

Paper R1

Investigation Teams

Complaints and Discipline Advisory Group (CDAG)

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Adrian Bulley adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk
Action required	Acceptance of resolution.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Amend Section O Appendix K to read:</p> <p>6: On receiving the material transmitted by the Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline, the Senior Member is to appoint three willing members of the Panel to form an Investigation Team for that case, and one panel member to assist the accused minister to address the issues and, if required, before the Assembly Commission for Discipline or the Disciplinary Appeal Commission, having regard to geographical proximity to the accused, complainant and likely witnesses as well as to appropriate skills and experience. No Panel member who is related to, belonging to the same local church as, or otherwise closely concerned with the accused minister or the complainant, has any pastoral or personal involvement with the case or is liable to be a witness, may be appointed to an Investigation Team for that case. Subject to these considerations, the Senior Member should also consider the desirability of all members of the Panel having regular involvement with disciplinary cases. The Senior Member may him- or herself serve on an Investigation Team when that appears appropriate. If, from the information available at this stage, the case appears to be onerous due to the likely volume of evidence or the complexity of such evidence and that professional assistance in investigation would be appropriate, the senior member shall refer the matter to the Executive Group of the Disciplinary Process who may appoint a suitably qualified person, whether or not a member of the URC, as an additional member of the Investigation Team. the Assembly Representative for Discipline will appoint an Investigation Team comprising a Human Resources specialist supported by a suitably qualified member of the United Reformed Church, with relevant subject experience, appointed by the General Secretariat.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To refine the existing provision in Appendix K to have an external person assist Investigation Teams by creating a smaller Investigation Team comprising an HR specialist and a suitably qualified URC member – who may be a member of the existing Disciplinary Investigation Panel – appointed by the General Secretariat.
Main points	<p>Since General Assembly 2022 adopted the new Section O process, 11 cases have been dealt with by the Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline; the vast majority of which have needed investigation. CDAG has, therefore, had the opportunity to see the new process work and learn many lessons. Whilst there are many positive aspects to the new process, it has not, as hoped, led to a faster procedure. Whether suspended or not, Ministers can be left in limbo for many months before their cases are resolved, which can lead to stress and frustration for minister, complainant, and local churches.</p> <p>It is expected that the use of an HR professional will greatly speed up the Investigation Stage – the phase which is taking the most time.</p> <p>The external HR professional will be supported by a suitably qualified member of the URC who can advise on our culture and polity.</p> <p>CDAG will review and evaluate this way of working over 2024 and, in due course, bring further resolutions to Assembly.</p>
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	The Officers of the Finance Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	There is a cost for an HR specialist to work with us, but this will be mitigated by the shorter Investigation Stage meaning ministers may be suspended for less time on full stipend.
External (eg ecumenical)	