

Covenants of Care - final report from working group

Contact Name and Details	Tim Carter; Connexional Safeguarding Adviser; cartert@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Resolutions	41/1. The Council receives the Report. 41/2. The Council commends the report to the Conference.

Summary of Content and Impact

Subject and Aims	To report progress of the working group on reviewing the operation of Covenants of Care and proposed resolutions to the Conference.
Main Points	<p>The report proposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i replacing Covenants of Care with Safeguarding Contracts for all those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences; ii introducing a more formalised process for independent risk assessment of known and alleged safeguarding offenders; iii maintenance of records of all those subject to Contracts by the connexional Safeguarding Team so that regular reporting and monitoring of consistent approaches can be achieved; iv providing training for members of Monitoring and Support Groups so that they are suitably prepared and enabled to carry out their role; v implementing a process whereby all Contracts are reviewed at least annually by Monitoring and Support Groups and consideration is given to re-assessing arrangements by means of a new risk assessment every three years.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>Covenants of Care were introduced in 2000 as a way to manage, safely and pastorally, the presence of known sex offenders who wanted to worship in our churches.</p> <p>Their use has expanded beyond the original application of SO 690. This has had two effects: first, a number of local arrangements have been set up without a corresponding system for regulating quality and consistency and secondly, the model has successfully been expanded to cater for non-sex offenders.</p>
Consultations	The Safeguarding Committee, DSOs and District Safeguarding Groups, Joint Safeguarding Working Group and Survivors' Reference Group.
Impact	<p>Finance Introduction of approved Risk Assessors commissioned by the connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) to undertake all but simple local assessments. Budget to be established to fund risk assessments of ministerial and lay persons.</p> <p>CST resourcing to maintain list of all people subject to new Safeguarding Contracts and monitor annual reviews are undertaken.</p>

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The 2014 Conference directed the Methodist Council to establish a working party “to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care and to formulate proposals”. The request came in response to Memorial 35 which can be found in Appendix 1. The Terms of Reference for the working party and a list of its membership can be found in Appendix 2. This report from the working party considers the operation of Covenants of Care since their inception in 2000 and brings forward recommendations for improvements based on what has been learned and current research.
- 1.2. Covenants of Care were introduced as a way to manage, safely and pastorally, the presence of known individuals with sexual offence convictions who wanted to worship in our churches. This was intended to provide a means whereby no further harm was caused and risk could be managed. Individuals with sexual offence convictions are precluded from holding office as per Standing Order 010.
- 1.3. As churches have become more familiar with this model and the advantages of systematically planning and managing risk in order to offer the opportunity for known offenders to remain part of Christian communities, their use has expanded beyond the original application of Section 69. This has had two effects: firstly, a number of local arrangements have been set up without a corresponding system for regulating quality and consistency and secondly, the model has successfully been expanded to cater for individual offenders who do not have sexual offence convictions.
- 1.4. In both of the above instances the original thinking and provisions put in place for Covenants of Care did not encompass this. Therefore, the model needs to be reviewed in light of the learning from our practice, current research and best practice to enable the church to move forward in confidence and faith. The model needs to balance the inclusion of those who have offended with clear expectations about the responsibilities they have to be accountable for their behaviour.
- 1.5. The Church also has a more developed safeguarding structure than it had fifteen years ago. The presence of District Safeguarding Officers, a connexional Safeguarding Team and learning from the Past Cases Review mean that we can now take a more systematic approach to assessing the best way to continue our practice of care and protection to all in our church community. The Church also wants to underscore its commitment to those who have been affected by abuse (victims and survivors) and make sure that developments in relation to how it works with those who have offended is matched with its commitment to hearing the voice of those who have been offended against. Whilst this report is focused on managing those who have offended, it should be read in the wider context of the Church’s commitment to survivors of abuse. The Past Cases Review has demonstrated some of the extent of hurt and pain that abusers have caused to many individuals and church communities and commitments are now in place to seek perspectives from those who have been abused in all future safeguarding policy and practice developments. Part of this commitment is to be able to hear perspectives and, in the preparation of this report, the working group has heard differing perspectives in relation to how we should be making provision for those who have offended to continue to be included within the life of the church.
- 1.6. The involvement in the life of the church of those who may pose a safeguarding risk is a major challenge to the Methodist Church. As society has discovered more about the extent of harm

and abuse, and the Church's social outreach draws in vulnerable people who might also pose a risk to others, the need for safe and supportive measures has increased to try and protect others from harm.

1.7. This report proposes:

- i. replacing Covenants of Care with **Safeguarding Contracts** for all those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences;
- ii. introducing a more formalised process for independent risk assessment of known and alleged offenders;
- iii. maintenance of records of all those subject to Contracts by the connexional Safeguarding Team so that regular reporting and monitoring of consistent approaches can be achieved;
- iv. providing training for members of Monitoring and Support Groups so that they are suitably prepared and enabled to carry out their role;
- v. implementing a process whereby all Contracts are reviewed at least annually by Monitoring and Support Groups and consideration is given to re-assessing arrangements by means of a new risk assessment every three years.

2. **Process undertaken by the working group**

- 2.1. The working group has met four times and engaged in research, consultation, reading and conversation in order to arrive at its conclusions.
- 2.2. This has included consultations with: subjects of covenants, members of the Survivors' Reference Group, District Safeguarding Officers, members of the Safeguarding Committee, other denominations and various members of the church who have experience of operating covenants and have been willing to share their reflections with us.
- 2.3. The working group has worked with members of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation to undertake direct research with some subjects of covenants and members of the working group have looked at current research on desistance behaviours. The experiences of the connexional Safeguarding Team in their current work and the lessons learnt from the Past Cases Review have also been considered.
- 2.4. The working party has undertaken its work and considered what the arising issues mean in relation to understandings of God and the nature of the Church, noting previous theological reflection in this area by the Methodist Church.¹ It believes that continuing exploration of the relevant theological themes is central to all aspects of safeguarding work and encourages the Methodist people to continue to engage in theological reflection.

3. **Brief history of Covenants of Care in the Methodist Church**

- 3.1. Appendix 3 traces the emergence of Covenants of Care within the Church alongside related safeguarding developments. It demonstrates how the Church has both developed its practice and understanding as well as responded to emerging thinking and legal changes within the world of safeguarding.

¹ For example in reports such as *The Church and Sex Offenders* (2000) and *Domestic Abuse* (2005).

- 3.2. Safeguarding practice in the Methodist Church has been developing over the last 25 or so years following the publication of *The Children Act* in 1989 and the Government report *Safe from Harm* published in 1993. A series of increasingly robust procedures and policies have been put in place beginning in the early 90s with best practice for the safeguarding of children and young people in the life of the church extended in 2010 to include vulnerable adults. Current guidelines and policy include consideration of domestic abuse and processes for safer recruitment. The Past Cases Review report, *Courage, Cost and Hope*, received by the 2015 Conference, makes further recommendations in the light of past experience.
- 3.3. The Church has taken seriously the situation of victims of abuse and produced previous reports, eg *Time for Action* (2003) and *Tracing Rainbows Though the Rain* (2006) encouraging the church to develop awareness and more appropriate responses to those affected by abuse. The Past Cases Review prioritised the need to continue these developments and has led to the setting up of a Survivors' Reference Group to help guide future developments alongside active dialogue with individuals who share their perspectives with the connexional Safeguarding Team, District Safeguarding officers and others within the church providing pastoral support.
- 3.4. The issue of sex offenders in the church was first considered by the 1998 Conference which adopted the policy that led to Standing Order 010 prohibiting anyone with a conviction or caution from holding office or playing a visible part in the life of the church. This was followed in 2000 with the Conference Report *The Church and Sex Offenders* which introduced the process of a contract between a local church and a registered sex offender detailing the extent of his/her involvement with the church. This contract later became known as a Covenant of Care (2010).
- 3.5. Safeguarding has been further enhanced by the growing policy and practice of training across the whole connexion for those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults as well as those in leadership in the local church. The opportunity for all ministers and employees and volunteers where appropriate to undertake CRB or DBS checks has developed since 2000 and is a requirement before commencing any office in a position of trust or those working in an unsupervised position with children or vulnerable adults.

4. The findings of the working group: key themes that have emerged from the operation of Covenants of Care

4.1. Feedback from those who have operated covenants

- 4.1.1. A number of key pieces of feedback have been shared with the working group from those who have operated Covenants of Care which have helped to inform the findings and shape the recommendations. These can be summarised as follows:
 - i. The requirement for a Covenant of Care (COC) for those who have committed sex offences is set out in SO 690f and Book V1 Part 4 of the guidance section of CPD. This followed *The Church and Sex Offenders* report (2000). The original model was devised to manage those who have committed sex offences but, over time, has been appropriated for different types of offending and alleged offending. Whilst this demonstrates the value of this type of model, provisions were never put in place to cater for a wider range of offences.
 - ii. The model was drawn from Circles of Support and Accountability. They are intended to ensure both monitoring and support. This balance can be difficult to achieve and ensure consistency between COC arrangements.

A 'Circle of Support and Accountability' is a group of Volunteers from a local community which forms a Circle around an offender. In Circles, the sex offender is referred to as the 'Core Member'. Each Circle consists of four to six Volunteers and a Core Member.

It aims to provide a supportive social network that also requires the Core Member to take responsibility (be 'accountable') for his/her ongoing risk management. The Circle can also provide support and practical guidance in such things as developing their social skills, finding suitable accommodation or helping the Core Member to find appropriate hobbies and interests.

Volunteers are fully informed of the Core Member's past pattern of offending, and whilst helping them to settle into the community the Volunteers also assist them to recognise patterns of thought and behaviour that could lead to their re-offending. Within it, the Core Member can grow in self-esteem and develop healthy adult relationships, maximising his or her chances of successfully re-integrating into the community in a safe and fulfilling way.

The Core Member is involved from the beginning, is included in all decision making and, like all other members of the Circle, signs a contract committing him or herself to the Circle and its aims. Each Circle is unique, because it is individually designed around the needs of the Core Member.

<http://www.circles-uk.org.uk/about-circles/what-is-a-circle-of-support-and-accountability>

- iii. Their use has evolved, partly through the activity of Safeguarding Panels (previously known as Safeguarding Advisory Panels) and has been provided for through the current *Safeguarding Handbook* for a range of situations and people who have been assessed to pose a risk, eg for worship for those whom the police have arrested and are in the early stages of the criminal justice process. There is now a need for policy and practice to be reflected in Standing Orders. Covenants of Care are not only used for those with proven and alleged sex offences; this raises the question of whether the model is appropriate for this wider range of people who might pose a risk.
- iv. There is no provision in Standing Orders for ending a COC. It is believed that only one has ever been ended which had been set up by a Safeguarding Advisory Panel. Reports were received of the progress of the individual and a clear case was put to the Panel. All other COCs currently have no end point. This can lead to various difficulties:
 - It may be hard for a Monitoring and Support Group (MSG) to keep up momentum;
 - It can feel like a life sentence to the subject.
- v. Is it better for COC to be ended through a planned process than for them to drift into inactivity? There is a strong momentum to provide a means of ending COC. A safe process is needed to enable this to happen with resource implications.
- vi. There have also been challenges to COCs:
 - resistant individuals (especially those who have not been convicted);
 - resistant congregations (usually in support of people who have not been convicted) with high potential to be persuaded into not seeing the risk;

- those in the Church who feel strongly that there is no place for those with proven and alleged sex offences within church communities as they pose too great a risk and have forgone their right to be a part due to the choices they have made;
- Superintendents/District Chairs/ DSOs who are concerned about the resource implications and difficulties in finding appropriate people to be part of a MSG. There is a need for a clearer agreement on how to manage, ensure minimum standards and provision of support.

vii. A further difficulty arises from the need to be able to manage within the Church new types of risk, particularly risks posed by the misuse of the internet and social media (for example, the use of indecent images of children). Does the model enable monitoring of this activity?

viii. We are only just beginning to draw data together about the numbers of COC we currently have within the Church since the Past Cases Review recommended that a register is kept. This will enable us to engage in better longer term planning and make more informed decisions about the future demands and resource implications for how the church can continue to develop this approach with confidence and safety as well as better share relevant information when individuals move between churches and districts, or other denominations.

4.2. **Covenants in other denominations**

4.2.1. Policies available from other denominations have some form of behaviour agreement. Sometimes these are monitored by the clergy and one other person in the local church. Others are monitored by groups as is the practice in the Methodist Church.

4.2.2. The churches all use different names for these behaviour agreements. That does not make it easy for statutory agencies to access and understand our processes. A process for review is mentioned in some of the policies with a variety of office holders with varying levels of safeguarding skill responsible for undertaking the review. Sex offender inclusion policies for many church denominations are not easily accessible. Legal requirements may dictate the need for clearer policies here.

4.2.3. From a safeguarding adults perspective the six principles of adult safeguarding can offer some helpful pointers as we consider the church's work with those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences (the same principles also apply to the church's work with survivors):

- Are those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences able to help shape the church's procedures that affect them (as appropriate)?
- Are those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences protected from harm, for example confidentiality, a breach of which could risk harm to an offender?
- Is harm to the offender prevented for example by careful selection of those who assist in monitoring and supporting?
- Are the measures put in place proportionate to the risk identified and the least intrusive?

- Is there good partnership between the church and other agencies supporting the offender?
- Are the church and those working with the offender accountable for their actions?

4.3. Views of the subjects of covenants

4.3.1. The working group commissioned some research to explore the views of those who have been subject to a COC. From a wide call for volunteers, seven subjects of COCs volunteered to be interviewed. Six of the interviews were undertaken by staff from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, a child prevention charity specialising in the prevention of sexual abuse, and one interview by the Reverend Jan Atkins, a member of the working group. The interviews were recorded and a thematic analysis of the transcripts was undertaken by Jaspal Sehmbi.² Drawing upon situational crime prevention theory, the research highlighted:

- i. the mixed views of participants about the ‘guardianship’ (see section 6.5 below) element of their COC. Some participants felt that it had negatively impacted upon their membership of the church by, for example, feeling less able to ‘move on’ from their offending or by feeling less trusted.
- ii. participants’ views about the church members who formed part of their COC. Several participants highlighted the helpful support they had received and the positive personal bonds they had established. Two participants commented less positively on their relationships with the members of their COC. They said they experienced the contact as stressful, and thereby emphasised the importance of positive rapport between all parties.
- iii. a large proportion of participants commented that elements of their COC had helped ensure their behaviour was responsible and above reproach i.e. by only attending particular services.
- iv. Overall the feedback from the interviewees suggested that COC were “*effective in reducing the likelihood of a relapse*”.³

5. Current research into desistance and change

5.1. Contrary to many people’s perceptions, people who commit sexual offences re-offend at a relatively low rate, certainly in comparison with non-sexual criminal populations. For example, a recent analysis of treatment effectiveness for men convicted of sexual offences, concluded that treatment reduced recidivism from 13.7% to 10.1%, a relative reduction in recidivism of 26.3%.⁴ These recidivism rates mirror historic research in this area. An analysis by Hanson and Bussiere of 61 studies from six different countries found that, after an average follow-up of four to five years, the average rate of recidivism for men who had committed sexual offences was 13.4% for sexual offences, 12.2% for non-sexual offences against the person, and 36.3% for any offence.⁵ Not surprisingly recidivism rates vary

² Sehmbi, J., 2016. *The effectiveness of Covenants of Care as a relapse prevention programme*. Master’s thesis UCL. Submitted.

³ Sehmbi, J., 2016. *The effectiveness of Covenants of Care as a relapse prevention programme*. Master’s thesis UCL. Submitted.

⁴ Gillespie, A.A. (2010). Indeterminate notification requirements: The final answer?. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 74(4), 304-309. DOI: 10.1350/jcla.2010.74.4.643.

⁵ Hanson, R.K., Bussière, M.T. (1996). *Predictors of sexual offender recidivism: A meta-analysis (User Report 96-04)*. Ottawa: Department of the Solicitor General of Canada.

amongst sub-groups of people convicted of sexual offences. For example, research indicates that men who have a history of contact offending against boys re-offend at a higher rate than men who have abused girls. Likewise, research suggests that men convicted of possessing indecent images of children, re-offend at relatively low rates compared to men with a history of contact sexual offending.⁶ Nevertheless, the fact remains that the majority of men, women and, in particular, young people convicted of sexual offences are well placed to refocus their lives in positive and responsible ways, especially if provided with treatment, guidance and support. In principle, this evidence lends support to the concept of COC as a worthwhile endeavour.

- 5.2. Researchers in recent years have also examined how public policies and legislative changes have impacted upon the human rights of people convicted of sexual offences. Academics like Tony Ward have argued that “the core values underpinning human rights offer a rich ethical resource for designing and implementing treatment in a way that is deeply respectful of offenders’ dignity as rights-holders but also stresses their obligations as duty-bearers” (Ward et al 2007).⁷ Moreover, the lens of human rights has underpinned legal challenges about the restrictions placed upon those convicted of sexual offences within the UK. In 2010 the Supreme Court ruled that indefinite notification requirements (as part of the sex offenders register) were incompatible with Article 8 (1) of *The Human Rights Act 1998* on the basis that “it can no longer be assumed that every offender poses a lifelong risk⁸ ... [and that] the precautionary principle of ‘better to be safe than sorry’, could not justify indefinite registration given the interference with the right to private and family life.”⁹ As this example demonstrates, it is incumbent on all organisations and individuals involved in the assessment, treatment and management of people who have engaged in abusive sexual behaviour to ensure that their interventions are proportionate, and that any restrictions or requirements placed upon the person concerned can be justified.
- 5.3. As is clear from the quote by Tony Ward above, human rights’ considerations have also led to a greater emphasis being placed on so-called ‘strengths-based’ treatment approaches, such as the Good Lives Model [GLM]. Strengths-based approaches place emphasis on well-being and improvements in participants’ capabilities, and underpin much of current practice in relation to the treatment of people convicted of sexual offences. The GLM itself posits that human beings are goal orientated beings who are predisposed to seek ‘Primary Human Goods’ [PHGs]. PHGs can be defined as states of mind, personal characteristics, activities or experiences that are sought for their own sake and, if achieved, are likely to increase psychological wellbeing. They include goals such as ‘Inner peace’, ‘Spirituality’, ‘Community’, and ‘Relatedness’. Within the model, sexual offending is viewed as a socially unacceptable and abusive means of achieving PHGs. In short, it is not the PHGs that an offender desires that are problematic, it is the methods through which they are sought. Membership of a church community, and the appropriate use of a COC, may help someone to achieve these important goals in healthy and positive ways, and to rebuild their life.
- 5.4. The importance of community, positive relationships and a sense of belonging are also noted within the literature about what helps people desist from a pattern of abusive sexual

⁶ Seto, M C, Hanson, R K, and Babchishin, K M, 2011. Contact sexual offending by men with online sexual offenses. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23, pp.124-145.

⁷ Ward, T, Gannon, T A, and Birgden, A, 2007. Human rights and the treatment of sex offenders. *Sexual Abuse*, 19 (3). pp.195-216.

⁸ Lösel, F, and Schmucker, M (2015). The effects of sexual offender treatment on recidivism: An international meta-analysis of sound quality evaluations. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 11(4), 597-630. DOI: 10.1007/s11292-015-9241-z.

⁹ McIvor, S, 2016. *Religion, risks and right: an evaluation of the Methodist Church’s response to sex offenders and their human rights*. Master’s Thesis. Submitted.

behaviour. In the Integrative Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO)¹⁰ there are four phases in the desistance process: decisive momentum; rehabilitation; re-entry and normalcy/reintegration. Re-entry, as the name suggests, relates to the person's re-entry into mainstream society, having, in the first two phases, already made a commitment to the desistance process. Within the model re-entry is facilitated by, amongst other factors: positive social relationships and bonds, mentoring, planning (for re-entry), close relationships between the person and relevant professionals eg probation officer, and by the person's own social network. It is obstructed by restrictions in housing, employment, a loss of positive social relationships, shaming, stigmatisation and low expectations. Desistance theory endorses the work of COC in terms of the support, guidance and inclusion they can offer when they incorporate justifiable and proportionate interventions and restrictions.

- 5.5. A final theoretical perspective of particular relevance to COCAs is that of situational crime prevention. Situational crime prevention is primarily concerned with the crime event and the environmental factors that facilitate offending.¹¹ The crime event is made up of three necessary elements: an offender, a target/victim and a place/situation; and the theory states that for a crime to occur these elements combine *in the absence of a capable guardian*. The capable guardian may fulfil a number of roles: they could be a 'guardian' towards the potential victim eg a protective adult; they might be a 'handler' of the potential offender eg a probation or police officer, a youth worker, or a church minister; or they might be a 'place manager' of a particular setting eg a leisure centre manager, a landlord. Within the theory, one person may fulfil all three roles. By way of an example, a pub landlord manages the 'setting' of their premises [place manager]; they might also tell someone prone to violence when they have had enough to drink [being a 'handler']; and they ought to intervene if they judge someone is being threatened in order to protect that individual from harm [being a capable 'guardian'].
- 5.6. The concepts of situational crime prevention can readily be applied to organisational settings such as that of the Methodist church. Individuals within the church may fulfil one, or more, of the three preventative roles: 'place manager', 'guardian' or 'handler'. Similarly, these roles are manifest within COCs, as COC members seek both to support a person to rebuild their life and take an overview of, and interest in, their activities within the church. In her research, Sehmbi (2016)¹² concluded that COC were effective in reducing the likelihood of a person relapsing into abusive sexual behaviour. At the same time, and with rights of the individual subject to a COC in mind, it is important that the imposition and requirements of a COC can be justified on the basis of the person's assessed level of risk.
- 5.7. In summary, the literature about effective treatment and management of people convicted of sexual offences, as well as theoretical perspectives on desistance and crime prevention, indicate that COCs are a valuable means of (1) protecting other members of the church community, and wider society, from harm; and (2) supporting those with a history of harmful sexual behaviour to rebuild their lives in positive and fulfilling ways. The evidence-base also presents some challenges too, not least how best to ensure that the terms and conditions of any COC are necessary, reasonable and proportionate; and that each individual COC is fulfilling their purpose to the maximum effect.

¹⁰ Gobbels, S, Ward, T, and Willis, G M, 2012. An integrative theory of desistance from sex offending. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 17, pp.453-462.

¹¹ Smallbone, S., Marshall, W., and Wortley, R., 2008. *Preventing child sexual abuse*. Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing.

¹² Sehmbi, J., 2016. *The effectiveness of Covenants of Care as a relapse prevention programme*. Master's thesis UCL. Submitted.

6. Theological Themes

6.1. As the working group has considered the operation of Covenants of Care, it has also paid attention to the question of how the Church can speak of God in the light of some of the challenges that arise. For example: the broader than intended use of Covenants of Care prompts reflection on how the church community establishes, maintains and enables its relationships; the questions about whether some Covenants of Care should come to an end provoke reflection on forgiveness, repentance and the extent to which change is possible; and the Church's position that someone subject to a Covenant of Care cannot hold office in the Church leads to the exploration of issues of power, participation and accountability. There are challenges and tensions as the Methodist Church strives to be a hospitable and inclusive community for all people. Some initial reflection on these complex questions is offered below, but members of the Methodist Church are encouraged to continue to wrestle with them with the help of God's Spirit of wisdom and discernment.

6.2. All Are Welcome

6.2.1. When the measures that later became known as Covenants of Care were established in the Methodist Church, the Conference reaffirmed its commitment to "the creation of a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation and to the restoration of broken people and communities".¹³ Such commitment is part of the church's response to the love of God; as welcome, hospitality and openness demonstrate the nature of God's grace and love for all. The church's witness to God through Jesus Christ involves its seeking to be a community marked by love and care for one another and for all whom it encounters. The Methodist Church emphasises the universality of God's grace, freely offered to all people without exception and to which all are invited to respond. Through God's grace there are transformational possibilities in personal and relational life for all, beyond what can be expected or predicted. Our church communities are thus called to be places where the transformational love of God is embodied and life in all its fullness is a gift that is offered to all people. This involves a commitment to thinking about what it means to welcome both those who have been abused and those who have abused others.

6.2.2. It is important to recognise that welcome for all does not mean that there are no boundaries to the church's inclusivity and hospitality. A theology of hospitality involves establishing the boundaries to this hospitality for the prevention of harm as the church seeks to be a safe space for those who participate in its communal life, and in order to enable the church to remain faithful to its identity as the body of Christ. It acknowledges the need for discipline for those who damage the integrity of the church and obstruct human flourishing, holding in tension the desire for safer spaces in our churches and the church's mission to welcome those who may pose a risk but have expressed a commitment to change.

6.2.3. The inclusion of those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences in the life of the Church is a particular example of the challenge of how the body of Christ might include all when the presence of some in any community may make others feel less safe, fearful, not understood, or themselves unwelcome. The inclusion of those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences in the life of the Church may put children and vulnerable adults at risk, and may also cause pain and offence to those who have experienced abuse and continue to live with physical, spiritual and emotional pain. The Methodist Church continues to be committed to making the Church a safer space and is taking steps to bring about the cultural change that is needed to understand what safeguarding means in every part of the life of the Church.¹⁴ Yet part of the Church's witness to the God who through the life, death

¹³ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, Resolution 38/2(a).

¹⁴ The Methodist Conference, 2015. *Courage, Cost and Hope (The Past Cases Review)*.

and resurrection of Jesus reconciles all things to Godself, is its offer of welcome to all people. The offer of hospitality to both those who have experienced abuse and those who have committed it is a powerful and difficult witness, demanding prayerful discernment. This current work is part of the Methodist Church's continuing reflection on where its boundaries appropriately lie and how it seeks to embody the love and grace of God.¹⁵

6.3. The Nature of Forgiveness

6.3.1. Forgiveness is a central part of our understanding of the Gospel. God's unceasing offer of new life and the assurance that, by God's grace, we are justified, set in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ is central to our faith and discipleship. Yet there are differences in experience and understanding of forgiveness, and the Church continues to wrestle with how it should speak of forgiveness and how forgiveness should be demonstrated within its structures and processes. The question of whether the forgiveness that God offers is the same as we are expected to offer is one that continues to be explored.

6.3.2. It is also the case that some simplistic understandings, or misunderstandings, of forgiveness have prompted actions or statements that have caused further harm and damage to those who have experienced abuse. Ideas that forgiveness involves "forgetting" behaviour that has caused harm, or that an offender should be treated as wholly reformed and good, may cause significant further harm to those who have suffered the abuse and provides an unrealistic view of human relationships and Christian discipleship. The Methodist Church has therefore identified three common misunderstandings of forgiveness¹⁶ that should be avoided:

- that forgiveness means 'forgetting'¹⁷ with its potential implication that those who have suffered should ignore, or not remind the Church of, the traumas they have suffered. This can lead to silencing and suppression. Remembering the past is an important part of Christian tradition. Through God's grace reconciliation with our past experiences is possible and we are enabled to live in a new way. It does not mean that we rewrite, or edit, our stories, or pretend that the past has no continuing impact on the present. Forgiveness does not negate the consequences of the past but enables people to live in a new relationship with them.
- that forgiveness means the cancelling of debts and obligations.¹⁸ Repentance often means taking responsibility for our actions and for the obligations that ensue, and seeking to put relationships right. Whilst it is often inappropriate and offensive and potentially harmful to suggest that offenders should seek to put the particular relationship right, forgiveness should encourage the taking of responsibility and being made accountable for their actions. The devastating impact of abuse means that the consequences cannot be predicted and that there is no time limit on the obligations that might ensue. Acknowledging this and responding appropriately by being willing to try to meet such obligations is part of the continuing process of taking responsibility. Forgiveness enables a person to respond to those obligations in a new way.
- that forgiveness means treating those who are forgiven as "wholly reformed or good".¹⁹ Forgiveness, grace and mercy help us on our journey, but do not hasten its end. We continue to be human with the capacity for sin, for brokenness, and for giving in to

¹⁵ Resources for the EDI Theological Underpinning produced by the Faith and Order Committee.

¹⁶ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, p.13 (section 4a).

¹⁷ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, p.13 (section 4a(i)).

¹⁸ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, p.13 (section 4a(ii)).

¹⁹ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, p.13 (section 4a(iii)).

temptation. Forgiveness brings the opportunity for new ways of relating and behaving and, through God's grace, we are equipped to take up a new pattern of living; but it is a continuing journey of real challenges and temptations, and one on which we continue to be tested. We are reconciled with God, and accepted totally, but we are still disciples, learners, who have to keep working at the new life that is offered. The discipline of the church and the support of the community help us in this task.

6.3.3. The question of whether those who have been abused should be expected to forgive their abusers is greatly challenging, and raises the question of whether the Church has any right to demand or expect anyone to forgive. Survivors should not be pressured to forgive as forgiveness can be a long and challenging journey. It is part of a survivor's relationship with God and with the Church, not about what is offered to the offender. Forgiveness, for those who are hurt, is a part of healing, liberation and growth. It can also be painful and difficult when a victim, hearing within the liturgical life of the church the pronouncement of forgiveness and knowing the offender is part of the congregation (stating the forgiveness of God). In the case of sexual (and other) abuse there are deep questions about what kind of relationship it is appropriate and possible to "restore". Such questions are beyond the scope of this work except to reflect that it is clear that the inclusion of an offender within the church community should not make further demands or requirements on those who have suffered from their behaviour. If there are any expectations of restoration or reconciliation, or even of them meeting, then there is a danger that the Church could coerce and thus further exercise abuse upon the person who has experienced abuse.

6.4. **Can People Change?**

6.4.1. Reflection on the operation of Covenants of Care continues to raise questions about an individual's ability to change and what this means for their participation in the Church community. Christianity proclaims that God can transform people's lives for good. It offers a new start, with confidence in Christ, inviting participation in the Christian community where all contribute to its witness through seeking to serve God alongside other disciples. Christians believe that God can change lives, but we cannot always know or judge if that has happened. The question of penitence and how that might be discerned is problematic. There is much teaching that turning away from evil is necessary (if we repent God will forgive) and yet plenty of evidence that Jesus forgave sinners where we have no evidence of their penitence. However, whilst it is for God to forgive, it is for the Church to discern how healthy relationships within the Church may best be enabled for the sake of its witness and for the flourishing of all.

6.4.2. The Church's recognition of God's desire for human flourishing is accompanied by a recognition of the reality of the human condition, the depths of what people are capable of and the potential of all to abuse trust. Trust is a key element in healthy relationships. Through God's grace there is the possibility of change for all, but for trust to be re-established the change has to be demonstrated in the context of a community that exercises discipline and demands accountability in order to protect the vulnerable, to signal that the church is a place of safety and justice, and to maintain the integrity of its witness. When trust has been broken (which is always the case when there has been abusive behaviour) there needs to be some evidence not only that the person intends not to cause harm but that they are indeed trustworthy. The responsibility to change behaviour lies with the offender. Indeed, the Methodist Church has argued that, given the nature of those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences, "an offender's acceptance of God's forgiveness is most likely to be reflected in an ongoing response in penitence, with the offender accepting a firm code of conduct for his new life in the congregation and in

Christ.”²⁰

- 6.4.3. In Wesley’s sermon *The Image of God*,²¹ Wesley argues that the first stage of true change (restoration in the image of God) is humility, that is “a knowledge of ourselves, a just sense of our condition” which comes with the gift of self-awareness. In Wesley’s understanding, self-awareness is a conviction of our guiltiness and helplessness, a recognition of our ongoing brokenness and need of God. As indicated above (6.4.2), repentance is not about avoiding the consequences of past behaviour, but involves living in a new way in relationship to that past behaviour, taking responsibility for the behaviour and bearing the consequences with God’s grace. Alongside the offer of welcome to the body of Christ comes the costly challenge of Christian discipleship, part of which is taking responsibility for past behaviour and being accountable to brothers and sisters in Christ. An offender’s acceptance of the discipline of the church is part of the process of rebuilding trust and an indication of their desire to change.
- 6.4.4. Forgiveness does not mean that our previous patterns of behaviour have been left behind, nor does it remove any risk of reoffending, but Covenants of Care have been part of offering a new framework for life, with the support of the Christian community. They are part of enabling an individual to rebuild their lives in a responsible way. They provide a structure by which trust can begin to be re-established, through which the risk of harm is minimized, and by which support can be offered. Participation in a Covenant of Care can be one indication of willingness to take responsibility and acknowledge the obligations, effects and consequences of past behaviour. It may also witness to an offender’s willingness to embrace discipline and actively play a part in making the Church a safer place. Sometimes Covenants of Care are perceived as punishments, particularly when they persist over long periods of time for what are perceived as relatively minor offences. Yet they are not intended as punishments but are part of enabling the flourishing of individual and corporate life. Their purpose is to enable an offender to participate in the life of the church community in appropriate ways, bearing in mind the wellbeing of the offender, those who have experienced abuse, those who are vulnerable, the particular church community and the integrity of the church’s witness. They are a part of an offender’s taking responsibility for their actions and indicating their desire to live as part of a community that seeks to enable the flourishing of all people. Discipleship is costly and the consequences of past behaviour can neither be foreseen nor denied. Repentance involves understanding the harm that has been caused and the ongoing effect it may have on others. These issues come into particular focus in relation to the question of whether it is ever appropriate for an offender to hold office in the Church.

6.5. **Holding Office in the Church**

- 6.5.1. The Methodist Church has said: “We accept the widespread conviction that sexual offenders are permanently a grave risk to others. It is, therefore, appropriate in their own interests, and in those of survivors, potential victims and the wider community, for them not to hold office in the Church. Living a safe Christian life is itself a calling from God. However, we also note the plain fact that in time God’s grace can work healing wonders in the most damaged personality (which we term ‘the optimism of grace’). Always the last word rests with God, with the promise of the new, with the coming of Christ. We found this issue to be especially difficult, but thought that the church must have a way to respond in very exceptional

²⁰ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, p.3.

²¹ Wesley, J, 1730, Sermon 141 “The Image of God, in Outler, A. ed., 1987, *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 4, Sermons 115-151. Abingdon Press, Nashville, pp. 292-303.

circumstances ...”²²

- 6.5.2. Some have found the position that offenders cannot hold any office in the Church challenging, especially when not all offices involve contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults. It is, however, important to note that no one has a ‘right’ to hold office in the Church and there are always other ways for gifts to be exercised and developed. There is a need to balance the welfare of those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences with the needs of the Church and the welfare of those who have been abused. The welfare and wellbeing of any individual cannot be dependent on them holding a particular office within the Church, and there are different ways in which an individual’s ministry can be expressed. It is unhelpful to think of offices in the Church in this way and the linking of membership of the Methodist Church with the idea of eligibility for office is unhelpful. Rights language is inappropriate: and indeed undermines the understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God. The Church confers office, and in doing so is conferring power, authority and responsibility – actual and that given and seen by others. Even if the Church were to decide that a particular individual posed no threat, attention would need to be paid to the symbolic and representative power that accompanies any office.
- 6.5.3. The Church as a human organisation has means by which it organises itself and enables the community to live and work together. It therefore has structures of oversight, care and management which involve the use of power. Power can be given, expressed and conferred in many different ways. It can be used to enable or to destroy (such as when those who have experienced its misuse have been harmed or silenced). Honesty is required about how power is used and misused within the Church. When power is held and deployed without awareness of temptations it is dangerous. The holding of an office within the Church signals that a person is trustworthy and will exercise power responsibly. In conferring an office the Church is understood as indicating that this is a person to be trusted thus giving a particular kind of power. This is the case for any office. Offices within the Church have a particular public profile, convey a level of authority and are to some extent representative. Questions about the use of power therefore apply to all who hold any office in the Church. Sexual offending is about the misuse of power and therefore attention needs to be paid to the continuing power dynamics of the Church’s relationship with offenders, and with those who have experienced abuse.

6.6. **Justice for All**

- 6.6.1. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, and it does so in various ways. In its structures and ways of relating the Church seeks to demonstrate its concern to protect the vulnerable. It requires respectful relationships and attention to particular boundaries and power dynamics.
- 6.6.2. Justice is an important part of healing from sexual abuse.²³ The Revd Dr Marie Fortune, who has worked extensively to raise awareness of issues of sexual abuse in Christian communities, outlines various elements in the process of making justice.²⁴ She maintains that justice begins with truth telling, giving voice to experiences of abuse, and with an acknowledgment of the violation by the Church. It requires honesty and openness about what has happened, whilst respecting the privacy of those who have been harmed. Compassion (listening to and suffering with the victim) and taking steps to prevent any

²² The Methodist Conference, 2000, *The Church and Sex Offenders*, p.17 (section 4c).

²³ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2002. *Time For Action*. Church House Publishing: London.

²⁴ Fortune, M., 1989. *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship*. San Francisco: Harper & Row; Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2002, *Time For Action*. Church House Publishing: London, pp.131-132.

further abuse to the victim or others are vital elements in the process. Accountability is required, through testing allegations, imposing sanctions and ensuring that participation in the community is linked to a taking of responsibility; and some restitution should be made, through the symbolic and practical actions of the Church, in order to acknowledge the harm that has been done. The goal of justice is vindication, the recognition that healing involves being set free from multi-layered suffering that abuse causes.

6.6.3. Whether the Church has “the informed awareness” or “the commitment” or “the appropriate structures and processes to make justice for those who suffer abuse within the Christian community” remains a significant question²⁵ and the Methodist Church continues to pay attention to all of these things, not least through its work for and in response to the Past Cases Review. In its discernment and decision making, including in matters relating to Covenants of Care, the Church can give priority to the welfare and wellbeing of survivors, demonstrating a bias to the vulnerable and remembering its commitment to survivors of sexual abuse.²⁶

6.6.4. The Church also remembers that it too has cause to repent, seek forgiveness and take responsibility for past actions. The Church, created and called by God, is a continuing community of followers of the risen Christ but also a flawed human organisation. The Church has not always protected the vulnerable in its charge from harm, nor has it responded adequately to those who have experienced abuse. The Church itself needs to recognise how it has, at times, contributed to the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people, not least through its use of power, and to seek to change its patterns of behaviour accordingly. This work is one aspect of this, as members of the Church help each other to work out how to belong together when trust has been destroyed.

7. **Recommendations**

Having reviewed feedback from how Covenants of Care have been used and developed since their introduction we have reached a set of conclusions that are consistent with our Methodist ethos and enable the Church to manage safeguarding risks and potential risk within the church community. These recommendations are built on the evidence that the working group has gathered, are consistent with the learning from the Past Cases Review, and further develop the commitments that have been made as a result of this.

7.1. **Terminology and new arrangements**

7.1.1. The term ‘Covenant of Care’ is unhelpful to describe the mechanism by which the Church is taking certain safeguarding action and its use has evolved in a way that means that we need to be clearer about how it is used and applied. ‘Covenant’ is used in other Church contexts (for example, Methodist ministers have a covenant relationship with the Conference) and covenantal language is not especially appropriate to describe the purpose and nature and relationships involved in a Covenant of Care. Neither is the language easily understood in safeguarding terms by those in external professional agencies.

7.1.2. Survivors have also found the language of ‘covenant’ in this context unhelpful and painful. It can be understood to imply that the Church has a particular kind of relationship with an offender that is ‘better’ than that offered to survivors. The language signals that the Church is making a formal, intentional commitment to the offender’s welfare and wellbeing, but it does not use the same language to describe its relationship with survivors.

²⁵ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2002. *Time For Action*. Church House Publishing: London, p.132.

²⁶ The Methodist Conference, 2003, *Response to Time For Action*; and 2006, *Tracing Rainbows Through the Rain*.

- 7.1.3. We are therefore proposing that current and future Covenants of Care become **Safeguarding Contracts** for those with proven sexual offences, alleged sexual offences where concerns remain following a police investigation/ court process and for those who are considered to be a safeguarding risk in any other way.
- 7.1.4. It is important to stress that the use of one term to describe arrangements for a wide set of individual circumstances does not mean that 'one size fits all'. Each Safeguarding Contract will be based on a clear assessment of risk posed and appropriate measures put in place to manage this risk. It is the risk posed rather than the offence that will determine the provisions that will be put in place.

Independent risk assessments

- 7.1.5. In order to improve standardisation of risk assessments an approved list of risk assessors should be established working to agreed standards. New procedures should be approved in order to facilitate setting out these mechanisms and how they will work (these will be included in the revised standing orders on safeguarding coming to the Conference as a separate report). This will introduce a more formalised process for independent risk assessment of known and alleged offenders.
- 7.1.6. Risk Assessments will be undertaken when either the connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) or District Safeguarding Officer considers that someone's behaviour or reported behaviour falls under one or more of the categories of sexual offence or posing a safeguarding risk.
- 7.1.7. The current practice of the CST funding assessments of ministers and districts funding assessments of lay people should be altered with the CST responsible for funding all risk assessments in order to establish consistent decision-making.
- 7.1.8. A connexional budget to pay for risk assessments should be created to facilitate 7.2.3
- 7.1.9. Local risk assessments will continue to be undertaken by District Safeguarding Officers for simple convictions, minor offences, blemished DBS checks or where temporary arrangements need to be put in place to suspend someone during a police enquiry or investigation, e.g. an agreement is needed to enable the person to continue attending worship in the presence of children or vulnerable adults.
- 7.1.10. Risk Assessments will be shared with the District Safeguarding Officer and members of Safeguarding Panels. Summaries will be made available to District Chairs and members of Monitoring and Support Groups. Other people who may require access will be subject of DSO decision following agreed CST guidance for appropriate disclosing of personal data.

7.2. Consistent record keeping and oversight

- 7.2.1. Each Monitoring and Support group will undertake a review of progress at least annually (see Appendix 4 for standard form template), or sooner if directed by the Safeguarding Panel.
- 7.2.2. The annual report will be sent to the DSO and CST who will oversee progress or challenges being reported with appropriate follow up. Guidance has been sought on the appropriateness of holding this data under the provisions Data Protection Act 1998.
- 7.2.3. The DSO or member of District Safeguarding Group will attend Groups on an agreed basis sufficient for the DSO to maintain a working knowledge of the arrangements and any

support identified to assist the Monitoring and Support group in carrying out their duties.

- 7.2.4. Resourcing of CST admin and case work time will need to be budgeted for to process and monitor the list of subjects with Safeguarding Contracts.

7.3. **Monitoring and support group training**

Training for members of Monitoring and Support Groups should be developed so that volunteers are suitably prepared and enabled to carry out their role. See Appendix 5 for a standard role description.

7.4. **Mechanism for review, change or discharge**

- 7.4.1. Whilst all Contracts and Agreements are reviewed at least annually by the Monitoring and Support Group, there should be a mechanism to consider if the core arrangements of the restrictions should be amended – to increase, decrease or terminate the agreement entirely. To ensure this is done in a careful and measured way the Monitoring and Support Group should consider, every three years, whether a significant change to arrangements has occurred. If this is the case a new risk assessment will be commissioned and presented to a new Safeguarding Panel. The decision to proceed to a new risk assessment will be discretionary but will provide a channel by which significant changes in circumstance (or very positive responses from the offender to the Contract) can be recognised and reflected.
- 7.4.2. It should be noted that removal from the Sex Offenders Register may occur for a number of reasons, not least, completion of period due to length of conviction or appeal against conviction. We must always bear in mind that offenders prior to 1997 were not on it at all. Removal from the Register does not necessarily mean there remains no risk that might be presented within the Church environment.

8. **Standing Order changes**

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice will identify necessary changes to standing orders when the working group's recommendations have been approved by the Council.

9. **Summary of Recommendations**

- 9.1. replacing Covenants of Care with Safeguarding Contracts for all those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences;
- 9.2. introducing a more formalised process for independent risk assessment of known and alleged offenders;
- 9.3. maintenance of records of all those subject to Contracts by the Connexional Safeguarding Team so that regular reporting and monitoring of consistent approaches can be achieved;
- 9.4. providing training for members of Monitoring and Support Groups so that they are suitably prepared and enabled to carry out their role;
- 9.5. implementing a process whereby all Contracts are reviewed at least annually by Monitoring and Support Groups and consideration is given to re-assessing arrangements by means of a new risk assessment every three years;
- 9.6. Methodist Council review of these new arrangements in 2022 (5 years).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

41/1. The Council receives the Report

41/2. The Council commends the report to the Conference.

Appendix 1 - Working Group on Covenants of Care

Memorial and Council direction

M35 Covenants of Care

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod (R) (Present: 125; Voting: 124 for, 0 against) expresses appreciation for the work undertaken by the staff with responsibilities for safeguarding in the Connexional Team. However we are concerned that, with the pressure of urgent cases, reviews of 'Covenants of Care' where offenders have cooperated with the arrangements for their participation in church activities, have taken an unreasonable amount of time to process. The Synod calls upon the Conference to review the present arrangements and to create a method by which, using the experience and expertise in Districts, such reviews can be carried out within three months of Circuits requesting such a review.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District Synod for its memorial. It notes the pressure of work in the Connexional Safeguarding Team as a result of dealing with urgent work. The Conference notes that there is currently no established procedure for the review of Covenants of Care unless they have been set up by a Safeguarding Advisory Panel which has requested such a review. The Synod has helpfully alerted the Conference to the need for thought to be given to the establishment of more formal arrangements for Covenants of Care. These might include a connexionally held register and a procedure for reporting and reviewing.

The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Methodist Council and requests that the Council establishes a working group to review the arrangements for Covenants of Care and to formulate proposals. The working group should draw on the experience of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel and expertise within Districts, together with lessons learnt from the Past Cases Review, which is due to report to the 2015 Conference. The Conference requests that the Council report the conclusions of this review to the Conference no later than 2017.

Appendix 2

The Methodist Council in October 2014 agreed the following Terms of Reference and membership of the working group:

To review the overall arrangements for Covenants of Care and report to the Methodist Conference no later than 2017.

Through its discussions the working group shall:

- Draw on the experience of the Safeguarding Committee; District Safeguarding Officers and others implementing Covenants of Care; the Connexional Safeguarding Team; those subject to Covenants of Care; the lessons of the Past Cases Review.
- Hold in tension the desire for safer spaces in our churches and the church's mission to welcome those who may pose a risk but have expressed a commitment to change.
- Evaluate the development of Covenants of Care since they were first introduced - in particular their use for non-sexual offences and arrangements for reviewing Covenants of Care.
- Draw on current research concerning the rehabilitation of those who have harmed others or who may pose a risk.
- Build on the work begun by the Connexional Safeguarding Team in setting up a Connexional Register of Covenants of Care.
- Consider the suggestion that there should be the possibility of discharging Covenants of Care.
- Liaise with the Law and Polity Committee.

The membership will be

- *A District Safeguarding Officer (the Revd Susan Mclvor)*
- *A District Chair (the Revd Peter Barber)*
- *A member of the Safeguarding Committee (the Revd Jan Atkins)*
- *A person who has been subject to a Covenant of Care (or consultation with a range of people)*
- *External expert from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation (Donald Findlater)*
- *A Safeguarding Colleague from the Church of England (Lisa Clarke)*
- *Non-voting convener: Connexional Safeguarding Adviser (Tim Carter)*

The working group was assisted by:

The Revd Dr Nicola Price Tebbutt – Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee

Mrs Louise Wilkins - Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice

Mr Tom Squire – Lucy Faithful Foundation

The Revd Mary Austin - supernumerary minister with considerable experience of Covenants of Care

Ms Philippa Reid – connexional safeguarding team

Appendix 3

Timeline of Church Safeguarding developments in relation to Covenants of Care practice

1993 – Government report – Safe from Harm published

Methodist church issued guidelines on protocols in working with children and young people.

Training began in ad hoc way – usually delivered by District Youth Officers, later Training and Development Officers when appointed.

1998 The Conference agreed the content of Standing Order 010 that no person with a record of a sex offence is allowed to hold office or play a visible part in the life of the church.

2000 The Conference adopted the report *The Church and Sex Offenders* which introduced the process of a contract between a local church and a registered sex offender detailing the extent of his/her involvement with the church. This contract later became known as a Covenant of Care.

2000 Methodist Church Safeguarding 'Blue Book' published

Office holders and workers with children required to sign declarations that they do not have a criminal record that might preclude them from office.

2000 CRB checks became available and a rolling programme over several years to check first ministers and from 2004 all who worked with children and young people began.

2002 Churches Agency for Safeguarding was set up in response to government requirement for CRB checks.

2002 The Conference received the report Domestic Violence and the Methodist Church – The Way Forward

2003 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland published the report *Time for Action: Sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors*. The Conference commended the report to the church and committed itself to follow the recommendations

2003 New Safeguarding Policy agreed and handbook (pink book) published

2003 Circuits and churches were required to produce Safeguarding policies and guidelines.

2003 Methodist Church appointed the first Safeguarding and Child Protection Specialist – The Revd Pearl Luxon. Districts began to appoint paid Safeguarding Officers and Circuits and churches were encouraged to make similar appointments

2005 The Conference received the report Domestic Abuse and recommended it be considered widely across the Connexion.

2006 Time for Action working group reported back to the Conference with the report 'Tracing Rainbows through the Rain' which was adopted

2007 Following a Safeguarding Training audit in 2005 the Training Course Creating Safer Space consisting of 4 modules was agreed at conference and launched.

2010 In response to memorials 35 and 36 the Conference directed that a Past Cases Review be implemented requesting the process be presented to the 2011 Conference

2010 The Conference adopted Policy for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

2010 New Safeguarding book ultimately to contain 5 sections: Safeguarding of Children and Young People, Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults, Domestic Abuse Guidelines, Model Church policies and Safer Recruitment – was published as loose leaf folder and electronically.

2011 Methodology for the Past Cases review was agreed. Pilot scheme took place in 2 districts March to July 2011

2011 A revised version of Creating Safer Space to consist of the Foundation Module and Leadership Module was approved.

2012 Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) set up through merging of CRB and Independent Safeguarding Authority. DBS replaces CRB.

2014 Memorial to the Conference from Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District that a review take place about the processes required to release, where appropriate, the subject of a Covenant of Care from that Covenant. The Conference referred the memorial to the Council, requesting the Council to appoint a working group to formulate proposals and report to the 2017 Conference.

2013-2015 Review process for Past Cases Review rolled out across remaining Districts

2015 Current form of Safer Recruitment requirements published as Joint Policy Statement on Safe Recruitment with Church of England.

2015 Report to the Conference of the Past Cases Review ‘Courage, Cost and Hope’ containing 23 recommendations including the development of a system of supervision for ministers, the creation of a connexional register of Covenants of Care and agreement that survivors would be consulted in the creation of training materials.

2016 Report to the Conference on progress of the recommendations from the Past Cases Review (PCR).

2016 Pilot of revised training materials to incorporate the PCR rolled out across the autumn of 2016. A new Revised Foundation Module course and a Refreshed Foundation Module course added for those undertaking the training 5 years on.

Appendix 4

Annual Review of a Safeguarding Contract (SGC)

1. INDIVIDUAL SUBJECT OF AGREEMENT AND KEY SGC DATES	
Name	
Address	
Date of Birth	
Contact details Email	
Telephone	
Commencement date of SGC	
Date of last annual review of SGC	

2. SUMMARY OF REASON FOR SGC				
	<i>Complete</i>	<i>Partial</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Comment</i>
[1] Key requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
[2] Key objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
[3] Key monitoring commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES TO THE ABOVE SINCE THE LAST REVIEW?

(Provide brief details below including reason)

Consider:

- Has there been any other change in circumstances? Consider: marriage; separation; bereavement; drug or alcohol abuse
- Has there been any change in the pattern of attendance at church and relevant activities? Has this changed? What are the reasons for this?
- What opportunities are there for the person subject to this agreement to participate in 'worship, teaching, practice and observance' (Article 9, Human Rights Act)?
- Could further participation be enabled without putting children, young people or vulnerable adults at risk?
- Are the interventions the least restrictive as possible (whilst not putting children, young people or vulnerable adults at risk)?
- What church office, posts or responsibilities, duties or jobs does the subject of the SGC hope to take on? (NB SO 010)
- What are the main problems/ benefits of the SGC from the perspective of the person who is subject to the SGC?

WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS/BENEFITS OF THE SGC FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SGC GROUP?

3. MEMBERS OF SGC MONITORING AND SUPPORT GROUP (MSG)

NAME	ROLE

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP SINCE THE LAST REVIEW?

(Provide brief detail below including reason for changes)

HAS THE MEMBER BEEN ISSUED WITH AN UP TO DATE ROLE OUTLINE?

DOES THE MEMBER HAVE A DBS CHECK FOR ADULT WORKFORCE?

HAS A CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT BEEN SIGNED?

(Renewed annually)

WHEN DID THE MEMBER LAST ATTEND TRAINING FOR MEMBERS OF SGC

WHO PROVIDES SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR THIS SGC MEMBER?

4. STATUTORY / OTHER AGENCY / DISTRICT AND CONNEXIONAL INVOLVEMENT		
AGENCY	NAME	CONTACT DETAILS
MAPPA		
Police		
Probation		
Social Care		
District Safeguarding Officer		
Connexional Safeguarding worker		
Other:		

HAS THERE BEEN ANY REFERRAL TO / LIAISON WITH ANY AGENCY SINCE THE LAST REVIEW?
 (Provide brief details below – including reason)

HAS ANY NECESSARY FOLLOW-UP REPORT / REQUEST FOR ADVICE BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE CONNEXIONAL SAFEGUARDING TEAM OR DSO? (Provide details below)

HAVE MEETINGS OF THE SGC GROUP BEEN HELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS DETAILED IN THE AGREEMENT?
 (Provide brief details below – including a reason)

IS ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION STORED SECURELY AND CONFIDENTIALLY?

(Include by whom)

5. PROBLEM RESOLUTION

HAVE ANY PROBLEMATIC ISSUES OCCURRED?

(Summarise together with the outcome of action taken)

ARE THERE ANY OUTSTANDING ISSUES NEEDING RESOLUTION?

(Summarise)

6. SUCCESSES - SUMMARISE WHAT HAS GONE WELL

7. LEARNING

HAS ANY GOOD PRACTICE BEEN IDENTIFIED AND ESTABLISHED THAT WILL ASSIST IN OTHER SIMILAR SITUATIONS?

8. TRAINING NEEDS

ARE THERE ANY TRAINING REQUIREMENTS OUTSTANDING?

9. ACTION PLANNING

IS THERE AN ONGOING ACTION PLAN / OUTCOMES RECORD IN PLACE?

HAS THE REVIEW LED TO ANY ACTION PLANNING? (Summarise)

10. NEXT MEETING

Appendix 5

Role description for member of Monitoring and Support Group (MSG)

Role Description

A member of a **MSG** group is required to:

- work with the DSO and other members of the group to shape the conditions of the Contract
- assist in monitoring the person who is subject to the Contract;
- work with other members of the group to hold the subject accountable to the Contract;
- not be afraid to challenge the subject as appropriate;
- work in a way that respects the dignity of all involved in the MSG;
- provide support and advice as required;
- commit to meet with the subject of the Contract and other members of the MSG as required;
- maintain confidentiality;
- maintain appropriate boundaries with subject of the Contract ;
- attend on-going training

Person Specification

Members of MSGs will:

- Worship regularly at the church the subject attends/ or be an identified 'independent' member of the group from another church
- Commit annually to the MSG;
- Have relevant experience of working with people to monitor and support;
- Not be a relative or close friend of the subject;
- Have attended Safeguarding Foundation Training and demonstrate knowledge of good safeguarding practice;
- Be willing to learn;
- Be emotionally aware;
- Possess a current DBS check.

Appendix 6

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Appendix 7

Glossary

COC Covenant of Care

COCA – Covenant of care agreement

MSG - Monitoring and Support Group

DSO - District Safeguarding officer

CST - Connexional Safeguarding Team

CPD – The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church

SO - Standing Order

GLM - Good Lives Model

DBS - Disclosure and Barring Service

SGC - Safeguarding Contract

MAPPA - Multi agency public protection arrangements

CJPA - Criminal Justice and Police Act

SOA - Sexual Offences Act

Appendix 8

Offences that will be considered in relation to safeguarding Standing Orders

The Covenant of Care Working Group recognizes both the development in statutory bodies and other organisations towards the assessment of risk on an individual basis giving due regard to personal circumstances. Within the statutory sector, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements are considered in relation to a list of offences included in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 which indicate public protection risks e.g. murder, terrorism, modern slavery in addition to sexual offences, supported by risk assessment.

Barring from appointment or the implementation of a Safeguarding Contract should be undertaken where an individual has a conviction or caution for offences under legislation (listed below) and where risk assessment or review indicates that there is a significant risk of serious harm to others who may be vulnerable (whether adults, children or young people).

Relevant Offences

Sexual Offences Act 2003 (all offences). <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

Criminal Justice Act 2003 Schedule 15 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/44/schedule/15>

Guidance on Offences Against Children, Home Office Circular 16/2005

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130125102358/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/corporate-publications-strategy/home-office-circulars/circulars-2005/016-2005/>

The category of someone who “otherwise poses a risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults” will be applied to Safeguarding Contracts to address behaviour that presents a safeguarding risk for which there is no conviction or caution.