



SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Pastoral Supporters



Introduction

The Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe environment in which all may flourish and develop through their engagement with the Church. The Church has a responsibility to make sure that all activities and locations are safe for everyone to access worship and leisure, by implementing safeguarding practice. Risk assessment plays a key role in that process in ensuring that fair, informed and proportionate decisions are made for the safety of all.

This leaflet may be a useful resource in the following circumstances:

- If you are asked to be a pastoral supporter for someone who is taking part in a connexional risk assessment.
- If you have been asked as a liaison minister to identify suitable parties to provide pastoral support for someone involved in the process.
- If you have been told that you are going to be subject to a connexional risk assessment and you want to find your own pastoral support.

A comprehensive guide to the process is available via the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures, which can be found on the Methodist Church website. There are additional information resources available online for other parties involved in the process.

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Am I the right person to undertake this role?

Many people feel concerned that they are not the right person to offer pastoral support during a Connexional Risk Assessment. The following information may assist you to decide if you are able to undertake this role. There is no expectation that you will have any specific experience of the safeguarding process, if you are invited to undertake this role.

The following **are not** deemed suitable to take on this role:

- 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 District Safeguarding Officer 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. A nominated pastoral supporter can attend Monitoring and Support Group meetings but only in a pastoral support role and not as a core member of the 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 disciplinary process.
- Any member of the Safeguarding Committee, the Connexional Safeguarding Team or the Conference Office (including members of the Connexional Safeguarding Team)

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

- Family members
- Close friends
- Direct work colleagues

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

It is expected that all parties will demonstrate respect and consideration in their communications with others, even where there may be differing perspectives or strongly held views. On some occasions, personal loyalties and feelings about a situation may make this more difficult. This should be considered when accepting an invitation to be a pastoral supporter.

Please contact the Connexional Safeguarding Team, the risk assessor or the District Safeguarding Officer if you have any concerns about the role you have been asked to undertake.

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What will be expected of me as a pastoral supporter?

The subject of a Connexional Risk Assessment may feel anxious about the process and their circumstances. This is an understandable reaction as the outcome of a risk assessment can have a significant impact on their future or deal with sensitive issues. The role of pastoral supporter in the process is to ensure that those who are being assessed have access to another person that they feel understand their situation and their needs.

As a pastoral supporter **you will**:

- Provide moral, emotional and other suitable support throughout the process
- Consider whether the individual's support needs have been addressed
- Ensure that any concerns about wellbeing are brought to the attention of the Connexional Safeguarding Team, District Safeguarding Officer, risk assessor or the Safeguarding Panel (where applicable) at the earliest opportunity
- Respect the confidentiality of the process

- Receive information about the specific circumstances of the concern only with the consent of the subject. Information will always be provided directly to the subject of the assessment who may choose to share this if they wish.
- Retain any information securely and use it solely for the purpose of supporting the subject through the process
- Destroy such material at the conclusion of your involvement in the role.

You may be asked by the subject of the assessment to:

- Attend meetings with the risk assessor and the subject of the risk assessment
- Attend a face-to-face panel (if applicable) with the assessed person and remain with them throughout.

As the pastoral supporter you **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 you to do so.
- Disclose to any other party information received during the risk assessment in your capacity as pastoral supporter.
- Act as legal adviser. There is no provision for a legal adviser to act or engage with those managing or undertaking the risk assessment process.

What do I need to know about the Connexional Risk Assessment process?

The following information about the process may help you to provide support to the subject of the assessment:

- The subject will have received a letter informing them that a connexional risk assessment is required and the reasons for this. This will include a privacy notice.
- A risk assessor will be identified by the Connexional Safeguarding Team who will have relevant experience and no direct, prior involvement with the circumstances. The assessor will offer the subject an opportunity to meet with them, to discuss the circumstances.
- Additional support arrangements may be put in place to ensure that the subject is able to engage fully in the process. This may include specialist advocacy and consideration of an appropriate location and time/date to suit the needs of those participating in meetings.
- The subject's participation in the process at any stage is voluntary but highly recommended. However, a risk assessment will be undertaken even if they choose not to attend any meeting and a copy of the report will be sent to them for comment on all occasions.

What happens next?

- A Safeguarding Panel will be arranged to consider the report and the subject's comments.
- The panel will then discuss the report by phone or in person (depending on circumstances).
For those invited to attend a panel, a sample format of a Safeguarding Panel can be found in the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Policy and Procedures.
- At the conclusion of the Safeguarding Panel, the outcome will be shared verbally with those present and also in writing within 5 working days with relevant parties.
- There is a right of appeal in some specific circumstances in relation to the Safeguarding Panel within 14 days of receipt of the outcome letter. If there is a right of appeal, it will be specified in the outcome letter.
- Implementation of the recommendations and directions of the Panel will be led by the District Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with relevant parties.

For further information about the risk assessment process

Please contact your local District Safeguarding Officer

or

The Connexional Safeguarding Team:

safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk

020 7467 5189
