



Pastoral Supervision Policy for Ministers

PAPER H4 GA 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope

1.1.1. This Pastoral Supervision Policy provides a framework for, and an outline of, the requirements for all Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (thereafter known as ministers) in categories 1-3 of the Active Ministers Policy within the United Reformed Church.

1.1.2. It draws on the work of the Ministries Pastoral Supervision Task Group and the Guidelines for Pastoral Supervision adopted at General Assembly 2020.

1.1.3. It is intended that this policy be reviewed every 5 years in light of further experience of the practise of pastoral supervision. It is important to review its implementation as part of the responsible exercise of oversight in the life of the church.

2. What is Pastoral Supervision?

2.1 Pastoral Supervision is defined by this policy as the exploratory and reflective practice by a minister in covenant with a trained, resourced and approved supervisor. It is designed to assist ministers in reflecting on their vocation and practice.

2.2 Pastoral Supervision is intended to be

- a *fruitful process*, for the sake of the other;
- a *body of Christ process* that is practises and experienced in community;
- a *holistic approach* involving heart, mind, soul and body;
- a *relational process* of collaboration between supervisee and supervisor that takes skill and practice;
- a *covenanted process* of relationship that is structured intentional and boundaried;
- and a *means of grace*.

2.3 The intention of focused reflection on practice is to encourage 'a conversation between soul, role and context'¹ thus enabling ministers to grow through their experience, or to come to terms with it resourcing the minister to better carry out their role and to further God's mission.

2.4 In order to be effective, supervision needs to be frequent, open and supportive in three areas through:

- providing reliable relational accompaniment which supports well-being and flourishing of ministry practice including the developing of skills and self-awareness;
- underpinning risk assessment, boundary management and clarification of role to assist safeguarding of everyone in church life;

¹ Patterson

- providing skilled and intentional space to reconnect with ministry vision and discerning what God is speaking in your particular context.

3. The purpose and function of pastoral supervision

3.1 Pastoral supervision within the URC has three main functions:

- To support and affirm the well-being and development of those who minister;
- To safeguard the interests of those amongst whom ministry is exercised;
- To ensure that ministry offered in the name of the URC is accountable and represents the purposes of the church in furthering God's mission.

3.2 Pastoral Supervision within the United Reformed Church has three main pillars²:

- Normative – attentive to accountability by having aims that accord with the Basis of Union, an appropriate code of ethics for one's working environment; physical, mental and ministerial fitness to work; an ability to set boundaries and to challenge inappropriate behaviours or expectations;
- Formative - learning and developing one's ministry through reflecting on their practice and that of others, exploring creative approaches to the demanding issues of ministry and relationships as they arise;
- Restorative – ensuring that the vocation and work of the minister is shared, valued and nurtured; exploring healthy habits and ensuring wellbeing issues for the minister are monitored and addressed.

This policy reinforces that supervision is 'affirmative', giving ministers support and affirmation, and encouraging realistic self-appraisal without becoming overly self-critical or self-judgmental.

4. The Ethos of a Supervisory Relationship

4.1 Ministry in today's world can seem to be a lonely experience. Not only are ministers likely to have fewer colleagues in ministry than they did 5 or 10 years ago, but the changing nature of ministry means there is less clarity regarding the expectations and realities of a minister's role.

4.2 Newly ordained ministers are provided with a pastoral advisor during their period of Education for Ministry Phase 2 (EM2) and this may continue informally when a minister enters Education for Ministry Phase 3 (EM3). The value of an ongoing personal supportive relationship in which issues to do with their ministry, usually on a one-to-one basis, in complete confidence, has been recognised by many ministers.

4.3 Ministers of the United Reformed Church have always been party to an oversight structure of the denomination as referenced in the Basis of Union. However, this has largely been about functions. The Marks of Ministry (2019), the Core Competencies (2007), the Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour of Ministers/CRCWs, Safeguarding Training, Safer Sacred Space Boundary training and peer support may have assisted the safety and flourishing of the whole church and those the church is called to serve. Pastoral Supervision provides an external safe space for the minister to reflect on issues of performance.

4.4 As pastoral supervision is introduced to ministers normally for those in Education for Ministry Phase 3 (EM3), they will be supported and trained to make the most of supervision. This will be done through How to get the most out of pastoral supervision workshops led by Ministries and, for new ministers, through the EM2 programme.

² Inskipp and Proctor 1988

4.5 It is important therefore, that care is taken to ensure that supervisor and supervisee feel able to work together to achieve the purposes outlined in 3.1 and 3.2 and are willing to collaborate in order to create an ethos that is

- prayerful and non-anxious,
- playful and reflection
- collegial and non-coercive
- embodied and dialogical
- excentric and missional
- compassionate and courageous
- intentional and boundaried
- and accountable³.

This list is not exhaustive.

5. The supervisory relationship

5.1 Each supervision should provide opportunity for

- reconnecting with God, self and the supervisor
- an update on any agreed actions from previous supervisions
- substantial attention to at least one issue
- attention to risk in relation to potential harm to self or others or the mission of the church
- a written record of explicit actions in relation to safeguarding, fitness to practice and any other matters for referral.

5.2 Boundaries and expectation of the supervisory relationship

5.2.1 Safe practice in supervision relies on the clear boundaries and expectations. These are established between the supervisor and supervisee as they come together but rests on the boundaries and expectations set by the Marks of Ministry or Core Competencies.

5.2.2 In this policy the United Reformed Church sets boundaries for the supervisory relationship and expectation concerning the scope and purpose of supervisions and practical matters like the frequency and duration of the meeting.

5.2.3 The main burden of the supervision agenda rests on the supervisee who should identify significant practice issues to bring to supervision that, over time, reflect the breadth and depth of their vocation and work.

5.3 Who may supervise?

5.3.1 The approved list includes those affiliated to

- APSE (Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education)
- BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy)
- the Association of Christian Counsellors;
- those trained by the United Reformed Church on the URC Pastoral Supervision course.

5.3.2 The request to use a pastoral supervisor from any other body than those listed above will need prior approval from the Synod Moderator who may consult with the Secretary for Ministries.

³ Jane Leach

5.4 Who may supervise whom?

- 5.4.1** Those trained by the United Reformed Church on the URC Pastoral Supervision course will be expected to supervise fellow URC ministers under the training agreement.
- 5.4.2** Best practice dictates that a URC trained pastoral supervisor should not normally pastorally supervise anyone in their own Synod or whom they know as a friend rather than a colleague.
- 5.4.3** However, the policy recognises the need for some flexibility in 5.4.2. For those supervisors who have dual roles, care needs to be taken to establish clear boundaries. Advice on conflict of interests should be sought from the Synod Moderator in consultation with the Secretary for Ministries.

5.5 Whom must be supervised?

- 5.5.1** All ministers in EM3 in categories 1-3 of the URC's Active Minister Policy (Paper H5 Assembly Executive 2021).
- 5.5.2** For those avoidance of doubt these categories are:
- Category 1: in a pastorate or post for which they are receiving a stipend (either full or part) from the United Reformed Church (e.g. deployed post, SCM post, Assembly appointment) under the Plan for Partnership;
 - Category 2: in non-stipendiary service in a recognised ministry post (e.g. model 1, 2, 3 or 4 or Local NS CRCW);
 - Category 3: exercising a ministry with another organisation within the gift of the church to the wider church to which they have been inducted by the URC where possible (e.g. chaplaincy, educational establishment, ecumenical body) and for which they receive a stipend, salary or serve in a voluntary capacity;
- 5.5.3** It is recognised that ministers in category 3 may have professional pastoral supervision as part of their work. In these cases, they should inform their Synod Moderator and the Synod should inform the Ministries Office.
- 5.5.4** Synod Moderators, at their discretion or with the approval of the Secretary for Ministries, may require those ministers in categories 4-7 to receive pastoral supervision. This may include ministers in Education for Ministry 2 (EM2).

6. Practical Arrangements for Supervision

6.1 Frequency and duration for full-time ministers

- 6.1.1** Every full-time minister who is subject to this policy should receive not less than six hours of supervision spread evenly throughout the year.
- 6.1.2** Additional supervision, up to 3 further hours, may be negotiated in appropriate circumstances e.g. when a supervisee is also a supervisor and needs supervision of supervision; when the supervisee is under particular pressure; if there is need for an emergency supervision for any negotiated reason. The cost of this will be borne by the pastorate.
- 6.1.3** Those engaged to supervise by the United Reformed Church as external supervisors or who are offering supervision as the main ministry they offer to the United Reformed Church should receive supervision on supervision equivalent to 10% of the time they offer as supervisors but not less than an hour per quarter.

6.2 Frequency and duration for part-time ministers

- 6.2.1.** For those in part time ministry, engagement in supervision should be proportionate and appropriate to the role being exercised as determined by the Synod Moderator in consultation with the Secretary for Ministries. However, in order to achieve the objective of frequency and maintain a realistic supervisory relationship, no one subject to this policy should be supervised for less than one hour each quarter.

6.3 Mode of supervision.

Whilst the United Reformed Church expects all ministers to have no less than 6 sessions throughout the year, Ministries had originally required that half those sessions would be in person. The pandemic meant that this was not possible. Whilst the ideal would be all six sessions in person, Ministries accepts that effective pastoral supervision can be done online. This will also help with the capacity issue in some areas. There is therefore now no requirement for in person supervision, though some such sessions are encouraged.

6.4 Sabbaticals

- 6.4.1 Any minister on sabbatical is entitled to receive her full quota of supervision but may, by negotiation with a supervisor, miss a quarter of the annual quota during that three-month period.
- 6.4.2 Any minister on sabbatical should not undertake all the supervisions for the supervisees during the sabbatical but should make appropriate and proportionate arrangements for the supervision of their colleagues.

6.5 Parental Leave

- 6.5.1 Any minister on parental leave should normally continue to be supervised on the keeping in touch days.
- 6.5.2 Any minister who supervises who takes parental leave for more than two months should make alternative arrangements can be made for their supervisees.

6.6 Sick Leave

- 6.6.1 Ministers who are signed off sick may not engage in pastoral supervision.
- 6.6.2 Any supervisor who is signed off sick may not supervise. Where this persists for more than two months, alternative arrangements should be made for the affected supervisees by the Ministries Office.

6.7 Suspension

- 6.6.7 Ministers who are suspended may not engage in pastoral supervision unless the Assembly Commission deem it appropriate.
- 6.6.8 Where the minister who supervises is suspended alternative arrangements should be made by the Ministries Office for the supervision of the supervisees.

6.8 Confidentiality

- 6.8.1 Pastoral supervision in the URC is not intended to replicate a professional management relationship. Whilst issues of accountability in relation to the minister's local pastorate and Synod will arise, these are not the main focus.
- 6.8.2 Supervision will be confidential between supervisor and supervisee, unless the supervision raises concerns relating to safeguarding, or serious legal or wellbeing issues. Supervisors are trained to respond appropriately to such matters, and the Serious concerns should be reported to the Synod Moderator.
- 6.8.3 Supervisees are also encouraged to regularly identify any needs or concerns that might be addressed or supported by the Synod or local pastorate, and to report them to the appropriate forum, e.g. the Synod Training and Development Officer or equivalent.

6.9 Recordkeeping

- 6.9.1 To ensure good recordkeeping, the minister and pastoral supervisor will jointly confirm in writing to the Synod Moderator or the appropriate Synod committee, normally in the January of each year, that regular supervision is taking place.

- 6.9.2 Upon receipt of the information the Synod will be responsible for updating both the minister's file and the entry on the minister's record on the database accordingly.
- 6.9.3 The Synod will, in turn, report this to the Secretary for Ministries, who will keep a denomination-wide record.

6.10 Claiming for Supervision

- 6.10.1 It is still hoped that the local pastorate sees the value of pastoral supervision for their minister and will pay the full cost, or, failing that, at least 50% of costs.
- 6.10.2 Those pastorates which cannot afford the full cost may apply for their reimbursement from Ministries.
- 6.10.3 A claim for reimbursement can be made via the Ministries Office in the December of each year.