

Note on Maternity Leave

Contact name and details	The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler HustlerJ@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolution	97/1. The Council receives the report.

The Conference of 2015 accepted the following memorial from the North Shields and Whitley Bay circuit:

M10 Maternity leave

The North Shields and Whitley Bay (20/5) Circuit Meeting (Present: 29; Voting: unanimous) draws the attention of the Conference to Standing Order 807A (Maternity Leave). Whilst the Circuit Meeting fully affirms and endorses this Standing Order, it is concerned about the lack of guidance that is provided for those experiencing a maternity leave. This should include:

Help for Circuit and Local Churches in both preparing for the term of absence and ensuring there is adequate cover during that absence.

Provision of appropriate levels of pastoral care and support for the individual concerned, both ante- and post-natal.

The North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit Meeting, noting the helpful guidance that is provided around sabbaticals (Standing Order 744), including the District responsibility to ensure that a Sabbatical Support Group is formed, asks the Conference to instruct that a document be created which outlines good practice and offers models of such practice so that Circuits may be better prepared and those on maternity leave better supported.

Reply

The Conference thanks the North Shields and Whitley Bay Circuit Meeting for its memorial and notes the importance of appropriate arrangements for maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave. The Conference notes changes in April 2015 to legislation regarding maternity leave and the subsequent revisions to Standing Orders 807, 807A, 807B and 807D considered by this Conference (Agenda, report 17).

The request for guidance made in this memorial was considered by the Stationing Committee at its meeting in March 2015. The committee agreed that a set of guidelines should be developed and then presented to the Methodist Council for approval prior to its publication, to ensure that any such connexional guidelines are in keeping with recent changes to legislation.

The Conference therefore accepts the memorial, noting that the Stationing Committee is already undertaking this work, and will present proposed guidelines for Circuits and churches regarding arrangements for maternity leave to the Methodist Council no later than October 2016.

As the reply indicates, the Memorial coincided with work already being undertaken by the Stationing Committee and amendments to Standing Orders in light of the changes to legislation that came into force in April 2015.

The Development and Personnel advisors have produced guidance for lay employees on shared parental leave but there is work still to be done on how most appropriately to apply this to

ministers. Consideration also needs to be given to how guidelines can be applied in a circuit ministers are married to each other and have a child and might want to take shared parental leave at the same time.

Work is ongoing to revise the guidance in light of the need to separate out the different categories of parental leave (ie compulsory maternity leave shared parental leave (39 weeks ordinary and 13 weeks additional), called maternity leave in SO 807A for fear of it being confused with parental leave in SO 807D, and paternity leave), the paperwork needing to be completed, and the experience of ministers who have taken leave under SO 807A. Staff in the Conference Office and Development and Personnel are looking to complete this work as soon as possible. A further report will be brought to the Council in January 2017.

*****RESOLUTION**

97/1. The Council receives the report.