Supporting Lay Employment

A Practice Guide for the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District

The Context and Purpose of this Practice Guide

Standing Orders 438a, 570, 574 and 575 set out clearly the Conference position on lay employment, including the function of the District Lay Employment Sub-committee. Additionally, on the Methodist website, in the Lay Employment Resource, there is extensive guidance on recruitment and employment practice, which is essential reading for all prospective or current employers and provides templates for all necessary documents.

This Guide is intended to indicate the ways in which the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District seeks to fulfil its obligations regarding lay employment. It also provides guidance for best practice additional to that contained on the website, to demonstrate our commitment to and affirmation of the ministry of the whole people of God.

Those who offer contracts to self-employed people may wish to consider the application of certain aspects of this guide and should refer to https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers/lay-employment-resource/8-key-policies-and-guidance-documents/hiring-self-employed-consultants/self-employed-consultants-vs-employees/

The Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District is in a covenant relationship with the other districts that comprise the North-West and Mann region, each of whom has a similar Good Practice Guide.

The District Lay Employment Sub-committee

In addition to the requirements of SO 438A, the LESC will seek to ensure that the District will appoint:

- A lay employee Champion/Coordinator who will gather Lay Employees on a regular basis, for professional development and collaborative working and ensure that details of training courses and funds are made known.
- A Chaplain (or Chaplains) for lay employees, to offer pastoral care.

Recommended Additional Support

It is critical to note that all roles may have an element of vocation to them, and also the Methodist Church notes that some Lay Employee roles, including Pastoral, Evangelism, Youth work and Children's work, have a distinctive leadership element to them, requiring these roles to be notified to the Chair of District, (SO570 (2(e)). In practice in this District, this happens via the Lay Employment Secretary; to satisfy SO 575(5) the Lay Employment Secretary will notify the Regional Learning Network

Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District is committed to fair pay and a good experience of employment for all Lay Employees, and therefore emphases the following, giving links to the Lay Employment Resource on methodist.org.uk:

1. Careful consideration should be given when setting or reviewing an employee`s salary. Refer to this link, [Guidelines for determining the salary figure for lay posts] for comprehensive guidance. Note that where criteria of qualifications, proven ability and responsibilities allow extra increments of salary, it is the recommendation of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District Policy Committee that the amount per point be 50p.This is higher than the amount calculated per point on this section of the Lay Employment Resource, but we believe it allows for greater differential between posts with differing levels of complexity.

   All employees must be paid at, as a minimum, the living wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation. Some jobs will require a salary which is equivalent to that offered on the open market. Where the role calls for professional qualifications e.g., JNC, the appropriate pay scales should be followed.

   The pay of Lay Employees should be increased on an annual basis, either as the Living Wage Foundation recommends, or to match the ministerial stipend increases each year or as the result of a change in responsibilities.

2. Employees should be employed by the most appropriate body. This is often Circuit or District to maximise peer support and create administrative efficiency.
   Choose the Line Manager carefully – there is significant potential for conflict of interest if the line manager is also the employee's minister. For this reason, consider alternatives – training for line management is available. Line Management Training - 2022/23 Consider also who might supervise the work and whether a mentor is needed.

3. Plan an Induction Programme carefully. Consider the steps required to enable the employee to operate effectively. New Employee Orientation

4. Care should be taken when an employee transitions between roles (for example resulting from career progression and changes in calling) within the same employer to ensure that a full review of working environment and requirements for the role are undertaken. In the case of TUPE, (between employers) the District Lay Employment Secretary should be consulted.

5. Arrangements for the workplace – consider the optimum base for work and state it clearly in the Job Description; budget for provision of equipment; consideration for home working and lone working. There also needs to be consideration given to safeguarding and lone worker policies. 8. Key Policies and Guidance Documents
   Employers have a responsibility to assess the risks of lone working both on and off their premises during the course of duty and to take appropriate actions to mitigate those risks. Employees have the responsibility to comply with all arrangements for their safety. Lone Working (methodist.org.uk)

   Refer to this link for full information on homeworking related payments:
   https://www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-homeworking/what-to-report-and-pay
   Note in particular: "Additional household expenses. If you cover any costs over the weekly limit (£6, or £26 a month for employees paid monthly), you need to be able to prove that the payments are no more than your employee's additional household expenses."

We recognise that lay employees may feel isolated (especially in geographically large circuits or where their work is more specialised). Employees should be encouraged to take opportunities for meeting other employees from across the circuit, district and region that are appropriate to the context of their role.

Connection to Leadership groups and engagement with local church: employing bodies should ensure that the work of the employee is affirmed and supported and that there is a shared vision around the work. Where appropriate, employees should be part of the circuit staff meeting and employing bodies should consult SO510(1)(iv). Where this does not apply consideration should be given to inviting the employee to attend the circuit meeting/church council at least annually. Consider whether they will benefit from being part of District Synod.

6. Professional Development –a clause relating to training and development should be included in the job description and money allocated to them in the budget, (for example retreats, reading days, training opportunities, spiritual advisors, courses etc.). Identification of training and development needs should be made on appointment and at regular intervals, including at each appraisal. 11. Learning and Development Events
   Safeguarding training is mandatory for any role involving regular work with children or vulnerable adults

   Training, Learning and Development can be resourced in various ways, many of which are now online:
   - On the job training and mentoring – by applying appropriate input from experienced people and by setting stretching objectives the employee can gain significant experience.
   - General skills development: computer skills, social media training, managing volunteers, counselling skills, first aid and food hygiene etc. Training in these areas is available from local Voluntary Services organisations, from a local college, or online.
   - Faith related development provided by: Regional Learning Network; Theological colleges e.g. Cliff College; Locally led Methodist & Ecumenical events.
   - Peer support – employees are encouraged to establish and develop a network of colleagues for mutual support this may be initiated at Circuit, District or Regional level. These might be Communities of Practice, breakfast meetings or online. There are a number of Methodist job specific social media groups to support various roles.
   - Knowledge Base – there are several Connexional on-line mailings and professional mailings which will offer background information.

7. Appraisals
   It is strongly recommended that an appraisal is given at least annually, where the employee performance and priorities are reviewed and documented against the targets set the year before, and targets agreed and recorded for the year to come which would include not just output targets but also personal development and training targets. This process deserves at least an hour of the line manager's and employee's time, should take place in a room free from distractions, and each person

should have at least two weeks' notice to prepare for it. It is recommended that the Supervisor also be a part of this process. There is a Lay Employee Performance and Development Review document which can be found at Lay employment review process

A specific form may not be necessary however, and a simple freestyle approach may also be productive though documentation and agreement of content is essential.

It is appropriate to review and update the job description at the same time, along with a potential salary review in the case of significant change. Ideally a job description should be limited to 5 or 6 paragraphs, one of which is on personal development and training. With any agreed changes, the terms and conditions of employment should be amended with a simple letter of amendment where necessary if the hours, place of work or Line Manager have changed, or the job is fundamentally different from what it was a year before. Both parties should sign and keep copies of the agreed outcomes.

8. Learning from Exit interviews Downloadable Templates: Exit Interview Pro Forma
   It is recommended that all employees, on leaving their post are offered an exit interview. Exit interviews are important in order to celebrate the contribution of the employee and also to gain learning on employment practice for the employer and, more widely, the district (to whom information should be sent without personal details). Always send the template in advance and ask for it to be returned to the person who is conducting the interview.

   The Line Manager may not be the most appropriate person to conduct the interview in order to get a fully honest response; it could be the Minister or a member of the Lay Employment Sub-committee. Be prepared for some difficult issues to be raised, and to rectify any shortcomings before engaging another worker. Be clear with the employee about who will see their answers – for example, will the line manager see any comments about them? What are the implications for this if the line manager is being criticised and the employee will remain in the context in another role?

   Don't overwhelm the employee with too many questions and do value the responses that they give, seriously considering any suggestions for change in practice.

   Finally, file the document in the employee's personnel file, and be sure to take the learning from the document to the employer.