The Methodist Church in Britain

SAFEGUARDING
RISK ASSESSMENT
POLICY AND PROCEDURES

September 2025

Version 1.0

Approved by the Connexional Council - 25 September 2025

Policy Review

Last Review Date	Type of Review	Approved by	Next Review Date
April 2018	Full Policy	Methodist Council	
July 2025	Full Policy	Safeguarding Committee	Safeguarding Committee July 2027

This is a fundamental re-write of the Methodist Church's Safeguarding Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures which takes account of the changes to safeguarding in the Methodist Church, the learning from successive safeguarding risk assessments completed by the Church and changes to the wider societal context of safeguarding in British Society. This Policy introduces the concept of Core Groups in the Risk Assessment process within the Church.

Minor amendments Jan 2026

Summary of Changes Section	Page No.	Amendment Details
Appendix 5, Section 5.4	49	Amended to clarify role of core group in assuring quality of risk assessment.
Appendix 6 Section 7.1	54	Amended to clarify role of Core Group Chair in appeal panels

Minor amendments June 2026

Summary of Changes Section	Page No.	Amendment Details
Section 10.2	26	Added need for summary of Risk Assessment report
Appendix 5 paragraph 5.2	49	Added need for summary of Risk Assessment report
Paragraph 5.14 added	51	Clarification of need for risk assessor to provide a summary of the Risk Assessment Report

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RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

NOTE - This Policy refers in its entirety to safeguarding risk assessments and is not intended for other risk assessments such as activity, situational or health and safety risk assessments.

1.1. This Risk Assessment policy is an important component of the Methodist Church's Safeguarding Policy - safeguarding_policy_and_procedures_for_the_methodist_church_in-britain_july_20_FdKXANA.pdf and it is that Policy from which it draws its foundations and priorities. This states:

"For the purpose of this guidance, safeguarding is defined as protecting the health and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is about implementing the necessary measures to prevent harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults who are most at risk of abuse and harm. It is integral to the mission of the Methodist Church to value every human being as part of God's creation.

1.2 Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture for everyone and this means that the Church will:

- promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk;
- work to prevent abuse of any kind from occurring; and
- seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused.

1.3 The Methodist Church is committed to providing an environment in which all who engage with the Church, in whatever manner, are enabled and encouraged to flourish and develop safely. It is the responsibility of everyone in the Church to consider the safety of those around them, in terms of both safeguarding and more widely, but it is acknowledged that a significant component of the role of Church's safeguarding officers is to assess the day-to-day risks that arise and advise colleagues in the Church how these can be managed and mitigated.

1.4 It is, of course, impossible for the Methodist Church to operate in a way in which there is no risk and circumstances will arise from time to time where it is suspected that a safeguarding risk may exist in relation to those engaging with the Church. It is, thus, imperative that clear guidance is required for those in the Church on the procedures to be followed to deal with issues where a safeguarding risk is believed to exist. The importance of these procedures being balanced and proportionate cannot be overstated.

1.5 The Methodist Church will seek to identify situations where a person may pose a risk to others and take steps to reduce such risks. The Church affirms that safeguarding is a shared responsibility and everyone associated with the Church who comes into contact with children, young people and adults at risk has a role to play in safeguarding. This is supported by consistent policies promoting good practice across the whole Church.

1.6 In order for the Methodist Church to achieve the above, the risks that someone or a group of people or a situation may present will require to be assessed. A risk assessment must be completed and from this, known risks addressed, mitigated, managed or reported to statutory partners.

1.7 It must be remembered that all abuse has an element of the misuse of power and that for every individual who perpetrates abusive behaviour, there is a victim or victims. Any form of abuse, whether in childhood or adulthood, can have a severe and lifelong impact upon victims and survivors and abuse which occurs in a church or faith setting can seem even more of a betrayal. The purpose of risk assessment activity is to reduce risks and thereby to reduce the risk of further abuse occurring.

1.8 The key values that the Methodist Church wishes the risk assessment process to embody are:

- Valuing the dignity of all
- Openness and accountability
- Fairness
- Balance without bias
- Respect for diversity
- Proportionality

1.9 These values shall be exemplified by:

- A response to safeguarding concerns which is proportionate, appropriate and robust.
- Clear policies, procedures, standing orders and information leaflets to ensure everyone is able to easily access the information they need.
- Consideration of safeguarding risks by those with the necessary knowledge and experience to undertake the role with fairness and an independence from the immediate circumstances.
- An expectation of appropriate and considerate communication between all parties involved in the process.
- The provision of effective safeguarding training to those across the church who have roles working with children, young people and/or adults at risk of abuse.

- Careful consideration of the specific needs of individual parties and provision made for additional support where needed to allow full participation in the process.
- The provision of effective pastoral support to all those who need it.
- An opportunity for all of those involved to provide feedback on the process and their experiences.

1.10 The Methodist Church's Past Cases Review of 2013-2015 – Courage, Cost & Hope, which formed the foundation of the Church's current approach to assessing safeguarding risk, adopted a definition of a safeguarding concern:

a) Sexual or physical abuse against a child or adult;

b) Emotional abuse/neglect if at the level of significant harm – against a child or adult

c) Domestic abuse of any kind (coercion and control involving woman v man, child v parent and wider family)

d) Any other abuse of a vulnerable adult – i.e. financial, institutional;

e) Accessing abusive images on screen.

1.11 As Society's approach to safeguarding has developed since the publication of the Past Cases Review, the factors that indicate a possible risk to a person within the life of the Methodist Church has expanded. While it is inadvisable to attempt to draft a full list of such factors, a number of additional risk factors have been identified that have, more recently, arisen in safeguarding risk assessments undertaken on behalf of the Church. These include:

- Spiritual harm or abuse;
- Financial harm;
- Cyber harm and data protection risk;
- Cultural and diversity issues;
- Interpersonal conflict and disputes;
- Bullying
- Ethical or regulatory risk;
- Doctrinal risk;
- Organisational or reputational risk to the Methodist Church.

PURPOSE AND STATUS OF A RISK ASSESSMENT

2.1 The purpose of this Risk Assessment Policy is to outline the procedures that must be followed when undertaking a safeguarding risk assessment and to provide detailed guidance and advice relating to safeguarding risk assessment activity within the Methodist Church.

2.2 The provisions outlined are informed by current legislation and guidance and accepted good practice from within the Church, the statutory agencies and other community organisations with safeguarding responsibilities.

KEY LEGISLATION

England and Wales - Legislation:

1. Children Act 1989 and 2004

- Establishes the duty of care to promote and safeguard the welfare of children.
- Requires inter-agency cooperation (e.g., schools, social services, police).
- Section 11 of the 2004 Act places duties on key persons and bodies to ensure their functions are discharged with regard to safeguarding.

2. The Children and Social Work Act 2017

- Introduced local safeguarding partners and a new child safeguarding practice review system.

3. The Care Act 2014 (for adults)

- Outlines responsibilities for safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Requires local authorities and partners to assess and manage risks to vulnerable adults.

4. The Education Act 2002 (Section 175)

- Requires schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- Places a statutory duty on schools to implement safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments.

5. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

- Established the framework for the **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**.
- Helps ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults.

6. Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

- General duty of care extends to safeguarding in premises and activities.
- Important for incorporating safeguarding concerns into broader risk assessments.

Government and Statutory Guidance:

1. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023 update)

- **Government statutory guidance all agencies** working with children.
- Provides the framework for safeguarding risk assessments, including thresholds for intervention and multi-agency responsibilities.
- Mandatory guidance for local authorities, health services, police, schools, and charities.

2. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) – latest version (updated annually)

- Applies to all schools and colleges.
- Emphasises risk assessment in:
    - Recruitment and vetting.
    - Online safety.
    - Extracurricular activities and off-site visits.

3. What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (Statutory Guidance)

- Outlines immediate safeguarding responsibilities for individuals.

4. Charity Commission Guidance (for charities)

- Safeguarding duties for charity trustees and managers.
- Risk assessment as part of safeguarding duties (especially for those working with children or vulnerable adults).

5. Prevent Duty Guidance (under Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015)

- Applies to schools, colleges, universities, and childcare providers.
- Risk assessments must include safeguarding from extremism/radicalisation.

Scotland – Key Legislation:

1. Children (Scotland) Act 1995

Sets out parental responsibilities and rights, and duties of local authorities.

2. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

Introduced the **Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)** framework.
Focuses on wellbeing indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included (SHANARRI).

3. Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007

Provides powers to protect adults at risk of harm.

4. The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007

Established the **PVG Scheme**, managed by Disclosure Scotland.
Ensures individuals unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults are excluded.

5. Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020
Updates and amends the 2007 PVG Act

6. Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Still applicable UK-wide — relevant for environment-based safeguarding risk.

Key Government Guidance

1. **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)**

   Statutory guidance for all child protection practitioners in Scotland.
   Includes expectations around identifying and responding to risk.

2. **GIRFEC National Practice Model**
   Helps assess children's wellbeing holistically.
   Used as a framework in risk assessment tools and planning.

3. **Scotland's National Adult Support and Protection Guidance (2022)**

   Outlines local authority duties and inter-agency cooperation.

Wales – Key Legislation

1. **Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014**

   - Main safeguarding legislation for children and adults.
   - Introduces a duty to report, assess, and manage risk collaboratively.
   - Requires a focus on **well-being** and **early intervention**.

2. **Children Act 1989/2004**

   - Still relevant but interpreted through the Welsh safeguarding context.

3. **Education Act 2002 (as it applies to Wales)**

   - Imposes duties on schools to safeguard pupils.

4. **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)**

   - UK-wide law — requires risk assessment of radicalisation risks.

Government Guidance

1. **Wales Safeguarding Procedures**

   - Official website
   - Interactive and constantly updated.
   - Sets out **thresholds for intervention** and **risk management processes**.

2. **Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019)**

   - Provides the practical steps agencies must take in safeguarding.
   - Applies to all statutory services and partners.

3. **Keeping Learners Safe (Welsh Government)**

   - Guidance for education providers
   - Statutory guidance for all education settings.
   - Includes specific advice on safeguarding risk assessments in schools and colleges.

4. **All Wales Child Protection Procedures** (superseded by above but still referenced in some areas)

METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN

1. SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

1.1 The role of Safeguarding Risk Assessment is to consider concerns raised about behaviour or actions that have been identified as potentially abusive or harmful or are considered to be poor safeguarding practice in order and to identify any safeguarding risk presented to those engaging with the Methodist Church. The risk assessment process will consider the nature of the risk and the possible severity of it as well as the likelihood of occurrence.

1.2 It must be noted that the safeguarding risk assessment process is not intended to be a disciplinary or adversarial process and the approach taken should be an objective exploration of the circumstances of a situation with a focus on understanding how the situation arose and the identification of measures that can be put in place to minimise or manage any potential risks identified.

1.3 The risk assessment process will consider recent and past events and/or issues leading up to the point at which the safeguarding concern was identified. Any assessment is undertaken to try to establish the underlying issues and problems that have led to the assessment being required. This may include potential risks posed by and to the subject of the assessment, to victims and survivors and their families, to those who engage with the Methodist Church and to the reputation of the Church itself.

1.4 The policy and procedures laid down in this document have been approved by the Connexional Council and cover Methodist Church members and those for whom Church safeguarding policies are required practice.

1.5 This policy and the associated procedures accord and comply with the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, volume 2 (2024) and the Church's Standing Orders.

2. TRIGGERS FOR A SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT

2.1 The requirement for a risk assessment will be prompted by any one or more of the following circumstances:

- **The raising of a safeguarding concern** -where a safeguarding concern has been raised about the conduct of a person engaging in some way in the life of the Church and, after initial inquiries have been carried out, the Connexional Safeguarding Team consider that risk assessment activity is required.

- **Information of Safeguarding Risk from Statutory Agency -** As a result of information provided by a statutory agency relating to a safeguarding risk presented by someone engaging in activities, roles or responsibilities with the Methodist Church.

- **Blemished DBS/PVG -** Where a person who wishes to undertake a role or responsibility within the Methodist Church which requires a criminal record check, and a notification has been received by the Connexional Safeguarding Team to confirm the certificate contains relevant information.

- **Blemished DBS/PVG – new information -** Where a person who is already undertaking a role or responsibility within the Methodist Church (whether as employee, volunteer or in ministry) which requires a criminal record check, receives a criminal record check certificate containing a conviction, caution, barring information or information provided by the Police for which they have not already been cleared as part of a previous process and which indicates that the Church's Standing Order 010 may apply.

- **Where there is no conviction or caution –** Where a safeguarding concern has come to light through inquiries or information or where there is no specific complainant but patterns of behaviour exist that raise safeguarding concerns. The Methodist Church, through its commitment to effective safeguarding practice and the protection for all those engaging with it, has a duty to respond to such concerns, consider any risk presented to those within the Church and put in place relevant measures to minimise and manage identified risks.

- **Record of Problematic Criminal History -** Where a person who wishes to attend worship or engage with activities in the Methodist Church and has a conviction or caution identified in Standing Order 010(2)((ii) which will require a safeguarding contract or who has no caution or conviction but whose circumstances suggest that a safeguarding contract may be required to manage a potential risk to children or vulnerable adults.

- **Review of Safeguarding Contract -** Where a person is already subject to a safeguarding contract and a request is made to terminate or substantially vary the contract at the three yearly cycle point

- **Strengthening of Conditions of Safeguarding Contract -** Where a person who is already subject to a safeguarding contract whose case has been referred to the Connexional Safeguarding Team as it is believed that arrangements currently in place are not effectively managing the safeguarding risks identified.

- **Safeguarding Concern emerging from the Church's Complaints and Discipline process (Part 11 of Standing Orders) –** Where a complaint has been made under Part 11 of the Church's Constitutional Practice and Discipline and the complaint raises a possible safeguarding concern. Standing Order 1102 requires that the person or body dealing with that complaint must refer the issue immediately to the Connexional Safeguarding Team. The advice and recommendations of a safeguarding panel may be sought in these circumstances.

NOTE – ***In situations where an individual has appeared in a court to face criminal charges and has subsequently been found not guilty, it may be necessary to undertake a risk assessment in respect of that person. It must be remembered that a finding of not guilty in a court of law does not indicate an absence of risk.***

2.2 A risk assessment may also be required for a broader range of concerning behaviours including non-sexual convictions and cautions to address situations that would suggest a child or adult may have or could in future suffer harm from such behaviour e.g. domestic violence, harassment, stalking or neglect.

2.3 A safeguarding risk assessment will be undertaken where further information is required to enable the Connexional Safeguarding Team and/or the Safeguarding Committee to determine that an individual can be cleared to work within the Methodist Church. This may relate to an offence indicative of a risk to children, young people or adults at risk or other information that may suggest a safeguarding risk may be present if the person were to undertake the envisaged role or responsibility.

For further details in relation to criminal record checks please refer to:

- The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD) – Volume 2, Book VI: *CPD Book VI*
- *The Safer Recruitment Policy*: Safer Recruitment Policy 2024
- *PVG Guidance – The Methodist Church in Scotland. (currently being reviewed) See* Policies and guidance - The Methodist Church

2.4 In each case, the decision as to the nature of risk assessment activity will be undertaken in consultation with the Connexional Safeguarding Team.

3. STANDARD OF PROOF

3.1 The Church's risk assessment process assesses possible safeguarding risk on the basis of the civil standard of proof, which is on the balance of probabilities. This means that, based on the evidence provided in the assessment, it is more likely than not that a risk of harm exists.

3.2 It must be remembered that the words, 'guilty' and 'innocent' are emotive terms and great care must therefore be taken over their use. The absence of a conviction does not mean the absence of risk, which is why an assessment of risk is necessary.

'It must be clearly understood that the decision of the police not to pursue an investigation, or not to investigate at all, or of the Crown Prosecution Service (the Procurator Fiscal Service in Scotland) not to prosecute, does not relieve the [Church] of the duty to assess, on the civil standard of proof, any potential risk and to act appropriately' *(Baroness Butler-Sloss (retired senior judge) May 2011 report into matters in the Chichester Diocese of the Church of England, following a high profile child abuse case.)*

3.3 Those who are the subject of risk assessment activity may feel that they are not being believed when, following a risk assessment process, recommendations, directions or guidance are made on safeguards to be put in place or supervision or restrictions imposed on activities that can be undertaken. It must be emphasised that any such measures are to address a potential risk and are not a proven finding of fact. Care must be taken in all communications with the subject of a risk assessment, from the initial briefing to the final outcome of the risk assessment process, to ensure that this is made clear.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS - PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Any risk assessment process undertaken by the Methodist Church will, through necessity, involve contact with a range of individuals. There will, therefore, be an initial and continuing requirement to consider and assess the needs of all those engaging with it and this will require very careful reflection and response to properly meet these needs. These individuals may include:

- Victims/survivors of harmful or abusive behaviour,
- The subject of the risk assessment who is suspected of/alleged to be responsible for harmful or abusive behaviour;
- The families of those directly affected by risk assessment processes;
- Clergy and church staff directly involved
- Congregations

4.2 It is important that guidance is sought where necessary and information shared appropriately in addressing the needs of all parties.

4.3 Ongoing and regular communication and update of progress will be an essential aspect of the risk assessment process.

5. INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED IN ADVANCE OF A RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 Frequent concerns and issues raised by parties involved in the Methodist Church's risk assessment processes arise from a failure to inform them of the reason for the assessment, what will be done with their information, how it will be retained or stored or a failure to offer suitable support. Thus, it is essential that proper and effective communication is maintained throughout the entire risk assessment process.

5.2 **Confidentiality and Privacy -** All parties providing information in relation to any form of safeguarding risk assessment must be directed to the Methodist Church's Privacy Notice which is available on the Methodist Church's Website - https://www.methodist.org.uk/privacy-notice/. This is to facilitate compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. Further information relating to GDPR and privacy notices may be found in the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance.

5.3 **Anonymity –** A victim/survivor may wish to have their identity withheld from the subject of an allegation or concern and may wish to supply information on an anonymous basis. This will, wherever possible, be respected and all those involved in the assessment of risk in such cases **MUST** maintain that anonymity. However, if a safeguarding complaint/concern results in a subsequent complaints and discipline process leading to the raising of a charge, it is most likely that such anonymity cannot be maintained. In such cases, the victim/survivor should be advised of this and further advised that insisting on the information continuing to be anonymous might prevent the safeguarding process continuing. In such cases, it might be possible for the risk assessment process to continue if sufficient independent information is available. This must be considered by the Core Group prior to the safeguarding process being halted.

5.4 All parties providing information for a risk assessment (including the subject of the assessment) must be given the following information, in addition to a privacy notice:

- That the content of any discussion with the assessor may form part of the final risk assessment report and any concerns in relation to disclosure must be raised with the assessor at the time.

- That the information is provided on a confidential basis and that it does not have to be shared with the subject of the risk assessment.
- The arrangements and process which will be followed in the risk assessment if known at the time.
- That a pastoral supporter can be present for any risk assessment conversation or for any contact with a survivor.
- That the Connexional Safeguarding Team welcomes feedback from those who engage with the risk assessment process and a contact email for the Team must be provided.
- That the core purpose of gathering the information is to aid the risk assessment report that goes to a Safeguarding Panel. In certain circumstances this may then be used as part of complaints and disciplinary proceedings.

5.5 The subject of the risk assessment must also be provided with the following information:

- Participation in any discussion in relation to the risk assessment is voluntary. However, where the subject declines to engage with the risk assessor, the assessment may still be undertaken and measures may be put in place to manage any perceived safeguarding risk. Under the General Data Protection Regulation, there is a requirement for clear explanations to be provided as to whether information will be processed by consent or otherwise.
- Confirmation of the Standing Order under which the assessment is being carried out.
- Any individual who has received a caution or conviction or been investigated in relation to a criminal offence or referred to Children's or Adult Care Services must be made aware that contact may be made with relevant statutory agencies. This is in order to effectively assess their individual circumstances, ensure that any arrangements are appropriate and the seriousness of any risk presented addressed.
- Written consent must be sought before making requests for information from statutory agencies and other parties. The subject of the assessment must be clearly informed that, if they choose to decline consent, this may impact on the recommendations made by the assessor and the nature of their involvement with church activities that is agreed as a result.
- Where a risk is identified towards children, young people or adults at risk, the Church has a duty to make contact with statutory agencies to advise them of those concerns. Further guidance in this respect is available in the Sharing of Information section of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance document.

- Those who are currently under the management or supervision of police or probation in relation to a sexual offence following a conviction or caution must be made aware that the relevant officer will be contacted and risk information (including any safeguarding contract) shared with them.
- The contents of the risk assessment report are confidential to the process but may be provided to any subsequent complaints and discipline process and can be shared with other parties with the agreement of the chair of the Safeguarding Committee.

6. CONTACT WITH STATUTORY AGENCIES

6.1 It is essential that in all cases for those under current management or supervision by the police or probation services, the subject's offender manager is contacted. Anyone currently on the Sex Offenders' Register will have a nominated police officer to manage the risk of their situation and contact with that person must be initiated not only to make the supervising officer aware that the subject is engaging with the Methodist Church but to request confirmation of any particular risk and initiate ongoing contact which will be of value to the monitoring of the subject of the risk assessment in the long term.

6.2 Additional guidance to assist with contacting statutory agencies in relation to risk assessment and safeguarding contracts has been produced along with template documents for the relevant risk assessment activity.

7. PASTORAL SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

7.1 Anyone who is involved in a Methodist Church risk assessment should be offered pastoral support throughout the risk assessment process. This is particularly the case for a victim/survivor of harm or abuse or the subject of the assessment, but it may well apply to anyone who becomes directly involved with the risk assessment in some other capacity – i.e. subject of the assessment, family member, minister or member of the church leadership team etc. Support of this nature is intended to ensure that those involved have access to another person that they feel will appreciate and understand their situation and needs.

7.2 The provision of pastoral support and what should be taken into consideration when identifying a suitable supporter is covered in greater detail in Appendix 3.

7.3 It is important to consider the communications capabilities of all those involved in a risk assessment and, where it is appropriate and relevant, consideration must be given to the provision of an advocate. An advocate would have several important responsibilities, including:

- **Representation**: Acting on behalf of the individual, ensuring their voice is heard and their preferences are considered.
- **Information Gathering**: Assisting in collating relevant information about the individual's circumstances, needs, and risks.
- **Communication**: Facilitating clear communication between the individual and the professionals involved in the assessment, ensuring that the individual understands the process.
- **Support**: Providing emotional and practical support to the individual throughout the assessment and helping to reduce anxiety and promote confidence.
- **Rights Protection**: Ensuring that the individual's rights are respected and upheld during the assessment process.
- **Collaboration**: Working collaboratively with professionals, advocating for the best interests of the individual and ensuring their concerns are addressed.
- **Follow-Up**: Assisting in understanding the outcomes of the risk assessment and helping the individual navigate any necessary next steps or interventions.

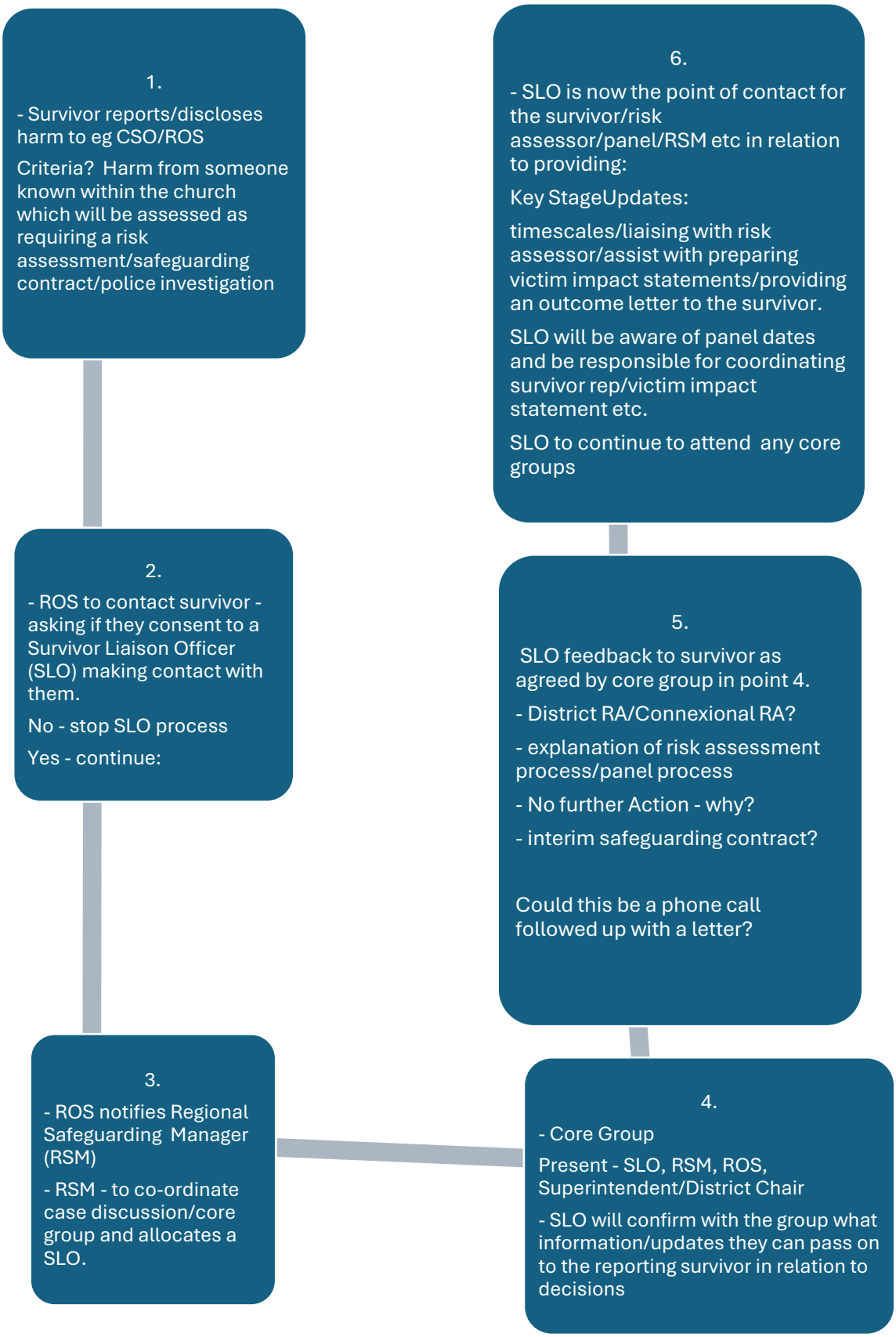
7.4 By fulfilling these responsibilities, advocates play a crucial role in empowering individuals and ensuring that their needs and rights are prioritised in the risk assessment process.

7.5 It is important to appreciate that an advocate and a pastoral supporter fulfil different roles, although both provide support and guidance. A pastoral supporter offers emotional, spiritual, and sometimes practical support and their focus is on providing care, comfort, and guidance based on spiritual principles. An advocate is primarily focused on representing the individual's interests, ensuring their rights are protected and facilitating communication with relevant authorities or professionals. Their role often involves navigating systems and processes, especially in legal or clinical contexts.

7.6 **Survivor Liaison Officer** – Engagement and effective communication with victim/survivors is vital as survivors navigate through the workings of the Methodist Church following a disclosure of harm or abuse such as risk assessments, safeguarding panels, outcomes and reviews.

The identification of a survivor liaison officer (SLO) as a point of contact for the victim/survivor would enable the survivor to feel engaged, informed, and included from the outset. This will be a responsibility of the Safeguarding Core Group and the process is set out on the following page:

Note following abbreviations are used on the process map:
CSO: Church or Circuit Safeguarding Officer
ROS: Regional Officer for Safeguarding
RSM: Regional Safeguarding Manager
SLO: Survivor Liaison Officer
RA: Risk Assessment


1.
- Survivor reports/discloses harm to eg CSO/ROS
Criteria? Harm from someone known within the church which will be assessed as requiring a risk assessment/safeguarding contract/police investigation
2.
- ROS to contact survivor - asking if they consent to a Survivor Liaison Officer (SLO) making contact with them.
No - stop SLO process
Yes - continue:
3.
- ROS notifies Regional Safeguarding Manager (RSM)
- RSM - to co-ordinate case discussion/core group and allocates a SLO.
4.
- Core Group
Present - SLO, RSM, ROS, Superintendent/District Chair
- SLO will confirm with the group what information/updates they can pass on to the reporting survivor in relation to decisions
5.
SLO feedback to survivor as agreed by core group in point 4.
- District RA/Connexional RA?
- explanation of risk assessment process/panel process
- No further Action - why?
- interim safeguarding contract?
Could this be a phone call followed up with a letter?
6.
- SLO is now the point of contact for the survivor/risk assessor/panel/RSM etc in relation to providing:
Key StageUpdates:
timescales/liaising with risk assessor/assist with preparing victim impact statements/providing an outcome letter to the survivor.
SLO will be aware of panel dates and be responsible for coordinating survivor rep/victim impact statement etc.
SLO to continue to attend any core groups

Contact with RSM
Contact with DSO/ROS
SLO
Contact with Survivor
Attendance of Core Groups/panel

8. SAFEGUARDING CORE GROUP

8.1 A core group is a concept used extensively by statutory services and is akin to a case conference. In a safeguarding context, it is multi-agency in composition, and it is convened to discuss a safeguarding concern and to develop a coordinated, comprehensive, and dynamic approach to protecting vulnerable individuals from harm or abuse and to ensure their wellbeing.

8.2 In the context of the Methodist Church, when a concern is received about the conduct or behaviour of a member of (or someone who is active in) the Methodist Church which potentially causes harm or abuse to a vulnerable person and which necessitates a risk assessment, a core group will be convened to share information about the concern, assess the risks present in the circumstances causing the concern and consider and develop a coordinated approach to deal with the issue effectively.

8.3 The purpose of the Core Group is to oversee and manage the Church's response to a safeguarding concern or allegation, and to ensure that the rights of the victim/survivor and the respondent to a fair and thorough investigation are protected.

8.4 The organisation, composition and responsibilities of the safeguarding core group are covered in greater detail in Appendix 1 to this Procedure.

9. RISK ASSESSOR

9.1 All safeguarding risk assessments managed by a Safeguarding Core Group will necessitate the identification of a suitably trained risk assessor to undertake the risk assessment. In simple or straightforward cases, a risk assessment will be undertaken at a regional level with a member of the Regional Safeguarding Team being allocated the assessment by the Regional Safeguarding Manager who will also chair the safeguarding core group.

9.2 More complex risk assessments will be allocated to one of the Methodist Church's independent risk assessors from the list of risk assessors approved by the Safeguarding Committee on an annual basis.

9.3 In all cases, risk assessors must follow the policy and procedures of the Methodist Church and use the standard template for a risk assessment report provided for this purpose. This will ensure that a standardised approach is taken to assessing risk to guarantee consistency and quality while facilitating those who receive numerous reports for consideration as panel members.

9.4 More details in respect of risk assessors is contained in Appendix 4 to this procedure.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

10.1 The standard template for a risk assessment report will be used for all safeguarding risk assessments but additional information can be added where this is necessary to provide further clarity to the report. The standard template is designed to aid the assessor in producing an effective risk assessment report and to standardise the approach taken to ensure consistency and quality of report.

10.2 The report must include the following:

- Clear and concise details of the risks
- Clear explanation of the impact on the alleged behaviour upon the victim(s)/survivor(s)
- The potential impact on the subject and those involved/linked
- Clear and appropriate recommendations
- Concise content written without jargon
- *A summary of the Risk Assessment Report*
- Balanced and fair content
- Differentiation between fact and opinion
- Corroboration of information provided with another source or clear acknowledgement that what is known has been provided solely by the subject of the assessment

- Clear indication of the source of information

10.3 The risk assessment report may include appendices containing specialist advice (where required), a response from a victim or survivor or submission from the district or local church about the circumstances and the potential outcome.

10.4 Additional advice and guidance on the content and completion of a risk assessment report is covered in Appendix 5 to this Procedure.

11. IMPACT STATEMENTS

11.1 An impact statement is a personal account that describes the impact and effects of the events or behaviour that prompted the need for a risk assessment on an individual or group. It provides a means of communicating to a safeguarding panel how they have been affected, particularly in an emotional, physical, social or financial way by the behaviour that was identified as causing them harm or was considered abusive.

11.2 An Impact Statement should contain, where possible, an account of how the events have affected the victim's mental and emotional well-being – for example anxiety, depression or fear. Where the harm or abuse was physical, it should outline the physical harm or injury suffered as a result of the events. Where there has been a financial impact from the abusive or harmful behaviour, there must be an account of any monetary losses or financial burdens caused by the events, for example medical bills or lost wages.

11.3 The statement could also outline the effect on the person's relationships, social life, and overall ability to function within society. In addition, any long-term impact, ongoing or future effects such as trauma, physical impairment or changes to the quality of life might also be included. The victim/survivor may also wish to express their views on what they might wish as an outcome from the subsequent risk assessment panel. The impact statement should be honest, clear, and focused on the personal consequences to the victim, offering the safeguarding panel members insight into how the event has affected the individual.

11.4 There is an expectation that the impact statement of a victim/survivor will not be shared with the subject of a risk assessment unless explicitly agreed by the victim/survivor. Such agreement should be recorded.

12. JUDGEMENT AND FACT

12.1 On occasion, those who take part in risk assessments express concerns about the provision of professional judgements by risk assessors. In many cases, the contentious nature of the situation or divided opinion is the determining factor for its referral for a risk assessment. Risk assessors must not shy away from expressing their opinion but it must always be clearly identified as the professional judgement of the assessor and not be presented as a fact. In addition, the opinion must be based on information that has, as far as is possible, been deemed as factually accurate and up-to-date. Corroboration with another source beyond the information provided by one party, where possible, demonstrates a commitment to ensuring accuracy as the basis of opinion.

12.2 In all circumstances, the language used in risk assessments must be considered carefully with a view to minimising the pain and distress of any party who may be represented in that document. The opportunity for the subject to review and submit additional comments to a Safeguarding Panel addresses the need to consider carefully the factual accuracy of the report and allow for opposing opinions to be provided for fairness and balance. Within the standard risk assessment format, there is clear direction as to the importance of representing the views of victims and survivors.

13. SAFEGUARDING PANELS

13.1 Methodist Church Standing Order 232(3A) sets out the composition and functions of a safeguarding panel for the consideration of a risk assessment. This is covered in greater detail in Appendix 6 to this Procedure.

Recording Outcomes

- All decisions, rationale, and any minority views must be recorded in writing.
- Records must be clear, factual, and stored securely according to data protection principles.
- A summary of the panel's findings will be provided to relevant parties as appropriate.

14 OUTCOMES RISK MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE

14.1 Responsibility for communicating the outcome of a safeguarding panel lies with the Core Group established to oversee and manage the consideration and assessment of the safeguarding concern. Further details are contained in Appendix 7 to this Procedure.

The Panel's outcomes and recommendations should be made to ensure the ongoing safety and well-being of all individuals within the church community, to promote learning, and to strengthen safeguarding practices.

The panel will determine outcomes based on:

- The facts and evidence presented.
- The level of risk identified to any individual or group.
- Compliance with relevant safeguarding policies and legal obligations.
- The pastoral needs of all parties involved.

The panel may make recommendations regarding:

1. **Pastoral support** for victims/survivors, alleged individuals, and the wider congregation.
2. **Training needs** for individuals or groups.
3. **Changes to practice** or **policy updates** to prevent future incidents.
4. **Referral to statutory agencies** (e.g., police, social services) if required.
5. **Restrictions** or **conditions** on an individual's role or involvement in church life.
6. **Disciplinary proceedings**, where applicable.

15. INFORMATION SECURITY, DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY NOTICES

See Appendix 10 for details.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - SAFEGUARDING CORE GROUPS

1.1 A safeguarding core group is a concept used extensively by statutory services akin to a case conference. Multi-agency in composition, it is convened to discuss a safeguarding concern and to develop a coordinated, comprehensive, and dynamic approach to protecting vulnerable individuals from harm and to ensure their wellbeing.

1.2 In the context of the Methodist Church, when a concern is received about the conduct or behaviour of a member of (or someone who is active in) the Methodist Church which potentially causes harm or abuse to a vulnerable person and which necessitates a risk assessment, a core group will be convened to share information about the concern, assess the risks present in the circumstances causing the concern and consider and develop a coordinated approach to deal with the issue effectively.

1.3 The purpose of the Core Group is to oversee and manage the Church's response to a safeguarding concern or allegation, ensuring that the rights of the victim/survivor and the respondent to a fair and thorough investigation are protected.

1.4 Thresholds **-** The decision to establish a core group will rest with the Regional Safeguarding Manager (where necessary in consultation with the Director of Safeguarding) and will be based on the severity and complexity of the concerns, as well as the need for coordinated multi-agency planning and intervention. The following require to be taken into consideration:

1. Significant Risk of Harm – There is evidence or a strong suspicion of abuse or neglect that poses a significant risk to an individual (a child, young person or adult).

2. There are multiple concerns about the person's safety, well-being, or environment.

3. There are indications that the harm is chronic, escalating, or has the potential for severe outcomes without immediate intervention.

4. Complex Needs – the concern involves multiple issues likely to require input from various agencies.

5. Challenging Circumstances - The circumstances of the concern are particularly challenging.

6. Multi-Agency Involvement Required – There is a need to involve statutory agencies or they are already involved and there is a need for better coordination within the Church to create a unified plan of action.

7. Collaboration, information sharing, and consistent monitoring of the case will benefit from the oversight of a core group approach.

1.5 Thresholds must always be contextual and aligned with the Methodist Church's safeguarding policies and procedures. Practical Indicators for establishing a core group will include:

- Urgency: the concerns require rapid and coordinated action.
- Lack of Progress: existing measures (where they have already been put in place) have not mitigated the risks.
- Professional Judgment: consensus among district and connexional safeguarding officers that a structured group is necessary.

1.6 Chairing **-** The Core Group will normally be chaired by a manager in the Connexional Safeguarding Team with responsibility for the District in which the issue has arisen. The chair will be responsible for:

- Establishing membership of the group,
- Ensuring all appropriate parties are present, exercising discretion as to the necessary and proportionate involvement of parties;
- Where more than one District is involved, ensuring relevant membership and communication is arranged;
- Defining the roles and responsibilities of its members through the process;
- Ensuring Methodist Church policies and practice guidance are followed;
- Keeping the Director of Safeguarding and the relevant District Chair updated on core group decisions and directions and any recommendations for action required by them.

1.7 Purpose and Responsibilities **-** Every safeguarding concern or allegation involving a member of (or someone who is active in) the Church will be managed by a core group convened for the specific situation. The core group will be responsible for considering:

- The requirement for referral to statutory agencies;
- The requirement for suspension;

- What, if any, human resources or employment issues may be involved and the legal implications of these;
- Victim/survivor needs, including a communication strategy;
- The requirement for a risk assessment, including timescales;
- The quality assurance of risk assessment reports;
- The preparation of a safeguarding contract (or interim safeguarding contract);
- Nomination of support person(s);
- Nomination of link person(s).
- Who else needs to be informed *(e.g. Secretary of Conference, other agencies)*.
- Referral to the Charity Commission.
- Requirement to instigate complaints and discipline/competency procedure(s).

- Ensuring that information is shared effectively between the local church, the District and the Connexion;

- Considering whether other church officers and/or bodies must be informed of the situation, and invited to join the core group;

- Where appropriate, liaising closely with the Church's Complaints and Discipline processes;

- Offering advice to the District Chair on support and pastoral care for church officers involved with the process;

- Ensuring how the needs of the church community in which the subject is or has served can best be met;

- Agreeing, in consultation with the Connexional Communications team, statements to the press and the congregation;

- Ensuring accurate information is kept and shared securely where appropriate and in accordance with data protection legislation;

- Undertaking or arranging for a 'lessons learned review' to be undertaken with a view to identifying possible changes in procedure and improved practice in safeguarding within the Methodist Church.

1.8 An outline suggested agenda is provided below which should be used as a guide but additional items can be included dependent on the circumstances of the concern being dealt with.

1.9 The Core Group will maintain a comprehensive record of its decisions, directions and recommendations and this must include information on any previous allegations that have been made against the individual concerned. Disagreement or disputes in respect of appropriate action will be referred to the Director of Safeguarding for a final decision.

1.10 If the subject of the safeguarding concern or allegation is a senior member of the Church or an individual with a high national profile, the case will be managed by a member of the Connexional Safeguarding Team.

1.11 At all times, consideration must be given to potential conflicts of interest where working relationships, friendships and personal or family relationships are involved to ensure proper independence and impartiality of discussion, debate and decision-making.

CORE GROUP – AGENDA

Date of commencement	
Subject Name	
Subject role/status	
Employment Status	
Nature of concern **(brief summary)**	
Reporting Person/s Names	

District and Circuit	
Church	
Core Group membership - Contact details of all Core Group members should be listed (role, telephone number and email address)	

- Introductions and roles
- GDPR/Information Sharing – information discussed and shared within the meetings of the Core Group should remain confidential to the Group members unless the chair of the Group approves of any sharing of information outside the Group. Such sharing should be recorded as one of the actions from the Group.

Item for consideration	**Actions agreed (who/by when)**
Statutory Agency Referral	
Who else needs to be informed?	

Requirement for Suspension	
Requirement for interim safeguarding contract	
Complainant – assess needs	
Victim – assess needs – survivor liaison officer?	
Pastoral supports needs	
Risk assessment required	
Risk assessor identified	
Estimated timescales	
Charity Commission referral required	
Complaints and discipline/competency implications	

(Consider the need for a parallel C & D process)	
Safeguarding Panel arrangements	
Outcome of Panel	
Recommendations from Panel	
Implementation arrangements	
Lessons learned review arrangements	

APPENDIX 2 - RISK ASSESSMENTS

1. A risk assessment will be required prior to the arrangement of a safeguarding contract or where a change of the conditions of a safeguarding contract is sought. One may also be required where a safeguarding concern has been raised or in cases of a more complex criminal record check cases where a more comprehensive assessment of risk might be required.

2. A straightforward risk assessment will normally be undertaken by a member of the Regional Safeguarding Team to inform a new safeguarding contract, before the implementation of temporary measures to address a current safeguarding concern or to review a proposal to amend or end a safeguarding contract. Where necessary or appropriate, this will be done in consultation with the Core Group and, where the circumstances justify it, the assessment will be considered by a Safeguarding Panel.

3. The Core Group established to oversee the concern raised must make contact with the subject by letter or email to introduce themselves and make arrangements for meeting with the risk assessor. A privacy notice must be supplied prior to the meeting. Consideration must be given to the location of the meeting in order to ensure that the venue is appropriate with reference to the confidential nature of the discussions and a neutral venue for all concerned where possible.

4. The Core Group should identify one of its members to accompany the risk assessor at a risk assessment meeting. Consideration must be given to the confidentiality of the case and the nature of information already known. The subject of the assessment must be made aware that the risk assessor will be accompanied and the reason for this. The risk assessor must clarify if a pastoral supporter will be present to support the subject. They must also confirm whether the subject has any additional support needs of which the assessor is not already aware and is fit to undertake the interview.

5. Particular care must be taken where the subject has been suffering from mental and/or physical ill-health and is in receipt of medical care as a result. If there is any concern that the person is not fit to participate fully with the risk assessment process, the assessor must contact the Core Group so that further actions can be taken to consider the health and welfare of the subject. Where the risk remains, it will be expected that the risk assessment will continue through to completion with appropriate support being in place for the subject.

6. The assessment relating to risk situations involving more complex circumstances relating to current or past safeguarding concerns would normally be undertaken by one of the Methodist Church's approved risk assessors. These assessments are commissioned by the Core Group and will produce a full risk assessment report for consideration by a Connexional Safeguarding Panel.

7. A risk assessment will be undertaken where it is believed a risk assessment is necessary to consider a safeguarding concern identified in the following circumstances:

- A past or present allegation of abuse brought to the Church's attention by one of the statutory agencies;
- Where statutory agency requests that such an assessment is undertaken.
- Where a referral has been made by a church court or body under Standing Order 010(5) in respect of a person holding or seeking to fulfil a role in the Methodist Church to which Standing Order 010(3) applies but where the individual concerned has a criminal conviction or caution for an offence included within Standing Order 010(2);
- Where a safeguarding concern has been raised about a subject wanting to fulfil or is already holding a role to which SO 010(3) applies;
- Where a safeguarding concern has been raised by a member of the public

8. A Core Group will be established to consider all the relevant circumstances of the situation, review action already taken and consider further steps that might be needed if an assessment is to be undertaken. A clear delineation must exist between investigation or the making of inquiries within the Methodist Church and the risk assessment process.

9. The investigation or making of enquiries in relation to a safeguarding concern must be undertaken by the Core Group prior to the commissioning of the risk assessment. A risk assessor must be in possession of the outcome of those inquiries or other processes, along with relevant materials, prior to initiating the risk assessment process.

10. The risk assessor's role is to review the information provided, discuss the relevant issues with the subject of the assessment and consider the nature and seriousness of any potential safeguarding risk identified. They will also make recommendations as to how any risk can be addressed.

11. The risk assessor will be provided with copies of records held by the local Church, Circuit, District or the Connexional Team (where available) and they will also be provided, where it is relevant and available, with information from statutory agencies and other organisations so as to establish a fair and balanced picture of the circumstances.

Material provided to the risk assessor must only include such information that is required and relevant to the risk assessment that they are undertaking. If the risk assessor receives information that they deem is, inappropriate or beyond the scope of their assessment, it must be disregarded immediately and no record retained of that information. Guidance on the appropriateness of such information must be sought from the Core Group.

12. Information provided by any party (including the subject of the assessment) must, where possible, be corroborated by another source. Where information is provided that has come from a third party which has not been directly observed or witnessed, this must be clearly identified.

Prior to a Safeguarding Risk Assessment

13 Advisory information - The Core Group responsible for commissioning the risk assessment will ensure that relevant parties are aware of the risk assessment process and any actions that they may be requested to undertake. This must include the District Chair, Circuit Superintendent and Presbyter in Pastoral Charge of the local Church (where appropriate) and may also include Circuit or Church Safeguarding Officer. Line managers or those providing supervision or ministerial oversight may also require information about the process, dependent on the circumstances.

14 The Core Group will have responsibility for sharing information, making preparatory arrangements and identifying any further work that might be required prior to the assessment commencing.

15. Following the initial discussions the Core Group will:

1) Provide the risk assessor with a contact list for those people appropriate and relevant to the case who are willing to be contacted in the course of the risk assessment.
2) Provide written details of any continuing roles and responsibilities or arrangements for engagement in church activities which are in place during the risk assessment.
3) Identify a nominated liaison minister. This could be the District Chair or the Circuit Superintendent but may be an alternative person. The liaison minister will provide information to the Core Group and so must have an awareness of the current circumstances and assist the Core Group in making relevant arrangements.
4) Confirm that advisory information has been provided to and read by ministers and others who may be involved in coordinating and implementing the process. This must include the District Chair, Circuit Superintendent and Presbyter in Pastoral Charge of the local Church (where appropriate).

5) Line managers or those providing supervision or ministerial oversight may also require information about the process, dependent on the circumstances.

6) Arrange with the liaison minister and Core Group of an agreed date and time for a preparatory teleconference.

7) Confirm with the liaison minister that consideration has been given to who might provide pastoral support to the subject of the assessment, if they decide to request this.

16. The Core Group will:

- Prepare a letter for the risk assessor undertaking the assessment.
- Prepare a letter to be given to the subject of the risk assessment prior to the commencement of the assessment. A privacy notice must be included with this letter. This letter will give the name of the Core Group member facilitating the assessment and any additional information which is not included in the leaflet describing the process. It will also include a summary of information provided to the risk assessor.
- In cases where (a) victim(s) or survivor(s) has/have been identified, prepare a letter for the victim or survivor to explain the process which will ensue, expected timelines and what support will be available to them throughout the duration.
- Make contact with those likely to be spoken to during the course of the assessment in order to introduce the assessor, request their support for the process, confirm preferred contact arrangements and ensure that required information is provided. This activity may be shared between the liaison minister and Core Group depending on the respective knowledge of the party and contact information already held.
- In all cases, the District Chair and the Circuit Superintendent and Regional Officer for Safeguarding will be offered an opportunity to speak to the risk assessor.

17. Commissioning Letter **-** Following the decision of the Core Group to commission a risk assessment, a letter will be drafted and sent to the risk assessor, providing the circumstances that require assessment and identifying key areas of risk for consideration. The specific, personal needs of the subject (where known) must also be included in this letter to ensure that, from the outset, the assessor is aware of and sensitive to the subject's situation and can make appropriate arrangements to support those needs. A template for this letter is available but this must be used as a guide and the letter must address the issues of each case specifically and in detail, clearly identifying risk areas that require to be considered.

Information Leaflets **-** Leaflets providing guidance on the Risk Assessment process are available via the Methodist Church website:

i. Risk Assessment: A Guide for the Subject **-** This contains information for those who are the subject of a safeguarding risk assessment and includes an explanation of the assessment process and what they can expect, including guidance as to choosing a pastoral support, timescales, interaction with complaints and discipline matters and sources of help.

ii. Guidance Leaflet for Contributors – This contains information for those who may be invited to contribute to a risk assessment because they were closely involved with the circumstances in the past or present. This may include victims/survivors.

iii. Guidance Leaflet for Ministers **–** This contains information for ministers, district chairs and superintendents and includes guidance as to the roles a minister might play in a risk assessment process and what they can expect. It includes guidance as to who is suitable to be a pastoral supporter, the risk assessment process, timescales and how the risk assessment process interacts with complaints and discipline.

iv. Guidance Leaflet for Pastoral Supporters **–** This includes information on the role of a pastoral supporter and advice on suitability, additional needs/diversity, matters of subject, process and timescales.

v. Guidance Leaflet for Congregations – This includes information for church congregations and members and is intended to support presbyters and others who need to respond to concerns raised by those within congregations when a member or attendee is subject to inquiry or risk assessment in relation to a safeguarding concern. It will focus on providing answers to questions that are regularly asked at such times**.**

19 The Assessment

19.1 Involvement of the victim or survivor**:**

19.2 In cases where a victim or survivor has been identified, is in contact with the Methodist Church and has expressed a wish to be involved in the process, the risk assessor must consult with the victim or survivor and offer them the chance to contribute to the risk assessment, either by being interviewed or providing a written statement. The risk assessor must be sensitive to the danger of and, if at all possible, avoid re-traumatising a victim or survivor during the process. They must discuss with them the best approach for them.

19.3 **Anonymity –** A victim/survivor may wish to have their identity withheld from the subject of an allegation or concern and may wish to supply information on an anonymous basis.

This will, wherever possible, be respected and all those involved in the assessment of risk in such cases **MUST** maintain that anonymity. However, if a safeguarding complaint/concern results in a subsequent complaints and discipline process leading to the raising of a charge, it will not be possible for such anonymity to be maintained. In such cases, the victim/survivor should be advised of this and further advised that insisting on the information continuing to be anonymous might prevent the safeguarding process continuing. In such cases, it might be possible for the risk assessment process to continue if sufficient independent information is available. This must be considered by the Core Group prior to the safeguarding process being halted.

19.4 If an individual has already been part of another process within the Church and the information they have to share has already been fully and accurately recorded, the person may prefer to refer to this, rather than repeat a disclosure.

19.5 The victim or survivor will be offered a pastoral supporter who can accompany them in any meetings with the risk assessor and they must have the choice in how they engage with this process. If there is to be an interview, the risk assessor must establish whether the individual will bring a pastoral supporter and should also arrange with the Core Group for a note taker to be present as a second person. As with the subject of the risk assessment, consideration must be given of whether the survivor has additional support needs and whether they are fit to participate in the interview. Victims or survivors must be kept updated throughout the process.

APPENDIX 3 - PASTORAL SUPPORT

3.1 The process and outcome of a risk assessment can have a significant impact on those directly (and indirectly) involved, particularly when it deals with extremely sensitive issues or where it might have a serious effect on their future.

3.2 The individuals involved in a risk assessment in any capacity may feel anxious and apprehensive about any aspect of the process. Those might include:

- A victim/survivor of alleged harm or abuse;
- The suspect/perpetrator of the alleged harm or abuse;
- The family members of those involved;
- Ministers affected by the assessment process;
- Church members directly or indirectly involved in the circumstances being assessed.

3.3 Anyone who is involved in a risk assessment will be offered pastoral support throughout the risk assessment process. This is particularly the case for a victim/survivor of harm or abuse or the subject of the assessment and it is intended to ensure that those involved have access to another person that they feel will appreciate and understand their situation and needs.

3.4 A person who has agreed to take part in a risk assessment can choose whether they wish to have pastoral support. If they decide that they do not want pastoral support this must be confirmed in writing. They must be reminded during the process that they can change their mind and they can be assisted to identify suitable support or to nominate someone at any time.

3.5 A pastoral supporter must only work with one individual in any risk assessment.

3.6 A pastoral supporter will:

- Have had no direct or indirect involvement with the subject of the risk assessment or the victim of the alleged harm;
- Provide moral, emotional and other suitable support throughout the process;
- Ensure that any concerns about the person's wellbeing are brought to the attention of the Core Group, the risk assessor or the Safeguarding Panel (where applicable) at the earliest opportunity;

- Consider whether the individual's support needs have been properly addressed;
- Alert the Core Group as to any concerns or support needs of which they may not be aware;
- Respect the confidentiality of the process;
- Receive information about the specific circumstances of the concern only with the consent of the subject;
- Retain that information securely and use it solely for the purpose of supporting the subject through the process;
- Destroy such material at the conclusion of their involvement in the role.

3.7 A pastoral supporter for the subject of a risk assessment may be requested to:

- Attend meetings with the risk assessor and the subject of the risk assessment;
- Attend a safeguarding panel (if applicable) with the subject and remain with them throughout.

3.8 The pastoral supporter may not:

- Act as an advocate or representative of the person being assessed at meetings with the risk assessor or at the safeguarding panel (if applicable);
- Speak on behalf of the subject unless the risk assessor and/or panel asks them to do so;
- Disclose information received during the risk assessment in their capacity as pastoral support to any other party;
- Act as legal adviser

3.9 It must be noted that there is no provision for a legal adviser to act or engage with those managing or undertaking the risk assessment process. On all occasions, information will be provided directly to the subject of the assessment who may choose to share this with their legal or pastoral support if they wish.

3.10 Specialist advocacy may be arranged for a victim/survivor or the subject of a risk assessment where they have additional support needs in relation to communication or understanding to ensure that they are able to engage effectively with the process.

It is important that anyone who is aware that a party may have such needs, identifies this to the Core Group at the earliest opportunity so that communications can be considered carefully from the start and appropriate adjustments or arrangements can be made to assist.

3.11 In circumstances where the person may have already been through an employment, Complaints and Discipline or other process, the Core Group must identify whether pastoral support is already in place. The Core Group must also confirm that the subject of the assessment and the current supporter are happy for this arrangement to continue.

Choosing a Pastoral Supporter

3.12 It is the duty of the Core Group, in consultation with the District Chair/Circuit Superintendent and the local minister, to ensure that suitable options for a pastoral supporter have been identified or the persons involved or being assessed have provided written confirmation that they do not want someone acting in that capacity.

3.13 There is no need for the pastoral supporter to have any specific experience of the safeguarding process but the recipient must be provided with guidance to identify a suitable person. Conducting a risk assessment can involve complex emotions and interactions and this has the potential to impact on the person providing pastoral support. The person who has offered to undertake that role will be made aware of this via the pastoral supporters leaflet and can seek support from the Core Group.

3.14 The following **are not deemed to be appropriate** to act as pastoral support for someone who will be risk assessed:

- Anyone who has pastoral oversight of a minister who is subject to a risk assessment;
- Anyone who is likely to be involved in decision making arising from the risk assessment process – (the District Chair and Circuit Superintendent will be in this category);
- Anyone who is likely to be involved in implementing decisions arising from the risk assessment process – (the Church Safeguarding Officer, Circuit Safeguarding Officer and members of the Regional Safeguarding Team are likely to be in this category but it may also include others within the church community who are likely to become involved in a Monitoring and Support Group);
- Anyone who is in a line management or supervisory capacity in relation to the subject of the assessment where they are employed or undertake a voluntary role;

- Anyone who is already or may be requested to undertake a role within a connected Complaints or Discipline Process;
- Any member of the Safeguarding Committee or the Conference Office (including members of the Connexional Safeguarding Team);

3.15 The following **may not** be suitable to provide personal support in a risk assessment process:

- Family members
- Close friends

3.16 Family members and friends may not be suitable to provide support in this process. On occasion, the person subject to risk assessment may find it difficult to fully discuss the matters under consideration with those closest to them, both prior to and during the process. There can be a significant impact on critical, personal relationships when the whole picture is presented and discussed. As a result, choosing a family member or close friend as pastoral support is not advised due to the potential negative effect on the welfare of the person being assessed.

3.17 A leaflet has been produced to summarise the role of the pastoral supporter in the risk assessment process and to identify those who may not be suitable to undertake this role. The Core Group must ensure that this leaflet is provided to the person being assessed and any identified pastoral supporter.

Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guide for Pastoral Supporters

APPENDIX 4 - RISK ASSESSORS

4.1 **Register of Approved Risk Assessors -** A register will be held by the Director of Safeguarding of people who have the requisite qualifications and experience to carry out more complex safeguarding risk assessments. Those wishing to be included on this list will have followed the required application procedure and been approved to carry out this work by the Church's Safeguarding Committee. Where risk assessors are already employed by a Methodist circuit or district, they may be included in this list but will carry out this work as a consultant, independently from their employed role and they will not conduct this type of assessment within their own Region. The Director of Safeguarding may provide training to develop the skills base of risk assessors where deemed necessary.

In order to join the approved list of assessors, it will be necessary to provide evidence of training and/or the appropriate level of experience in the following areas:

4.2 **All assessors**

- Interview skills relevant to those who have been the subject of allegations of abuse and safeguarding concerns
- Awareness of relevant criminal offences and statutory agency practice pertinent to the case (e.g. sexual offences, domestic abuse etc.)
- The Data Protection Act and the management and handling of all data including sensitive personal data
- Assessing and managing safeguarding risk
- Preparation of risk assessment reports

4.3 **Additional skills where required by the needs of any individual assessment**

- Awareness of the impact of trauma upon victims and survivors of abuse or other traumatic experiences and the ability to interact sensitively and compassionately with them during interview
- Interview skills relevant to adults who may be vulnerable or have additional needs
- Interview skills relevant to those who have been the subject of allegations of abuse or safeguarding concerns.

The risk assessor will receive support from the Core Group overseeing the assessment and a regional officer for safeguarding undertaking a risk assessment will receive support from their regional manager.

4.4 Independence

4.5 In normal circumstances, less complex and straightforward risk assessments will be carried out by a member of the Regional Safeguarding Team of the area in which the concern has been raised. Where an apparent or obvious conflict of interest exists and the independence of the assessment process could be compromised, an alternative assessor must be identified.

4.6 More complex or serious risk assessments will be undertaken by one of the Methodist Church's approved risk assessors, but the same considerations of independence and possible conflicts of interest will be relevant in these assessments also. Where the identified risk assessor is connected to the Methodist Church by membership or employment or has a ministry or voluntary role, it is essential that they are independent from the district or the activity in which the concern has been identified or where the parties are currently located. This is critical to embody the value of fairness and balance in the process.

4.7 Those agreeing to undertake assessments must be asked to confirm in writing that they have no close connection to the main parties and to declare any potential conflicts of interest of which they are aware. A record of this will be added to the relevant case file by the chair of the Core Group as appropriate.

4.8 The details of the risk assessor and confirmation of their independence from the safeguarding concern must be obtained prior to engaging in the process.

4.9 In all cases, assessors must follow the risk assessment policy and procedures of the Methodist Church and use the standard risk assessment format provided for this purpose. This is important to standardise the approach taken to ensure consistency and quality while facilitating those who receive numerous reports for consideration as panel members.

APPENDIX 5 - RISK ASSESSMENT REPORTS

5.1 The standard template risk assessment report (see below) will be used for all Safeguarding Risk Assessments, but additional information can be added where this is deemed necessary to provide further clarity to the report.

5.2 The standard format risk assessment document is designed to aid the assessor in producing an effective report and must include the following:

- Clear and concise details of the risks;
- Clear explanation of the impact on the alleged behaviour upon the victim(s)/survivor(s) and the potential impact on the subject of the assessment and others involved or linked to the circumstances;
- Concise, balanced and fair content written without jargon;
- *A summary of the Risk Assessment report*
- Corroboration of information provided with another source or clear acknowledgement that what is known has been provided solely by the subject of the assessment;
- Clear indication of the source of information;
- Differentiation between fact and opinion;
- Clear and appropriate conclusions and recommendations.

5.3 The risk assessment report may include appendices containing specialist advice (where required), a response from a victim or survivor or a submission from the district, the circuit or the local church about the circumstances and the potential outcome. This may be in addition to contents of the risk assessment report itself.

5.4 *The Core Group is responsible for assessing the quality of the completed risk assessment report and ensuring that it meets an acceptable standard. Once the Report has been signed off by the Core Group, it will be passed to the Chair of the Safeguarding Panel.*

COMPLETION OF THE REPORT

5.5 Any supporting documents, records of correspondence or notes must be retained by the assessor throughout the assessment and a copy provided to the Core Group at the conclusion of the process. These will be supplied (in a redacted format where required) if a Subject Access Request is received under the Data Protection Act 1998. Further information is available in relation to the provision of material for such requests in the:

- Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes Data Protection Act Guidance and

- The Safeguarding Subject Access Request Process document.

5.6 A feedback form will be made available to the risk assessor to permit their feedback on the process. This must be returned to the Core Group, which will collate feedback in order for the on-going review and development of the risk assessment process.

5.7 On completion of the risk assessment, the draft report will be forwarded to the Core Group which will be responsible for sending a copy to the subject of the assessment. The Core Group will advise the subject of the assessment that they must submit any comments directly to Core Group chair within 14 days of receipt of the completed report.

5.8 Any comments made by the subject will be copied to the risk assessor. Any factual inaccuracies, as opposed to differences of opinion or alternative interpretations, must be corrected by the risk assessor and the subject informed of the amendments made.

5.9 Risk Assessments should endeavour to present the level and nature of risk that it is believed the subject represents. While this is very much a subjective conclusion, an opinion, expressed as objectively as possible, should seek to offer an informed view along the following lines:

- Low risk – Current evidence does not indicate a likelihood of the subject causing serious harm.
- Medium risk – There are identifiable indicators of serious harm and the subject has the potential to cause such harm but is thought unlikely to do so unless there is a change in circumstances.
- High risk – There are identifiable indicators in the subject's behaviour and attitude to suggest there being a risk of serious harm which could happen at any time and the impact of which would be serious.
- Very high risk – There is an imminent risk of the subject causing serious harm, it being assessed that this is more likely than not to happen and the impact would be serious.

5.10 Where there is disagreement in relation to information provided by contributors to the assessment, this must be clearly indicated and the relevant sources of information detailed. A final version of the report must then be supplied to the subject of the risk assessment.

5.11 Care must be taken in relation to the means by which the assessment is sent to the subject. It is important to consider the security of the means chosen and the support that might be required for the subject on receipt of the document.

5.12 Arrangements can be made to ensure that a pastoral supporter, a member of the Core Group or even the risk assessor themselves can deliver the document in person where deemed appropriate or necessary. If there are any concerns about the health or welfare of the recipient, consultation with the Core Group must be made prior to the sending the report.

5.13 The final risk assessment report, along with the full comments received from the subject of the assessment will be sent to the members of the Safeguarding Panel in advance.

5.14 *The risk assessor should prepare a summary of the Risk Assessment report for submission to the Core Group and the Safeguarding Panel along with the full report.*

5.15 Where there are concerns for the safety or vulnerability of a third party if information that they have provided for the risk assessment report were to be disclosed or where it has not been possible to obtain permission from the person referred to, further advice must be taken from the chair of the Core Group.

APPENDIX 6 - SAFEGUARDING PANELS

1. Panel Membership

Methodist Church Standing Order 232(3A) sets out the composition of a Safeguarding Panel for the consideration of a risk assessment.

The safeguarding panel will consist of three members of the Safeguarding Committee with safeguarding experience and/or a senior position within the Methodist Church and, where it is appropriate (in cases where the subject of a risk assessment has, or is alleged to have, perpetrated abusive behaviour against another person) there must be a survivor representative from the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group as a fourth member of the Safeguarding Panel. The role of the survivor representative will be to provide 'the voice of the victim' to assist the other panel members in their determinations.

Note – Following discussions at the Safeguarding Committee in October 2024, this is likely to change to a pool of individuals, both members and non-members of the Safeguarding Committee, from which Panel membership can be drawn. The necessary arrangements for this have yet to be made.

2. Types of Panels

Where a Safeguarding Panel has been considered necessary following a risk assessment, the safeguarding panel may convene in a face-to-face meeting or virtually by appropriate electronic medium.

3. **Video/Telephone Panel -** This form of panel is used for risk assessments relating to volunteers but can also be used for staff employed by district and less complex issues. The risk assessor will be available to be spoken to by video or telephone during the teleconference and can be called upon to clarify issues. The subject of the assessment will be permitted access to the video/telephone conference at an appropriate time to provide comments relating to the assessment to the Panel.

4. **Face-to-Face Panel -** This panel involves a meeting of the panel and the subject of the assessment. The risk assessor will also usually attend. . This is the preferred arrangement for a safeguarding panel for ministers. If the subject of the assessment chooses not to attend, the Panel may revert to a video/teleconference if they deem this suitable, bearing in mind the circumstances of the case.

5. Format of a Safeguarding Panel (Standing Order 232) – Safeguarding Panels would be expected to broadly follow the same format, but this may vary and changes to the format will be at the discretion of the Panel Chair and members. The presence and order of attendance at a safeguarding panel will be at the discretion of the chair and members of the panel but there is an expectation that the Chair of the District in which the subject is stationed should be invited to attend. The Chair of the District can delegate his/her attendance and, if unable to attend, should be contactable.

The expected format would be as follows:

1. Panel planning discussion – (this may take place sometime prior to the panel convening).
2. Introductions – (This may include a prayer at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel).
3. Questions to the risk assessor.
4. Discussion with additional attendees.
5. Discussion with the subject of the assessment.
6. Panel considerations.
7. Decision on outcome.
8. Outcome Letter production plan
9. Right of Appeal

6. Appeal and Grounds of Appeal

The subject of the risk assessment is entitled to appeal against the outcome of the Panel, and this is outlined in Standing Order 231(2) of CPD Volume 2. Appeals may be brought by the subject of the risk assessment, the District Chair or Superintendent or the Director of Safeguarding (SO 231(1)).
There are three grounds of appeal:

(i) that there was a material irregularity in how the matter was dealt with by the safeguarding panel or the risk assessor appointed under Standing Order 230(7)(*b*);

(ii) that the panel or the risk assessor failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones; or

(iii) that in the light of events occurring since the direction was given or the determination was made (as the case may be), or of evidence of which the appellant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the direction or determination.

7. Appeal Process and Appeal Panel

7.1 *The notice requesting an appeal should be accompanied by a written statement indicating on which of the grounds the appeal is brought and the specific nature of any error, omission or other matter relied on. The chair of the Safeguarding Committee will pass it to the Core Group Chair to organise an appeal panel. The Core Group Chair will arrange for the appeal to be heard by an appeal panel consisting of members who are independent from the original safeguarding panel.*

7.2 An appeal panel, held either as a face-to-face panel or as a virtual panel, is convened to consider an appeal against the decision of a safeguarding panel held to consider a risk assessment.

7.3 The appeal panel must consider if the letter of appeal submitted under the Standing Order meets one of the three specified criteria. This initial part of the appeal process may be conducted virtually or in person and need not include the appellant. If the appeal panel considers that the appeal meets one or more of the specified criteria then a further meeting of the appeal panel will be arranged to consider the appeal.

7.4 The appeal panel will consider evidence produced for the purposes of the appeal but there will be no rehearing of evidence provided to the original safeguarding panel. Evidence produced for the purposes of the appeal will be provided by the appellant to the facilitator no later than 14 days before the date of the meeting.

7.5 A member of the original safeguarding panel will be in attendance to present that panel's report. The appellant has the right to attend and present their case on the basis of the grounds of appeal specified. They may be accompanied by a friend who shall also have the right to speak.

7.6 The appeal panel will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal or refer the matter back to the Safeguarding Committee for further consideration or a further risk assessment.

7.7 The decision of the appeal panel will be reached solely on the basis of the documents relied upon by the original safeguarding panel and any submissions presented at the meeting and any other documents which both the person representing the original panel and the appellant agree the appeal panel should consider. The appeal panel will provide the appellant with the reasons for its decision.

7.8 The decision of the safeguarding appeal panel is final and there is no further route of appeal in respect of the outcome.

APPENDIX 7 - OUTCOMES, RISK MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE

The outcome of the Safeguarding Panel should be based on:

- The evidence presented in the risk assessment during the hearing.
- The assessed level of current and future risk to individuals or groups.
- The need to comply with statutory safeguarding duties and internal safeguarding policies.
- The pastoral needs of all parties involved.

The Panel should ensure that, on completing its deliberations, any decisions made are clearly and unambiguously identified as ‘directions’ or ‘recommendations’ as appropriate to limit the possibility of confusion for the Core Group in ensuring their implementation.

Possible outcomes may include:

- No further action required.
- Implementation of risk management plans.
- Supervision, restriction, or removal from roles or ministries.
- Mandatory safeguarding training or professional support interventions.
- Referrals to statutory bodies (e.g., police, social services) where required.

The subject of the risk assessment will be advised of the decision and determination of the Safeguarding Panel directly by the Chair of the Panel either in person at the conclusion of the Panel or in writing in the form of an Outcome Letter as soon as is practicable after the hearing.

Risk Management Measures

The panel will assess risks identified by the risk assessor and consider the recommended risk management actions. These may include:

- A safeguarding contract or agreement outlining the Church’s expectation of the subject’s conduct and their future involvement, if any permitted, with the Methodist Church.
- Supervision by a Church monitoring and support group.
- Restrictions on activities within the Methodist Church involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults.
- Regular safeguarding reviews or audits.

Compliance Monitoring

The Core Group overseeing the risk assessment will ensure that the outcomes, directions and recommendations of the safeguarding panel are properly actioned. This will normally be passed to a Monitoring and Support Group in terms of Standing Order 690(2).

APPENDIX 8 - SAFEGUARDING CONTRACTS

https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-Information/forms/safeguarding-contract-forms/

A safeguarding contract in a church context is a formal written agreement designed to manage risk and ensure the safety of all individuals—especially children, young people and vulnerable adults—when someone in the congregation poses, or may pose, a safeguarding concern. It is a structured agreement between the Methodist Church and an individual who may present a safeguarding risk. It outlines specific boundaries, expectations, support mechanisms, and monitoring arrangements to ensure the individual's safe participation in church life while prioritizing the protection of others.

Key Elements typically Include**:**

- **The purpose** of the contract (risk management and safety)
- **Restrictions** (e.g., not being alone with children, limited access to certain areas/events)
- **Accountability measures** (e.g., regular check-ins, assigned supervisors)
- **Support offered** (e.g., pastoral care, counselling, reintegration support)
- **Consequences** for breaches
- **Review dates** and oversight process (by the Monitoring and Support Group)

Methodist Church Standing Order 690A requires that there should be an annual review of the arrangements under a Safeguarding Contract. A review meeting will be undertaken by the Monitoring and Support Group. The full contents of the relevant risk assessment report should be considered, taking account of any changes in circumstances and issues of concern that have arisen during the previous twelve months. The Monitoring and Support Group, assisted by the Regional Officer for Safeguarding, will decide whether there have been any changes in circumstances that could significantly impact on both the severity and nature of any previous risk(s) identified in the report.

Standing Order 690A(2) provides that the Monitoring and Support Group shall consider at least once every three years whether a new risk assessment is required to be undertaken to reassess the risk posed by the person concerned. The Monitoring and Support Group may decide that:

a) The current arrangements are appropriate and should continue unchanged or

b) They wish to request a consideration of a change of conditions or removal of the current arrangements or

c) They feel able or not able to support a request already made by the person who is subject of the safeguarding contract to change or remove one or more conditions or the contract itself.

If the Monitoring and Support Group feels a change or removal of conditions or a removal of the safeguarding contract is appropriate, the Regional Safeguarding Manager will consider the necessity of commissioning a new risk assessment.

SGC/1 Safeguarding Contract Information Summary

This form should be used to collate information to support introduction of a safeguarding contract where there is an automatic requirement under standing orders 010 prior to a party engaging with the Methodist Church. It should be used in conjunction with SGC/2 & 3. June 2020.

SGC/2 Safeguarding Contract Summary of Risks

To summarise risks to support introduction of a safeguarding contract where there is an automatic requirement under standing order 010 and 690 for engagement in church activities. The summary of risks should be based on information collated via SGC/1. January 2019.

SGC/3 Safeguarding Contract Template

This form should be used to produce a safeguarding contract following completion of SGC/1 & 2 or following the decision of a Safeguarding Panel that a safeguarding contract is required. January 2019.

SGC/4 Safeguarding Contract Annual Review Form

To be completed on annual basis for all safeguarding contracts. January 2019.

SGC/5 Safeguarding Contract District Risk Assessment to Remove/Change Safeguarding Contract

This form should be completed when a review has been initiated (standing order 690A) and a risk assessment is required to be considered by a Safeguarding Panel.

APPENDIX 9 - MONITORING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

9.1 Standing Order 690(2)(a) provides for the establishing of a monitoring and support group for safeguarding contracts within the church context. The group supports the implementation of safeguarding measures recommended following a safeguarding panel and it is intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all individuals involved.

9.2 The purpose of a monitoring and support group is to oversee the Implementation of a safeguarding contract within the church, ensuring compliance with the conditions of the contract, providing support to the subject of the agreement, and safeguarding the wellbeing of the wider church community.

9.3 Membership of the group should typically include:

- A chairperson
- A minister or pastoral leader

9.4 The monitoring and support group will:

- Monitor compliance with the safeguarding agreement
- Provide pastoral and professional support
- Meet regularly to review the subject's progress
- Identify and act upon risks or concerns
- Update the safeguarding contract as needed and review the contract on an annual basis
- Maintain clear and confidential records of meetings

9.5 Reporting and Accountability - meeting minutes should be recorded, handled confidentially, and stored securely. The group should report findings or concerns to the Regional Safeguarding Manager and serious breaches must be escalated immediately according to Methodist Church safeguarding procedures.

9.6 Support offered to the subject of the safeguarding contract may include:

- Emotional and pastoral care
- Referrals to counselling or specialist support
- Professional supervision and training
- Clear and compassionate feedback

9.7 Confidentiality and Data Protection - all group members must adhere to the requirement of confidentiality, data protection regulations and the church's safeguarding policies. Sensitive information should be disclosed only on a need-to-know basis.

APPENDIX 10 - INFORMATION SECURITY, DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY NOTICES

10.1 OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

10.2 It should be noted that both the risk assessment report and any summary report will contain **'personal data'** and are likely to contain **'special category data'** as defined by the UK General Data Protection Regulations. For the purposes of risk assessment, there is a requirement to obtain consent of those people whose data is used within the process (see initial information to be provided). It is legitimate to process such data where the individual wishes to engage with the Church and the risk assessment is carried out in order to do this and protect others already engaging with the Church.

10.3 Where special category data is concerned, there are additional processing requirements, some of which are likely to be relevant to this process. This includes the need to protect the vital interests of the individual or another person and it may apply in cases where consent cannot be given or reasonably obtained.

10.4 PRIVACY NOTICE

10.6 A privacy notice will be supplied to all parties who provide information to a risk assessment (both the subject of the assessment and contributors) and to those about whom information has been received during the course of the risk assessment. This will include advice about how information is stored, used and shared, in addition to their rights to raise a complaint and access details held about them. A copy of the Methodist Church's Privacy Notice can be accessed on the Church's Website at https://www.methodist.org.uk/privacy-notice/

10.7 PERSONAL DATA

10.8 For the purposes of information security and data protection, personal data is defined as:

- Data that relates to a living individual;
- Data than can identify a person;
- Where an individual can be identified via indicative circumstances or direct details;
- It also includes where the data can be identified by using another piece of data held (e.g. anonymous report with a key)

- It includes the expression of opinion about the person and expression of intentions about them (e.g. recommendations, outcomes, advice) means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified.

10.9 What is special category data?

10.10 Special category data is information about an individual which includes one or more of the following categories:

- Racial or ethnic origin
- Political opinion
- Physical or mental health or condition
- Any proceedings for any offence alleged to have been committed and the outcome of any such investigation or proceedings
- Trade union membership
- Religious beliefs
- Genetics
- Biometrics (where used for ID purposes)
- Sexual orientation
- Sexual life

10.11 Criminal Offence Data

10.12 This has now become a separate category of data under GDPR and includes criminal allegations, proceedings or convictions.

10.13 INFORMATION SHARED FOLLOWING A SAFEGUARDING PANEL

10.14 Following a Safeguarding or Appeal Panel, an outcome letter will be drafted by the Core Group for approval by the Panel. The Director of Safeguarding, District Chair and the Regional Officer for Safeguarding will be consulted prior to the final outcome letter being sent, to ensure the directions and recommendations are in line with local circumstances.

10.15 The following documentation will be sent to the listed parties:

- Outcome letter will be sent to the subject of assessment, the District Chair, the Regional Safeguarding Manager, the relevant circuit superintendent, the chairperson of any Monitoring and Support Group and support group members.

- The summary section of Risk Assessment Report will be sent to The District Chair, the relevant circuit superintendent, the chairperson and members of the Monitoring and Support Group (if one is required).

- Should they wish to receive it, a summary copy of the Risk Assessment Report should be provided to the victim/survivor.

- The full risk assessment report will be sent to the Regional Safeguarding Manager.

- Appeal Panel decisions will be sent to the subject of assessment, the District Chair, the relevant circuit superintendent and the Regional Safeguarding Manager.

10.16 In each case, the Safeguarding Panel will consider information that can be provided to a victim or survivor who has been actively involved in the risk assessment or has requested this information. This will include considerations as to legal requirements, statutory guidance, Methodist Church policy and procedures and consent provided by those involved. The Panel will clearly identify in correspondence the reasons why certain information cannot be provided, if that is the case, and any relevant legislation, government guidance or authority on which that decision is based.

10.17 Prior to the commencement of the risk assessment, the Core Group will ensure that all parties engaging in the process are aware of how their information will be processed. All parties will be invited to provide their consent for this and will be made aware of the extent to which information can be shared. Any information or correspondence being sent out by the Safeguarding Panel will be reviewed and approved by the Panel members before being sent out.

10.18 Each risk assessment contains a summary which includes a guide to the risks identified, details of the circumstances, the conclusions of the risk assessor and the recommendations made in relation to risk assessment. It is the intention that the summary will contain sufficient information for the management of risk locally.

10.19 FURTHER INFORMATION SUPPLIED VIA THE REGIONAL OFFICER FOR SAFEGUARDING

10.20 The full risk assessment report will be held in confidence by the Regional Safeguarding Team. The Regional Safeguarding Team will fulfil a gatekeeping role in relation to the full risk assessment document based on the following considerations:

- There is a need for risk assessment information to be available to support risk management locally to ensure effective measures are put in place and that actions can be taken with due regard to the circumstances of any issue.

- It is intended that for the most part, the summary section of the full risk assessment will address these needs.

- The disclosure of data is subject to relevant legislation and statutory guidance both in general (e.g. the General Data Protection Regulation) and specifically within a safeguarding environment.

- It is likely that not all those who may need to receive information of a sensitive nature will have received suitable training or have relevant experience as to how, when and if certain information can be disclosed. The Regional Safeguarding Team's gatekeeping role will ensure that those receiving information have the requisite guidance to manage it, securely store it and minimise the likelihood of such requirements being breached.
- There is a requirement for a record to be kept of why information has been disclosed with reference to key aspects of legislation and statutory guidance.

10.21 The Core Group will consider the following issues in each case before responding to any request for any additional information from the full risk assessment to any other party:

1. Is there a need for disclosure in order to manage an identified current safeguarding risk?

2. Is there a specific need for that individual to receive or hold that information?

3. If the risk assessment contains information about employment/disciplinary or complaints processes, has disclosure been agreed with the lay employment adviser (employment) or the Connexional Complaints Worker (complaints & discipline) prior to disclosure? There are legal and organisational requirements in relation to confidentiality of those processes and consultation should be undertaken before disclosing this information.

4. Are additional privacy notices required for any relevant parties who have provided information to the risk assessment or about whom information has been received? The Core Group will need to consider whether any additional sharing of information is covered by privacy notices that have already been supplied.

10.22 A note in relation to consideration of the above questions will be added on the relevant case file prior to disclosure. For further information in relation to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (England & Wales)/Scottish National Guidance on Child Protection 2021, refer to the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Guidance document.

10.23 Information will be disclosed to any complaints or disciplinary process of the Methodist Church relating to the subject of the assessment in consultation with the Connexional Complaints Manager, other relevant member of Conference Office and the Safeguarding Panel.

10.24 INFORMATION SHARING BEYOND THE PANEL PROCESS

10.25 It should be noted that there is a requirement to share information which has been obtained or produced during the risk assessment process in the following circumstances:

1. In response to a Subject Access Request to the Church under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). This may be initiated by any party and the information relating to them must be provided. Further information may be obtained from the Connexional Safeguarding Team in relation to the Methodist Church Safeguarding Process for Subject Access Requests. There is also a useful guide on related matters on the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) Website.
2. There is a legal requirement to disclose information to statutory agencies (such as Police and Children's Services) where they are undertaking an investigation or there is a court order requiring that to happen. The information disclosed must be only that data which is relevant to the investigation. Any material supplied to such agencies could become subject to a Freedom of Information Act request once held by them so sensitive material that may put someone at risk, if released, should be clearly highlighted and discussed with the relevant officer prior to submission.
3. There is a legal requirement to disclose material to DBS in relation to vetting and barring inquiries (England & Wales) and Disclosure Scotland in relation to the PVG scheme. Due to the considerations above, this material will be redacted prior to submission by the Church. Further assistance should be sought on this matter from the Connexional Safeguarding Team on receipt of such a request.

Further details of relevant procedures relating to information sharing can be found in the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance document.

APPENDIX 11 - DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Adult at risk - a person aged 18 or over who may be unable to protect themselves from harm, exploitation, or abuse due to factors such as age, disability, illness, or mental or physical impairment. They may require care services or support and can be at risk of harm from others or from their own inability to manage certain aspects of daily life independently.

Child - a person under the age of 18-years of age

Core Group is a team of professionals responsible for implementing and monitoring a safeguarding concern and overseeing a risk assessment. This group works together to ensure the effective investigation and management of a safeguarding concern and overseeing an assessment of risk. The Core Group meets regularly to review progress, share information, and coordinate actions aimed at managing and mitigating the risks under consideration.

DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) is a system in England and Wales that helps employers make safer recruitment decisions by checking the criminal records of individuals. It ensures that people who are unsuitable for working with children or vulnerable adults are identified and can be barred from certain types of employment. The DBS provides different levels of checks, from basic criminal record checks to more detailed background screenings, depending on the role.

Individuals who pose a risk of harm to children and/or vulnerable adults - Standing Order 010, paragraphs 2(i) and 2(ii) provide a list of offences a conviction for which bars an individual from holding an office or undertaking work in the life of the Church with children, young people or vulnerable adults. A list of these offences is contained within Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933 (as amended), the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or Schedule 15 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003. This prohibition also applies to an individual who is barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service (or the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults legislation in Scotland) from work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Monitoring and Support Group

PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) Scheme is a system in Scotland designed to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by preventing individuals who are deemed unsuitable from working with them. It is managed by Disclosure Scotland and helps employers make safer recruitment decisions by ensuring that people who have a history of harmful behaviour cannot work in certain roles involving vulnerable groups. Individuals must be members of the PVG Scheme to work in such regulated roles.

Risk Assessment Activity - Risk Assessment Activity is a collective term to describe all forms of actions to consider the presence and seriousness of safeguarding risk within Church environments.

Risk Assessment - A risk assessment process commissioned by the Regional or Connexional Safeguarding Team producing a comprehensive report for consideration by a Safeguarding Panel relating to a range of more complex circumstances in respect of current and past safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding Concern - An identified or reported concern relating to words or behaviour of a person currently engaging or previously having engaged with the Methodist Church via worship, other church activities, responsibilities or roles. The words of behaviour of concern are reported to be abusive, harmful or neglectful towards children, young people and/or adults who may be vulnerable. The person identified may be an employee, a volunteer or a member of the Church's ministerial team and there is likely to be an inherent imbalance of power between the person exhibiting the alleged conduct and the person towards whom the behaviour was directed. The concern may also relate to poor safeguarding practice by those whose roles or responsibilities include interaction with members of those groups. A safeguarding concern may be raised by any party, whether inside or outside of the Methodist Church, and could be received initially by anyone perceived to be in a position trust in the Church. However, it will have been brought to the attention of a Church, Circuit, District or Connexional Safeguarding Officer to initiate further action.

Safeguarding Contract - An agreement made locally or following a safeguarding panel to facilitate an individual's involvement in roles, responsibilities or activities in the life of the Methodist Church or attendance at worship within the Methodist Church (as appropriate). A safeguarding contract will normally be put in place following a risk assessment but there may be a need to draw up an interim safeguarding contract to address immediate safeguarding risks while more detailed risk assessment activity is undertaken. The safeguarding concern may arise from a past or current safeguarding concern raised within a District.