

# MANCHESTER & STOCKPORT METHODIST DISTRICT

## ECUMENICAL OFFICER



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### **So you are thinking of working ecumenically but want to know how to go about it!**

The answer to the question will depend on what sort of ecumenical work you are wanting to undertake.

There are six types of formal Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP).  
There is also the “less formal” route of Churches Together groupings.

**Churches Together (CT) groupings:** allow churches in a town or area to come together to share and discuss matters of shared or common life and to bear common witness to the locality. They are often affiliated to “Intermediate (County)” Ecumenical bodies like GMCT, Churches Together in Cheshire, Derbyshire and will have their own constitution and officers. Methodist Churches are permitted to host CT events so long as the Methodist Church is in membership. Unless inviting CT to attend a Methodist event, the CT group should have its own public liability and personal accident insurance.

*County Ecumenical Officers (CEO) are a source of guidance for and to CTs.*

You might be looking to develop something further than a CT. In this case you are probably looking at a more formal LEP. The most common church LEPs are types 1 - 3.

**Type 2 LEPs (Covenanted Partnerships [CP]):** are developments from CT groups. They come about when a number of churches of differing denominations commit themselves to work together in worship, mission and or ministry while still retaining their separate buildings and life.

To establish a CP the churches would need to draw up a Statement of Intent (vision and rationale for the partnership) and a Covenant document or Constitution (setting out what was going to be done together). If shared (ordained) ministry is envisaged, other denominational approvals are required.

Model Statements of Intent and Constitutions are available and should be used as templates for local development.

*Denominational approval is required for a Methodist Church to enter into an LEP and the District Ecumenical Officer (DEO) should be consulted as soon as matters are first being discussed. The DEO will facilitate contact with denominational approvals and with the County bodies and CEO.*

“Intermediate (County)” Ecumenical bodies give oversight to CPs.

Where denominations desire or wish to collaborate together across an area, a CP can be designated as an Ecumenical Area (EA). Such a body has greater freedom in constitutional requirements from its parent denominations.

A Statement of Intent (vision and rationale for the partnership) and a Constitution (setting out what was going to be done together) are required. If shared (ordained) ministry is envisaged, other denominational approvals are required.

*Denominational approval is required for a Methodist Church to enter into an LEP and the District Ecumenical Officer (DEO) should be consulted as soon as matters are first being*

*discussed. The DEO will facilitate contact with denominational approvals and with the County bodies and CEO.*

*“Intermediate (County)” Ecumenical bodies give some oversight to EAs.*

**Type 1 LEPs (Single Congregation [SC]):** are formed when two or more denominations seek to come together in one building, as one congregation.

A Statement of Intent (vision and rationale for the partnership), a Constitution (setting out what was going to be done together) and a Sharing Agreement for the church building are required. If shared (ordained) ministry is envisaged, other denominational approvals are required.

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*A Methodist Church Schedule 3 should be completed and sent via the DEO.*

*If a building scheme is anticipated, Schedule 1 should also be completed as a way of “launching” conversations.*

*The DEO will facilitate contact with denominational approvals and with the County bodies and CEO.*

*“Intermediate (County)” Ecumenical bodies give oversight to SCs.*

**Type 3 LEPs (Shared Buildings [SB]):** are formed when two or more denominations seek to make separate use of one common building. In such instances, providing there is little joint work, worship, ministry there is no need for a Statement of Intent or Constitution. However, a Sharing Agreement is required. These are prepared by TMCP legal officers.

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*A Methodist Church Schedule 3 should be completed and sent via the DEO.*

*If a building scheme is anticipated, Schedule 1 should also be completed as a way of “launching” conversations.*

*The DEO will facilitate contact with denominational approvals and if necessary) with the County bodies and CEO.*

**Types 4-6 LEPs** are mission partnerships and would not normally be entered into by local congregations.

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In all instances of developing LEPs, your first port of call should be your District Ecumenical Officer, who is your route into and through the denominational maze for advice, support and approvals.

Contacting the “County” Ecumenical Body/Officer is not a substitute for involving the DEO.

Where you are seeking to be in some form of partnership with a church not in association with Churches Together in England, LEP status may be possible though the possibilities of shared ministry are somewhat formally reduced. In addition churches not party to the Sharing of Church Buildings Act cannot enter into Sharing Agreements. If Methodist hospitality is being given to such congregations they need to be covered by a Schedule 14a agreement and annual license.

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