal requirement under Section 25 of the Inquiries Act for churches and other relevant organisations in England and Wales to retain documents relating to child protection and allegations of child abuse made against individuals or the organisation. This also includes child protection policy documents. **The recommendations are to retain safeguarding documents for at least 75 years.**

Basic record description	Retention Policy	Final Action
Clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate	Retain for 6 months from the recruitment decision	Destroy
Risk Assessment Recommendations and a management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished DBS disclosure	Retain for 75 years after appointment / employment ceases / confirmation of blemished DBS details	Destroy
Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection concerns either within the church, church related activity, or within a family by an individual where the church was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans that is any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements Please see Standing Order 010	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy

Records of any children’s activities, Sunday School/Junior Church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Personnel records of individuals with contact with children and vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigations regardless of the findings	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Safeguarding meeting minutes	Ensure minutes relating to individual files are kept within that file. Other general minutes not required for reference or historical purposes can be destroyed after 1 year. General meeting minutes should be referred to Regional Officer for Safeguarding (ROS)	ROS to decide whether to archive or destroy depending on content
Records of complaints made through the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service	Retain for 6 years after the conclusion of the complaint	Destroy

1.8 Publications		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Church guides / significant anniversary publications	Replace with new editions	One copy sent to the British Library. If deemed to be of Connexional value or significance, archive with the Connexional archive at The John Rylands Research Institute and Library

Church magazines	Date of issue + 2 years	Archive
Miscellaneous and/or ephemeral literature (scrap books, photographs, newspaper cuttings)	Last action +2 years	Archive

1.9 Legal Documents

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements	Retain for the duration of the Local Ecumenical Partnership	Archive
Trustee Declarations	Retain while person is in office	Archive
Data Protection records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Subject Access Requests • Right to Rectification • Right to Erasure (to be forgotten) • Right to Restrict Processing 	7 years after the last contact with the individual	Destroy or delete
Data Protection Consent Record	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete

Data Consent Forms and Data Collection Forms	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Processor Record	End of the Connexional Year after it has been updated	Destroy or delete
Church Copyright Licenses	Current Connexional year + 6	Destroy

1.10 Minister, Probationer and Candidate Records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Successful Candidate – no complaints made	For 10 years	Destroy
Minister Records – no complaints made	Until death of Minister	Destroy
Non recommended candidates record (name and examiner retained only)	For 10 years after the Conference at which they are not recommended	Destroy
Probationer records	Until death of Probationer	Destroy
Supervision records	To be held, retained and or destroyed as per the Policy and Guidance note on handling Supervisory files	To be held, retained and or destroyed as per the Policy and Guidance note on handling Supervisory files

Please note – it is unlikely that Section 1.10 will apply to individual churches. Any notes made by individuals are a record and covered by Section 1.10

1.11 Miscellaneous / General records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General Correspondence	Conclusion of matter + 1 year	Destroy
Records of anniversaries and commemorations	Date of event plus 10 years	Archive
Ministers' papers relating to major church developments, audits etc.	Last action plus 5 years	Archive
Visitors' books	Last entry plus 5 years GDPR Privacy Notice required	Destroy
Photographs and videos of events	5 years after the event – selected items retained for historic purposes and consent obtained	Archive
CCTV images	A maximum of 90 days or such shorter period as is set out in the local CCTV policy	Destroy

Certificates for Public Worship and Registration for Marriages	Permanent retention	Keep secure in Circuit Safe. If church is closed, Certificates to Local Record Office
Public Liability Certificates	Retain for 10 years after the policy expires.	Keep secure in Circuit Safe

Please note. This is not an exhaustive list of miscellaneous or general records which a Local Church, minister or office holder may use but seeks to cover all main areas of activity. As general guidance, records not covered by this schedule should be retained until the conclusion of the matter/end date plus one year. If in doubt, please contact your District Archivist.

Section 2. Circuit Records

2.1 Circuit meetings		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Circuit meeting minutes	Current Connexional year then refer to District Archivist (DA) or Recipient Archivist (RA) as appropriate. If minutes are required for reference purposes then these can be kept locally for a maximum of 5 years before archiving as above.	Archive pursuant to Standing Order 015 anything deemed worthy of permanent preservation
Other committee meetings reporting to Circuit meetings minutes	Current Connexional year then refer to District Archivist (DA) or Recipient Archivist (RA) as appropriate. If minutes are required for reference purposes then these can be kept locally for a maximum of 5 years before archiving as above.	Archive pursuant to Standing Order 015 anything deemed worthy of permanent preservation

Records relating to ecumenical partners	Current Connexional year +2	Archive
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2.2 Employment		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Employee tax and insurance records	Current tax year +6 Statutory responsibility	Destroy
Insurance records: employer liability	Current tax year plus 40. Statutory responsibility	Destroy
Pension contribution records	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Contracts of employment	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Annual tax return	Current tax year +6 Statutory	Destroy
Expenses claims	Current tax year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training records	No collection as yet but if it is collected (as envisaged) then this is a Connexional project and all data to be sent to the CT and then destroyed	Destroy after sending over data

2.3 Finance		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Annual accounts	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Cash books	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy

Cheque Book / Paying in slips	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Financial Statements	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not Inc. in Circuit accounts
Accounts of reporting organisations	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive if not Inc. in Circuit accounts
Accounts of youth organisations	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Standard Form of Accounts	Current year 6	Destroy
Missionary accounts	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive (Weed)
Trust Deeds	Permanent retention	Keep securely in Circuit safe

2.4 Membership

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Circuit Directories	Review annually to ensure that they are current pursuant to CPD SO 015 and SO 054 and s10 of the Deed of Union	Archive at least one version of old directories for historical statistical purposes and destroy the remaining noncurrent lists
Circuit databases, mailing and contact lists ³	Retain for as long as consent has been given and review annually to ensure that they are current	Destroy non-current lists
Circuit register of baptisms	Retain while register is in use CPD SO 015	Archive
Preaching plans	Permanent retention for historical purposes	Archive

³ Where consent is required, evidence should be retained as long as the person is a member (or withdrew consent) then deleted.

2.5 Property		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Title Deeds including Title Registration, Deeds of Covenants, Deeds of Release, Memorandum of Overage, Deeds of Easements etc.	Permanent retention in Circuit Safe when property is owned by the Church, and for 12 years after the property is sold	Retain until a church building is sold, and for 12 years thereafter
Burial grounds Title documents	Permanent retention	Keep securely in Circuit safe
Insurance policies	Retain for 40 years Commercial practice	Destroy
Claims correspondence	3 years after last action Commercial practice	Destroy
Property agreements e.g. leases	6 years after end of agreement Commercial practice	Archive
Licences for use	3 years after end of agreement Commercial practice	Destroy
Records of letting and use by external bodies	3 year. Commercial practice	Destroy
Methodist property logs	Retain whilst log or church is in use.	Archive any logs containing copies of listed building and conservation area works. Destroy non listed or conservation logs.
Quinquennial inspection reports	Hold in property log.	Destroy if property no longer owned by Church
Records of building schemes	Last action + 5 years	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Chapel registration certificates	Retain permanently	Keep securely
Records of church closure and sale of premises	Current Connexional year +6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive after weeding

Records relating to manse inspections	Hold in property log CPD SO 954 and 965	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Burial Registers / Records of graveyards including plans of graves	Permanent Retention	Keep securely in Circuit Safe

2.6 Health and Safety

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Accident reporting sheets or book – for adults	Date of incident plus 3 years. SI 1995/3163	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – for reporting COSHH or asbestos accidents	40 years from date of report	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – for children	Date when the child attains the age of 21 plus 3 years SI 1995/3163	Destroy
Records documenting external inspections	Date of last inspection + 3 years	Destroy

2.7 Safeguarding

As part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, there is currently a legal requirement under Section 25 of the Inquiries Act for churches and other relevant organisations in England and Wales to retain documents relating to child protection and allegations of child abuse made against individuals or the organisation. This also includes child protection policy documents. **The recommendations are to retain safeguarding documents for at least 75 years.**

Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate	Retain for 6 months from the recruitment decision	Destroy

<p>Risk Assessment recommendations and a management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished DBS disclosure</p>	<p>Retain for 75 years after appointment / employment ceases</p>	<p>Destroy</p>
<p>Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection concerns either within the church, church related activity, or within a family by an individual where the church was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans that is any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements Please see Standing Order 010</p>	<p>Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter</p>	<p>Destroy</p>
<p>Records of any children’s activities, Sunday School/Junior Church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above</p>	<p>Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter</p>	<p>Destroy</p>
<p>Personnel records of individuals with contact with children and vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigations regardless of the findings</p>	<p>Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter</p>	<p>Destroy</p>
<p>Safeguarding meeting minutes</p>	<p>Ensure minutes relating to individual files are kept within that file. Other general minutes not required for reference or historical purposes can be destroyed after 1 year. General meeting minutes should be referred to Regional Officer for Safeguarding (ROS)</p>	<p>ROS to decide whether to archive or destroy depending on content</p>

Records of complaints made through the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service	Retain for 6 years after the conclusion of the complaint	Destroy
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2.8 Publications		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it

2.9 Legal Documents		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Trustee Declarations	Retain while person is in office	Archive
Data Protection records in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Subject Access Requests • Right to Rectification • Right to Erasure (to be forgotten) • Right to Restrict Processing 	7 years after the last contact with the individual	Destroy or delete
Data Protection Consent Record	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Consent Forms and Data Collection Forms	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Processor Record	End of the Connexional Year after it has been updated	Destroy or delete
Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements	Keep for the duration of the Local Ecumenical Partnership	Archive

2.10 Minister, Probationer and Candidate Records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Successful Candidate records – no complaints made	For 10 years	Destroy

Minister records – no complaints made	Until death of minister	Destroy
Non recommended candidates records (name and examiner retained only)	For 10 years after the Conference at which they are not recommended	Destroy
Probationer records	Until death of probationer (now minister) Destroy or delete	Destroy
Supervision records	To be held, retained and or destroyed as per the Policy and Guidance note on handling Supervisory files	To be held, retained and or destroyed as per the Policy and Guidance note on handling Supervisory files

2.11 Miscellaneous / General Records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General correspondence	Conclusion of matter +1 year	Destroy / delete file
Records of anniversaries and commemorations	Date of event plus 10years	Archive after weeding
Circuit newsletters, notices, publications and Circuit Plans	Date of issue + 2 years	Archive after weeding
Copies of replies to District and Connexional questionnaires and circulars	Last action plus 5 years	Destroy / delete file
Visitors' books	Last entry plus 5 years GDPR Privacy Notice required	Destroy
Photographs and videos of events	5 years after the event – selected items retained for historic purposes and consent obtained	Archive
CCTV images	A maximum of 90 days or such shorter periods as is set out in the local CCTV policy	Destroy / delete
Public Liability Certificates	Retain for 10 years after the policy expires.	Keep secure in Circuit Safe

Circuit Plans. Please Note: Local Authority Record Offices will generally not accept Circuit Plans.

Section 3. District Records

3.1 District Meetings		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Synod/District Committee minutes	Current Connexional year +3 Good practice then review pursuant to SO 415 (until no longer required for current reference)	Archive pursuant to Standing Order 015 anything deemed worthy of permanent preservation.

3.2 Employment		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Employee tax and insurance records	Current tax year + 6 Statutory requirement	Destroy
Insurance records: employer liability	Current tax year + 4 Statutory requirement	Destroy
Pension contribution records	Current tax year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Contracts of employment	Current tax year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Annual tax return	Current tax year + 6 Statutory	Destroy
Expenses claims	Current tax year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training records	Refer any data collected to Connexional Team	Destroy once data has been sent over

3.3 Finance		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Annual accounts	Current Connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive
Cash books	Current Connexional year + 6 Good practice	Destroy
Cheque book / paying in slips	Current Connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Financial statements	Current Connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Destroy
Accounts of reporting organisations	Current Connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive (if not already included in District accounts)
Accounts of youth organisations	Current Connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive (if not already included in District accounts)
Trust Deeds	Permanent Retention	Keep securely in Circuit Safe.
3.4 Membership		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
District/Synod Directories	Review annually to ensure that they are current pursuant to CPD SO 015 and SO 054 and s10 of the Deed of Union	Archive at least one version of old directories for historical statistical purposes and destroy the remaining noncurrent lists
District and Synod databases, mailing and contact lists ⁴	Retain for as long as consent has been given and review annually to ensure that they are current	Destroy non-current lists

⁴ Where consent is required, evidence should be retained as long as the person is a member (or withdrew consent) then deleted.

3.5 Property		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Title Deeds including Title Registration, Deeds of Covenants, Deeds of Release, Memorandum of Overage, Deeds of Easements etc.	Permanent retention in Circuit Safe when property is owned by the Church, and for 12 years after the property is sold	Retain until a church building is sold, and for 12 years thereafter
Insurance policies	Retain for 40 years Commercial practice	Destroy or delete
Claims correspondence	3 years after last action Commercial practice	Destroy or delete
Property agreements and leases	6 years after end of agreement Commercial practice	Archive
Licences for use	3 years after end of agreement	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Records of lettings and use by external bodies	3 year. Commercial practice	Destroy
Methodist property logs	Retain whilst log or church is in use.	Archive any logs containing copies of listed building and conservation area works. Destroy non listed or conservation logs.
Quinquennial inspection reports	Retain for as long as required for current business	Destroy if property no longer owned by the Church
Records of church closure and sale of premises	Current Connexional year + 6 Limitation Act 1980	Archive after weeding
Burial Registers / Records of graveyards including plans of graves	Permanent Retention	Keep securely in District Safe

3.6 Health and Safety		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it

Accident reporting sheets or book – for adults	Date of incident plus 3 years. SI 1995/3163	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – for reporting COSHH or asbestos accidents	40 years from date of report	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – for children	Date when the child attains the age of 21 plus 3 years SI 1995/3163	Destroy

3.7 Safeguarding		
<p>As part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, there is currently a legal requirement under Section 25 of the Inquiries Act for churches and other relevant organisations in England and Wales to retain documents relating to child protection and allegations of child abuse made against individuals or the organisation. This also includes child protection policy documents. The recommendations are to retain safeguarding documents for at least 75 years.</p>		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate	Retain for 6 months from the recruitment decision	Destroy
Risk Assessment recommendations and a management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished DBS disclosure	Retain for 75 years after appointment / employment ceases	Destroy
Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection concerns either within the church, church related activity, or within a family by an individual where the church was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans that is any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements Please see Standing Order 010	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy

Records of any children’s activities, Sunday School/Junior Church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Personnel records of individuals with contact with children and vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigations regardless of the findings	Retain for 75 years after the conclusion of the matter	Destroy
Safeguarding meeting minutes	Ensure minutes relating to individual files are kept within that file. Other general minutes not required for reference or historical purposes can be destroyed after 1 year. General meeting minutes should be referred to local Regional Officer for Safeguarding (ROS)	ROS to decide whether to archive or destroy depending on content
Records of complaints made through the Discrimination and Abuse Response Service	Retain for 6 years after the conclusion of the complaint	Destroy

3.8 Publications		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it

3.9 Legal Documents		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General correspondence	Conclusion of matter +1 year	Destroy
District newsletters and publications	Date of issue + 2 years	Archive

Copies of replies to Connexional questionnaires and circulars	Last action +5 years	Destroy
Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements	Duration of the Agreement	Archive
Trustee Declarations	Retain while person is in office	Archive
Data Protection records in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Access Requests • Right to Rectification • Right to Erasure (to be forgotten) • Right to Restrict Processing 	7 years after the last contact with the individual	Destroy or delete
Data Protection Consent Record	End of the Connexional Year plus 2 years	Destroy or delete
Data Processor Record	End of the Connexional Year after it has been updated	Destroy or delete
CCTV images	A maximum of 90 days or such shorter period as is set out in the local CCTV policy	Destroy
Public Liability Certificates	Retain for 10 years after the policy expires.	Keep secure in Circuit Safe

3.10 Minister, Probationer and Candidate Records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
Successful candidate records – no complaints made	For 10 years	Destroy or delete
Minister records – no complaints made	Until death of Minister	Destroy or delete
Non recommended Candidates	For 10 years after the Conference at which they are not recommended	Destroy or delete
Probationer records	Until death of probationer (now Minister)	Destroy or delete
Supervision records	To be held, retained and or destroyed as per the Policy and Guidance note on handling Supervisory files	To be held, retained and or destroyed as per the Policy and Guidance note on handling Supervisory files

3.11 Miscellaneous / General Records		
Type of record	How long to keep it for	What to do with it
General correspondence	Conclusion of matter plus 1 year	Destroy or delete
District newsletters and publications	Date of issue plus 2 years	Archive
Copies of replies to Connexional questionnaires and circulars	Last action plus 5 years	Archive
Photographs and videos of events	5 years after the event – selected items retained for historic purposes and consent obtained	Archive
CCTV images	A maximum of 90 days or such shorter period as set out in the local CCTV policy	Destroy

Section 4 – Connexional Property Owned by the Methodist Church

Connexional properties owned by the Methodist Church are also required to devise retention schedules relevant to the needs of individual properties, taking account of Standing Orders and specific jurisdictions.

This schedule was last reviewed on **20 November 2025** by Laura Kent Legal Counsel (Governance) and Data Protection Officer, Methodist Church in Britain Email: dataprotection@methodistchurch.org.uk, and TMCP Legal Team: dataprotection@TMCP.org.uk.