



# The Methodist Church

## Manchester and Stockport District

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### Pastoral Visitors and Safeguarding – A Good Practice Guidance February 2018

#### Introduction.

**THIS DOCUMENT IS INTENDED TO BE A RESOURCE FOR MINISTERS AND THOSE COORDINATING PASTORAL WORK, TO SUPPORT DISCUSSIONS WITH PASTORAL VISITORS AND IN THEIR TRAINING.**

The work of Pastoral Visitors lies at the heart of the life and work of local churches within the District. It is clear that for many, pastoral support is invaluable and helps affirm that they are not alone and are valued. Pastoral visiting also helps to engage with people to offer appropriate support. However, there are differences in the way the work is currently being undertaken across the District. This document seeks to offer good practice in bringing a consistency, where possible, to how the work should look, especially in relation to safeguarding.

**This is not Policy but is offered guidance to good practice. It will be for each church to identify what aspects of it suit the needs of their congregation and the way they wish to develop the work of their Pastoral Visitors.** It is acknowledged that some Pastoral Visitors have served for many years and that it may be challenging to apply this guidance immediately to all those already in post. Individual situations may require further discussions between the Pastoral Coordinator and Minister and/or Safeguarding Officer.

#### Summary of Key Principles

- Pastoral Visiting is carried out on behalf of the church; Pastoral Visitors are sent out on behalf of, and are accountable to, the local church; their work is critical to healthy church life.
- Ideally, Pastoral Visitors should be part of a team, which meets at least twice a year, dependent on the size and situation of the church.
- The role is subject to safer recruitment – this guidance includes 3 role outlines. It is for Pastoral Visitors to choose the one they feel most comfortable with; this will determine which DBS check is needed, if any.
- The role of a Pastoral Coordinator is important in over-seeing the work of the Pastoral Visitors and organising the Pastoral Committee (or Pastoral Visitors' Meetings); this role is often filled by the Secretary to the Pastoral Committee. This document assumes someone will be in that roll, whether the Secretary of the Pastoral Committee, the minister in pastoral charge (in some smaller churches), or another individual separately appointed. They will be referred to as the pastoral co-ordinator.
- Pastoral Visitors should be formally commissioned, ideally annually, using the commissioning service from the Methodist Worship book (page 344).
- Pastoral Visitors should make a simple note when they have had contact with someone, especially if a visit has taken place.
- If there are concerns about anyone the Flowchart (Appendix iii) should be used.

- If Pastoral Visitors visit someone in hospital or care homes and have concerns about the standard of care being offered they should speak with the pastoral coordinator, Minister and/or Safeguarding Officer.
- Pastoral Visitors need to protect themselves by being accountable and visiting in pairs if this is required.
- Visiting cards should be considered, to ensure people know Pastoral Visitors are official visitors on behalf of the church and how to contact them (Appendix V).
- The Pastoral Visitor may feel it is appropriate to ask if the person visited would like a prayer to be said; requests for spiritual advice should be referred to the pastoral coordinator and/or Minister to ensure appropriate support is provided.

## **1. The significance and importance of the work**

Those who undertake any form of pastoral visiting are in a significant position to be able to get to know and understand the needs of those they are supporting. This means that Pastoral Visitors are well placed to offer appropriate practical help and, where necessary, pass concerns on to their pastoral coordinator for further advice. Pastoral Visitors will need support to know how and where to refer concerns; it is essential that those in the role are connected in to all the relevant District processes, especially safeguarding.

In order to acknowledge the significance of the Pastoral Visitor role, it is important that this work is given the right profile and the highest respect.

## **2. Some considerations**

By definition, pastoral visiting is about church outreach, through visits to peoples' homes, wherever and whatever those may be. There are some important considerations:

- **The term "visitor" should not always mean that we confine the role to visiting.**

Contact may be through an informal discussion at church, after church, during church activities etc. These are all opportunities to make important contacts, identify how someone is feeling and what help, if any, they need at that time or in the future.

However, it is good practice not to confine all pastoral contact to the above settings. Visiting the person at home or where they live, helps to get to know much more about their situation, the people who are part of their life and the environment in which they live.

- **There is an important difference between social visiting as a friend and pastoral visiting on behalf of the church.**

Becoming a Pastoral Visitor does not, of course, stop that person also visiting someone as a friend. However, visiting as a Pastoral Visitor means that someone is being visited on behalf of the church, not just as a social friend. Supporting someone as a friend has clearly different expectations and experience shows that it will be harder as a friend to report concerns and break confidences.

Visiting on behalf of the church means that the visitor has been "sent", is accountable and does not work in isolation of a wider team. It particularly reinforces that the Pastoral Visitor has a

responsibility to report any concerns on behalf of, and to, the church. It means that the visitor is part of a team which should work to support each other and meet regularly to discuss common issues.

This distinction is somewhat more difficult for smaller churches where it is likely that people support each other in a more natural and informal way given the size of the church and the fact that people are likely to know each other well. It will still be important, however, that there is an understanding that should there be any concerns about each other, people know where to go for help.

### **3. Good Practice**

The following are areas of good practice essential in supporting the work of Pastoral Visitors.

- **A Team Approach.**

It is important for Pastoral Visitors to see themselves as part of a team and not working in isolation, although this may be difficult for those in small churches. The team approach needs very careful co-ordination; meeting as a team helps to ensure that everyone understands their role and enables Pastoral Visitors to be mutually supported.

- **Acting on behalf of the church.**

Methodist CPD makes clear that:

***“Pastoral Visitor means a person appointed by the Church Council or by a responsible committee under its authority to exercise pastoral care over those committed to his or her charge...”***

*Acting on behalf of the church* means that the Pastoral Visitor is representing the church, is from the church and therefore is accountable to the church. For the Pastoral Visitor, this will give a sense of security knowing that they are not operating in isolation of the church but with its support.

The critical implication of acting on behalf of the church is the need to be accountable back to the church.

- **Different Pastoral Visiting roles.**

It is clear that all those involved in Pastoral Visiting operate very differently. Some prefer to “call in” and simply check that all is well, others are keen to become more involved in the overall welfare of the person, sometimes involving longer and more in-depth discussions.

Pastoral Visitors will be walking alongside people and should not give themselves the responsibility of having to “sort” out concerns. It will be for others, possibly external agencies, to do that if necessary. The critical issue will be for the pastoral coordinator to be informed.

Therefore, there is the opportunity in the District for those wanting to be a Pastoral Visitor to be able to decide the sort of role they want to take on. **There are three role outlines that apply; these can be found in *Appendix i*.**

The requirement for a DBS (criminal record check) will be dependent upon the level of role undertaken by the Pastoral Visitor. It is very important for the pastoral coordinator to ensure that roles are not extended or expectations changed without further discussion, nor that the Pastoral Visitor takes on a

role which should be left to professionals. This discussion may be between the pastoral coordinator and Pastoral Visitor but could also include the minister and/or church safeguarding officer.

- **Governance.**

It is good practice for a Pastoral Coordinator to oversee the work of the Pastoral Visitors in the church and circuit. The Pastoral Coordinator will have responsibility for supporting, equipping and developing the team. This role may be taken on by the minister but in some cases, can be assigned to someone else, to release the minister from those responsibilities. (*See Appendix ii*). Good practice indicates that a lay Pastoral Coordinator is best, so that the minister is in a better place to follow up any concerns where necessary.

The Pastoral Coordinator is the person who people should contact initially with any issues, especially for advice and support. The role needs to be pro-active, working alongside the Pastoral Visitors who know them as individuals, how they are coping with their role, and chairing meetings when everyone comes together.

The Pastoral Coordinator role is “the hub” of the team; she/he should pass on news promptly of any significant changed circumstances affecting people who are visited and provide support and advice on request.

Where the Pastoral Coordinator is not the Minister, consideration should be given as to whether that person should be involved in visiting themselves or remain as overall coordinator. In larger churches, best practice indicates that the Pastoral Coordinator should not be involved in visiting but focus on the administration of the team of Pastoral Visitors, their development and giving advice when needed. The Pastoral Coordinator should work closely with local Church Safeguarding Officers and the Circuit Safeguarding Officers to identify any worries or concerns.

If the Pastoral Coordinator role is shared, it is important that there is common agreement between those sharing the role about the vision of how the work will develop.

- **Recruitment.**

In line with the Safer Recruitment Policy, all Pastoral Visitors should be recruited to their role. They should understand and have sight of their role outline, be interviewed for the role, however informally, and have references taken up.

The Pastoral Coordinator, and/or Pastoral Committee if there is one, must undertake this no matter how formal or casual is the expression in the Pastoral Visiting role. It will be particularly important that the Pastoral Visitor understands to whom they are accountable, as well as their duty to report safeguarding concerns should they arise.

If under 18s are involved in any form of pastoral visiting, this should be done in full consultation with their parent or guardian and close oversight by the Pastoral Team.

- **Commissioning.**

The Methodist Worship Book contains an outline of a service for commissioning all Pastoral Visitors (page 344). The use of this service recognises and publicly acknowledges the importance of the role.

- **Pastoral Visitor meetings.**

Ideally the Pastoral Visitor should be a part of a wider team of Pastoral Visitors who should meet together at agreed and regular intervals. The meetings will serve many purposes:

- **to bring together Pastoral Visitors, simply to keep in touch as a team and support each other;**
- **to share common issues that are being faced, discuss together how to best resolve them and develop good practice;**
- **to discuss particular situations that have caused difficulty or confusion;**
- **to identify training and development needs and on occasions provide training, to further equip Pastoral Visitors in their knowledge and understanding;**
- **to report on their work to Church Council on an annual basis.**

Without regular meetings of this type, Pastoral Visitors may feel isolated, disconnected from each other and not up to date with relevant developments that impact on their role.

- **Recording visits**

**(NB This section only applies to visits by volunteer Pastoral Visitors – different guidance will be produced for recording pastoral visits by paid pastoral workers and ministers)**

It is good practice for a Pastoral Visitor to make a simple note when they have had contact with someone, especially if a visit has taken place. This is important for several reasons:

- **To help to record who has been seen, including dates and times;**
- **to avoid disputes if someone feels they have been unsupported;**
- **in the rare case of a complaint being made, there is a record of what support has been offered and/or if someone has been in someone's home at a particular time/date;**
- **to support accountability.**

Pastoral Visitors should note the following basic information:

- **name of person visited**
- **date and time of visit**
- **venue**
- **reason for the visit, if appropriate**
- **necessary action, if any, and who it involves**

There are a few ways this information may be recorded:

- The Pastoral Visitor could make a note in a diary or similar just to show when they visited or had contact. Often nothing more than that may be required.
- The Coordinator could hold a record of when visits are made, as informed by the Pastoral Visitors.

However, if more detailed information needs to be recorded, this needs to be kept securely, in consultation with the Pastoral Coordinator. If a safeguarding concern arises, the process for recording safeguarding concerns should be followed.

If individual notes are recorded or a central record kept of visits, it will be important to keep that record or the means of tracing the record in line with archiving policies

- **Safeguarding**

Many concerns which arise from those receiving support will be able to be dealt with practically and speedily, often by consultation with the person's family or circle of friends. However, issues may arise that necessitate wider assessment and advice from elsewhere.

There is an established procedure for passing on concerns, outlined in The Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church (2017) pages 25-32. This is summarised in the Flowchart Appendix iii.

All safeguarding issues must be passed on to the Pastoral Coordinator, Minister and/or Safeguarding Officer for attention and the necessary help agreed. This must be done even when the Pastoral Visitor does not have consent to do so if it is felt that that person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, harm. The District Safeguarding Officer should be contacted if further help and advice is needed.

All concerns should be recorded on the District Safeguarding form and signed as appropriate. (Appendix iv)

It is important to stress that the fear of involving external agencies, invading people's privacy and spoiling relationships should not detract Pastoral Visitors from seeking advice.

- **Information gathering**

Appropriate systems should be in place to support the work of Pastoral Visitors:

- **Information should be held on which Pastoral Visitors are linked to which member of the church.**
- **Appropriate limited information on each Pastoral Visitor, especially to ensure they can be contacted in emergencies or for support, should be held with their consent.**
- **Where possible, it is advisable for Pastoral Visitors to have important telephone numbers on their person, especially in case of emergency – Minister/Coordinator, District Safeguarding Officer, Police etc.**

Over time, many Pastoral Visitors build up a network of contacts with local and external agencies which can prove very useful in responding to concerns quickly and practically. These contacts should be made available to the team to make good use of them. There are examples of some churches having simple and accessible directories made up of Pastoral Visitor contacts which have been pooled.

- **Training.**

All Pastoral Visitor's should have completed Creating Safer Space foundation level training which is refreshed every 4 years. New Pastoral Visitors must undertake Creating Safer Space Foundation Module Training (2016) which is then refreshed every 4 years.

Training which reflects the current trends in safeguarding should be made available to Pastoral Visitors either locally or through external training events (e.g. Domestic Violence, Mental Health, Adults who are vulnerable etc.).

#### **4. Other good practice guidelines**

##### **Visiting Cards** (See example in Appendix v)

Although the Pastoral Visitor may be well known by those being visited, visiting cards serve a number of purposes:

- **it shows that Pastoral Visitors are there on behalf of the church;**
- **the person being visited and relevant others (family, staff in hospital or care homes) can contact the Pastoral Visitor if necessary.**

**Useful telephone numbers** – As previously mentioned, it is helpful for Pastoral Visitors to carry a list of emergency contact numbers when visiting.

**Contact with other settings** – nursing homes, hospitals etc. It will be important that Pastoral Visitors who have contact with people in various care settings understand their duty of care should they be concerned about the quality of care being offered or the standards of the environment they are in. Any concerns should be passed to the Pastoral Coordinator, Minister and/or Safeguarding Officer.

##### **Safeguarding the Pastoral Visitors**

It is important that the well-being of the Pastoral Visitors is a high priority. They will need their own level of support from the Pastoral Coordinator/Minister. As well as regular team meetings, from time to time each individual Pastoral Visitor could be spoken with on a one-to-one basis, however informally, to ensure all is well.

There are certain occasions where it is better for more than one pastoral visitor to visit or deal with a situation. This is, of course, not always possible but some situations, although rare, will need careful consideration and may need a risk assessment to ensure that all are safe.

##### **Prayer and Spiritual advice offered by Pastoral Visitors**

The Pastoral Visitor may feel it is appropriate to ask if the person being visited would like a prayer to be said, but this should not be assumed as obvious. Spiritual advice is best in the form of encouragement rather than specific advice. If this is clearly needed, this should be referred to the Pastoral Coordinator and/or Minister, to ensure that appropriate support is provided.

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We would like to thank the Lincolnshire District of the Methodist Church for sharing their Good Practice Guidance.

**The following covers the three different role outlines.**

**Prior to recruitment, the pastoral coordinator, Minister and/or Safeguarding Officer should discuss the different roles with the prospective Pastoral Visitor, who should consider the level of involvement they wish to take on.**

**Ideally most Pastoral Visitors will be appointed to the second role outline, as this will cover most of the situations they are likely to encounter.**

### **1. Pastoral Visitors – role outline for those wishing to offer occasional support.**

This pastoral visitor will not be expected to become involved in the day to day affairs of the person being visited or have contacts other than to enquire about their general health and well-being and engage in social discussion (rather than more involved personal matters);

- to visit occasionally for social conversation and help reduce someone's feeling of isolation; to act as a listening ear for any matters of a personal or spiritual nature the person visited may wish to raise;
- to pass information to someone who may not be able to attend church or activities;
- to deliver a newsletter (if the church has one) and keep someone informed of life in the church;
- to ensure someone's general health and wellbeing is monitored and report to the Pastoral Coordinator/ Minister any concerns;
- to offer prayer if required

This role does not require a DBS check but attendance at Foundation Module training is required.

**It is essential that if this role develops into more involved work, the Pastoral Coordinator must be consulted immediately and a DBS check is considered.**

### **2. Pastoral Visitors – role outline for those wishing to offer more involved support.**

This Pastoral Visitor may need to assist in more involved support with someone, given the person's circumstances and requests for help:

- to visit more substantially and actively offer opportunity for discussions about life events, current issues and concerns;
- to support someone with a particular task but NOT personal care or personal affairs e.g. talking through a particular situation that is worrying someone, signposting them to appropriate services and/or requesting spiritual support from the Minister/Deacon;
- to support others – family members not on pastoral lists – if required;



- to enquire about a person's general health and well-being in more depth to be sure a person is not vulnerable in any way;
- to offer prayer if required.

This role would need a DBS check (Enhanced) and attendance at Foundation Module training.

### **3. Pastoral Visitors – role outline for those who visit and have contact regularly and undertake specific personal care tasks.**

This Pastoral Visitor will offer more regular contact in respect of children or be involved in more personal care in respect of vulnerable adults:

- to have contact once a week, 4 times a month and if necessary in the night in respect of children and their families;
- to undertake personal care tasks and see to personal life affairs (bank, bills, shopping etc.);
- to hold information about an individual which is personal and indicative of their personal affairs;
- to act as a representative of an individual as required and with permission

Such a role should only be undertaken with the complete approval of the Pastoral Coordinator and Minister, in consultation with Circuit and/or District Safeguarding Officer. Consideration should also be given to visiting in pairs and the recording of all visits.

This role will require a DBS check and Barring Check and attendance at Foundation Module training.

#### **Accountability for all Pastoral Visitors.**

Pastoral Visitors will be accountable to the Pastoral Coordinator and the Pastoral Team.

#### **Safer recruitment.**

All Pastoral Visitors will be recruited as per the Connexional Safer Recruitment Policy and will be subject to informal interview, references and DBS checks as appropriate.

#### **Confidentiality.**

Pastoral Visitors will respect and adhere to confidentiality in all aspects of their role.

## Appendix (ii)

### **Pastoral Coordinators – role outline**

It is helpful for a local church to have someone coordinating pastoral work. This role is often undertaken by the Secretary of the Pastoral Committee, but it can helpfully be carried by another individual. The following is offered as a possible role description for someone carrying responsibility for coordinating pastoral work, whether the secretary or someone else.

#### **Overall responsibility.**

- To co-ordinate and administrate the work of Pastoral Visitors.

#### **Key responsibilities:**

- to act as central point for support for all Pastoral Visitors;
- to act as a central point for the receiving and giving of information;
- to maintain a central library of relevant information;
- to coordinate the lists of who is being supported by which Pastoral Visitor;
- to constantly review that list to ensure suitability of matching;
- to keep appropriate records of such lists;
- to coordinate regular Pastoral Visitor meetings;
- to ensure Pastoral Visitors are appropriately recruited, DBS checked if appropriate and offered support and induction;
- to receive safeguarding concerns and pass them to the Safeguarding Officer and/or Minister;
- to identify, through a team approach, any training or development needs

#### **Accountability for all Pastoral Coordinators.**

The Pastoral Coordinator will be responsible to the Minister and the Pastoral Team. If the role is held by a Minister, she/he will be responsible to the Pastoral Team and Superintendent.

#### **Safer recruitment.**

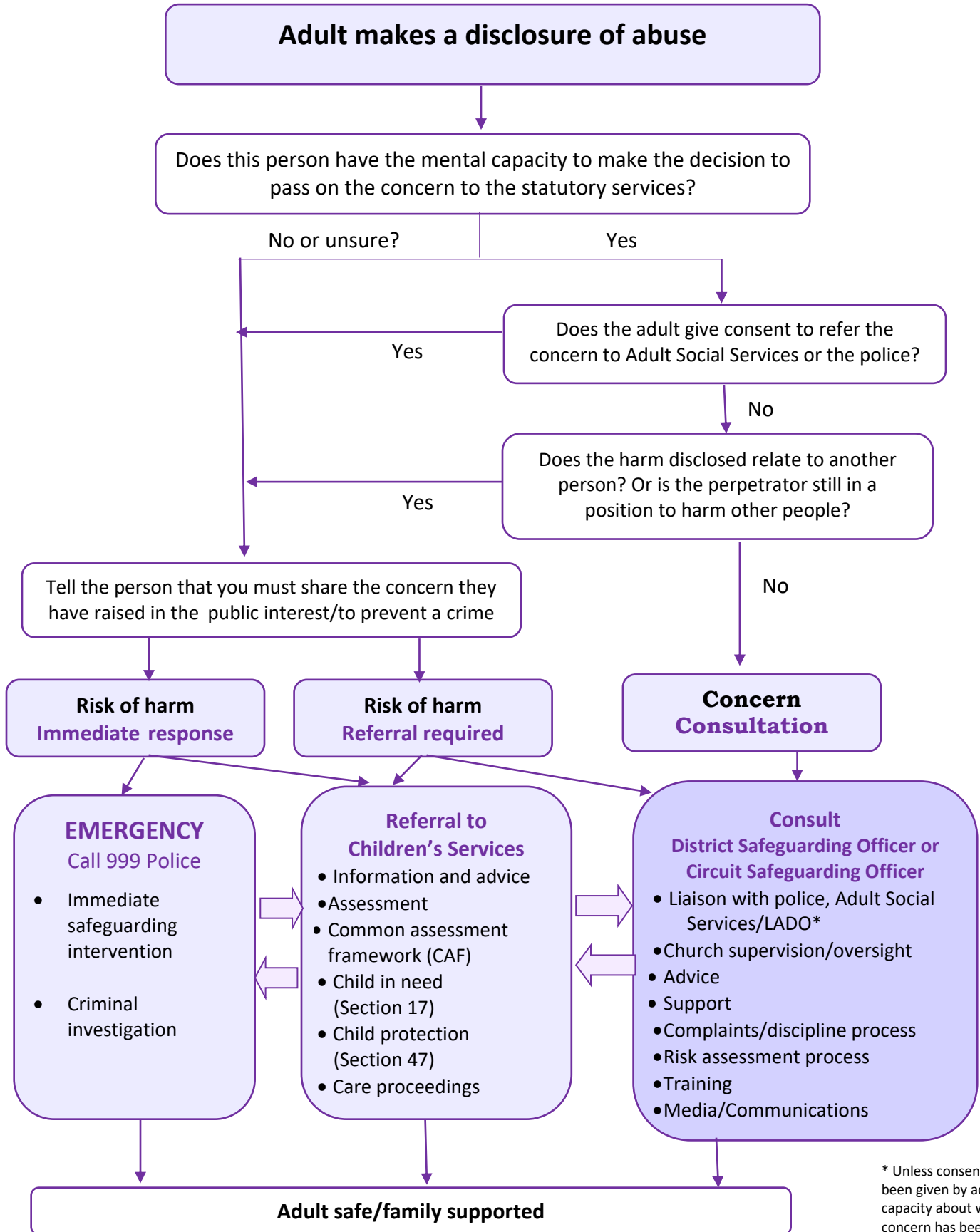
All Pastoral Coordinators will be recruited as per the Connexional Safer Recruitment Policy and will be subject to informal interview, references and DBS checks as appropriate.

The role requires a DBS check given its overseeing role. If the Pastoral Coordinator is the Minister, then they are required to have the necessary DBS checks as part of their Presbytery/Deacon role.

#### **Confidentiality.**

Pastoral Coordinators will respect and adhere to confidentiality in all aspects of their role.

## Responding Well Flowchart <sup>2</sup>



\* Unless consent has not been given by adult with capacity about whom the concern has been raised

<sup>2</sup> Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church – Section 4 Procedures for responding well to safeguarding incidents







**Manchester & Stockport District****Confidential Incident / Concern Report Form      Ref No.**

Name and contact details of child / young person / adult who is vulnerable subject of concern / at risk:	
Name and contact details of parent / guardian / carer of above named:	
Name and contact details of worker / member / attendee causing concern:	
Name and contact details of parent / guardian / carer of above named:	
Position and church of person causing concern:	
Nature of concern: (The Allegation / Behaviour / Risk that is causing concern):	
(Names of principle parties are essential. If you have not done so make a factual written record of your observations and any conversations - sign and date it)	
<b>Who have you spoken to about your concerns?</b>	
Child / young person / vulnerable adult subject of concern / at risk:	Yes / No
Senior staff / line manager Position: Name:	Yes / No
Contact details of senior staff / line manager:	
Social Services	Yes / No
Police	Yes / No
Probation	Yes / No
Name / Position / Contact details of persons contacted:	
Initial Report compiled by: Signature: Date and time:	
<b>Initial Action / Feedback at Circuit / Parish / District / Diocese Level:</b>	
Name / contact details of person taking action:	
Position / Role Date and time:	



Example of Visiting Cards

The sections in italics should be filled in as appropriate; the blank space can be filled with a very short personal message.

<p>The <b>Methodist</b> Church </p> <p><i>Location</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Church Office phone number</i></span></p> <hr/> <p>I called today on behalf of us all at church and will continue to remember you in my prayers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Pastoral Visitor</p>	<p>The <b>Methodist</b> Church </p> <p><i>Location</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Church Office phone number</i></span></p> <hr/> <p>I called today on behalf of us all at church and will continue to remember you in my prayers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Pastoral Visitor</p>
<p>The <b>Methodist</b> Church </p> <p><i>Location</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Church Office phone number</i></span></p> <hr/> <p>I called today on behalf of us all at church and will continue to remember you in my prayers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Pastoral Visitor</p>	<p>The <b>Methodist</b> Church </p> <p><i>Location</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Church Office phone number</i></span></p> <hr/> <p>I called today on behalf of us all at church and will continue to remember you in my prayers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Pastoral Visitor</p>
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