

# Recommended Employment Terms



We evaluate employment terms and conditions through benchmarking and relevant guidance as it is issued by the Methodist Church.

In all matters regarding lay employment, our objective is to protect the financial and reputational interests of the Circuits, Churches, and projects across the Districts we work in.

This document provides data, recommendations, and best practice standards to support informed decision-making and facilitate productive dialogue. Please note that the final application of these recommendations ultimately rests with the individual employing body.

Supplemental resources are available via the Lay Employment Resource Pack on the Methodist Church website: [www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/employees-and-volunteers/).

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## 1. Hours of Work:

The recommended standard working week for a full-time employee is 37 hours.

## 2. Working Time Directive:

Under the Working Time Regulations 1998, employers have a statutory duty to ensure employees do not typically work more than 48 hours per week. This "normal" limit is generally calculated as an average over a rolling 17-week reference period.

While certain sectors may be exempt from this limit, there are currently no lay employment roles within the Methodist Church that fall into an exempt category. If an employee holds multiple jobs, the Church must collaborate with the employee to ensure their combined total hours do not exceed the 48-hour average.

### 3. The Living Wage Policy:

The Methodist Church is a committed Real Living Wage employer. It is a requirement that the Real Living Wage, as published by the [Living Wage Foundation](#), forms the minimum basic salary for all employees within the District.

This mandate applies to all staff, including those under the age of 18.

- **Current Rate** (announced 22nd October 2025): £13.45 per hour
- **Implementation:** Employing bodies within the District are required to implement this updated rate as soon as practicable, and no later than [1st May 2026](#)

### 4. Probationary Periods:

A probationary period provides a structured timeframe for the Church to review a new employee's performance and for the employee to assess the suitability of the role.

Following recent and additional upcoming changes in employment legislation, we recommend a more condensed and active monitoring period.

- **Standard Duration:** The standard probationary period is guided to be 3 months. This ensures that both the Church and employee have a focused window to establish performance and suitability early in the relationship
- **Extension:** In instances where performance or conduct has not yet reached the required standard, but there is potential for improvement, the probationary period may be extended for a further 2 months. This brings the maximum total probationary period to 5 months and all decisions and dismissal notice periods must be completed within this time.
- **Documentation:** The written Statement of Terms and Conditions must specify the 3-month length of the initial probation and explain the monitoring process (e.g., performance, conduct, and capability)
- **Review Meetings:** The Line Manager is responsible for monitoring progress. Formal review meetings should occur at the end of month one, month two, and a final assessment before the end of the 3-month period to determine if the employee has passed, failed, or if the 2-month extension is required

The Church recommends a three month probation period because from January 2027, employees gain the right to claim Ordinary Unfair Dismissal after six months service. It is therefore vital any decision to terminate employment during probation - including the serving of contractual or statutory notice - is finalised and enacted during the fifth month in post.

Under the Employment Rights Act, the qualifying period for an employee to claim Ordinary Unfair Dismissal drops from two years to just 6 months, effective 1 January 2027.

This threshold applies to all workers hired on or after 1 July 2026.

It is critical therefore that any decision to terminate employment during probation, including the serving of notice, is finalised and enacted before the 5-month mark. By law, a worker who has passed 1 month of service is entitled to a minimum of 1 week's statutory notice. If an

employer serves notice at month 5 and that notice period rolls even one day into the 6th month, the worker automatically hits the 6-month threshold and gains full unfair dismissal protections. Furthermore, under the new rules, statutory compensation caps on unfair dismissal have been abolished, exposing employing bodies to uncapped financial risk.

## 5. Sick Pay (SSP and Occupational/Enhanced):

From April 2026 SSP has been fundamentally reformed. All employing bodies must adhere to these updated statutory minimums before applying any enhanced occupational provision:

- **Day-One Entitlement:** The previous three-day "waiting period" has been abolished. Employees are now entitled to SSP from the first full day of sickness absence.
- **Universal Eligibility:** The Lower Earnings Limit (LEL) has been removed. All employees, including part-time and lower-paid staff, now qualify for SSP regardless of their weekly earnings.
- **Payment Calculation:** For the 2026/27 tax year, the weekly rate of SSP is £123.25 or 80% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.
- **Duration:** SSP remains payable for a maximum of 28 weeks per period of sickness.

We recommend an enhanced sick pay provision that exceeds statutory requirements is offered to all employees. For consistency, we have prepared two straightforward options:

Option 1		
Occupational sick pay	Up to 15 days per rolling year	Paid as full basic salary (inclusive of SSP). The employing body pays the difference between SSP and the employees normal salary and the employee sees no dip in their regular take home pay.

Option 2	
6 months to 1 year of service:	1 month full pay.
1 to 2 years of service:	2 months full pay and 2 months half* pay.
2 to 10 years of service:	4 months full pay and 4 months half* pay.
Over 10 years of service:	6 months full pay and 6 months half* pay.

\*During "Half Pay" periods, the employee receives half basic salary plus full statutory SSP rate (currently £123.25/week), provided the total does not exceed their normal full pay

Note that part-time staff receive sick pay on a pro-rata basis and periods of absence are calculated based on a rolling 12-month year.

If an employee is absent for more than 4 continuous weeks, or if a long-term absence is anticipated, employing bodies are advised to contact Andrew Crawford, the [District Lay Employment Advisor](#).

## 6. Line Management and Supervision:

It is mandatory to identify a suitable Line Manager before any new employee begins work. All Line Managers must complete Methodist Line Management training through the Learning Network ([www.methodist.org.uk/learning-network](http://www.methodist.org.uk/learning-network)).

- **Line Management Meetings:** Frequent meetings are essential for monitoring progress and providing a platform for employee feedback. Managers should use a structured agenda to ensure focus.
- **Reflective Supervision:** In addition to standard management, roles with a pastoral element are now required to receive formal [Reflective Supervision](#).

## 7. Appraisals:

We recommend that formal annual appraisals are framed as Performance and Development Reviews (PDR). These should not be a one-off "box-ticking" exercise but a culmination of the ongoing, informal conversations held during regular line management meetings.

### Key Principles for an Effective Review:

- **Separation from Pay:** PDRs should focus on performance, potential, and vocational development. Discussions regarding salary or cost-of-living adjustments should be handled in a separate meeting to ensure the focus remains on professional growth.
- **Two-Way Dialogue:** Both the Line Manager and employee should complete a [pre-appraisal self-assessment form](#). This allows the employee to reflect on their own achievements and challenges before the meeting.
- **SMART Objectives:** Set 3–5 key objectives for the coming year that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. These should align with the mission of the local Church or Circuit, where relevant.

### Core Areas for Discussion:

- **Vocational Reflection:** For a number of lay roles, work is seen in vocational terms. The review should explore how effectively the work contributes to the individual's sense of calling and faith development.
- **Well-being and Work/Life Balance:** Explicitly discuss whether the employee's workload is sustainable and if they have sufficient space for rest.
- **Training and Professional Development:** Identify specific learning needs, i.e.,:
  - [Lay Leadership Skills Training](#).
  - Attendance at District Orientation Days or the annual Lay Employees' Retreat.
  - Exploring Spiritual Direction as a tool for personal and professional maturity.
- **Resource Sufficiency:** Review whether the employee has the necessary tools, budget, and physical workspace to complete their tasks effectively.

### Post-Review Action:

After the meeting, a written report including the agreed Personal Development Plan (PDP) should be signed by the employee and Line Manager and retained safely.

## 8. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications:

A well-constructed job description (JD) and person specification (PS) are essential for legal compliance and effective recruitment. These documents manage expectations and provide the benchmark for the annual appraisal and the 3-month probationary review.

- **Outcome-Focused Duties:** Instead of listing tasks, focus on the impact and primary functions of the role. Aim for no more than 10 main duty areas to ensure clarity.
- **Essential vs. Desirable Criteria:** Clearly distinguish between essential qualifications and desirable attributes in the Person Specification. This avoids unintentional bias and encourages a broader range of applicants.
- **Inclusion & Accessibility:** Use neutral, jargon-free language to ensure the JD is inclusive. Explicitly mention the Methodist Church's commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).
- **Safeguarding Requirements:** If the role involves working with children or vulnerable adults, the JD must explicitly state the requirement for a specific level of DBS check and relevant safeguarding training.
- **Contextual Information:** Provide a brief overview of the local Church, Circuit, or project to help the candidate understand the community where they will be serving.

## 9. Notice Periods:

A notice period is the amount of time an employee must work after they resign, are dismissed, or are made redundant. We recommend notice periods that provide security while allowing for operational flexibility

- **During Probation:** A standard notice period of 1 week applies to both the Church and the employee.
- **Post-Probation (Contractual Notice):** After successfully completing probation, a standard notice period of 1 calendar month is recommended for both parties. This contractual notice period often exceeds the statutory minimum to allow for a smoother transition.
- **Specialist Roles:** For roles with significant responsibility (i.e., Circuit Managers or Mission Enablers), a notice period of 3 months may be more appropriate to allow for recruitment and handover.
- **Statutory Minimums:** If the contract is silent, or if an employee has long service, the Church must adhere to statutory minimums:
  - 1 month to 2 years of service: At least 1 week's notice.
  - 2 to 12 years of service: 1 week for every year worked (e.g., 5 years' service = 5 weeks' notice).
  - 12+ years of service: A maximum of 12 weeks' notice.
- **Summary Dismissal:** Notice is not required in cases of gross misconduct, where an employee can be dismissed instantly without notice or a payment in lieu of notice (PILON). This must only occur after a formal and fair disciplinary process.
- **Payment in Lieu of Notice (PILON):** The Church may, at its discretion, terminate employment immediately by paying the employee for the notice period instead of requiring them to work it.

## 10. Annual Leave:

The recommended annual leave entitlement for a full time employee working a 37 hour week is 33 days or 244.2 hours per annum, inclusive of all public holidays. A part-time employee's entitlement is calculated pro-rata.

For specific calculations involving term-time only or annualised hours, it is recommended to seek support from Andrew Crawford, the [District Lay Employment Advisor](#) or use the [Gov.uk Holiday Calculator](#).

## 11. Statutory entitlements:

Recent reforms have shifted several key benefits from "service-based" to "day-one" rights. Employing bodies must now ensure that all new starters are eligible for the following from their first day of employment, regardless of service length:

- **Paternity Leave:** The previous 26-week service requirement has been abolished. Fathers and partners are eligible for statutory paternity leave from day one.
- **Unpaid Parental Leave:** The requirement for one year of service has been removed. Parents may request unpaid leave to care for a child from their first day of work.
- **Flexible Working:** Employees have a statutory right to request flexible working from their first day of employment and employing bodies have a legal duty to handle requests in a reasonable manner, including consulting pro-actively with the Employee.
- **Carer's Leave** is a day-one statutory right that allows employees to take up to one week of unpaid leave per year to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need
- **Bereavement Leave:** Statutory leave following the death of a dependant or partner, including "Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave."
- **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP):** Payable from the first day of absence (no "waiting days")

Further Statutory Protections include:

- **Neonatal Care Leave:** provides parents with up to 12 weeks of paid, day-one leave if baby requires specialist hospital care for at least 7 consecutive days following birth.
- **Redundancy Protection** gives expectant parents and those returning from maternity, adoption, or shared parental leave priority for suitable alternative vacancies for up to 18 months after the birth or placement of their child.
- **Predictable Patterns** allows workers on irregular or fixed-term contracts to request more stable working terms, such as a guaranteed number of hours or a more certain schedule, after 26 weeks of service.

## 12. Auto Enrolment & Pensions:

Employing bodies must comply with legal auto-enrolment duties, which include monitoring the age and earnings of staff to determine their "worker category" (Eligible, Non-eligible, or Entitled).

### Methodist Church Pension Rules for Lay Employees:

As per the Methodist Conference 2017 resolution, employing bodies must offer the following:

- **Employing Body Contribution:** A minimum of 6% of salary.
- **Employee Contribution:** New employees (appointed after 1 Sept 2017) must be offered choices with a minimum contribution of 2%.
- **Flexibility:** Employees who originally opted out of the 6% rate should be offered the chance to enrol at a level between 2% and 6%.
- **Preservation:** Employing bodies cannot move existing employees currently contributing 6% down to these lower tiers.

Auto enrolment is the responsibility of the employing body and, for 2026/27, according to the official review published by The Pensions Regulator and the DWP:

- The **Earnings Trigger** stays at exactly **£10,000** per year.
- The **Lower Earnings Limit (LEL)** stays at **£6,240** per year. (Contributions are calculated on earnings starting from this amount.)
- The **Upper Earnings Limit (UEL)** stays at **£50,270** per year, which caps mandatory contributions.

Age Criteria:

- The **mandatory automatic enrolment age** remains **22** to State Pension age.
- The 2023 Extension Act: While the Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Act 2023 granted powers to reduce the minimum age to 18, the DWP and the ongoing Pensions Commission have not implemented this change for 2026/27 however workers aged 18 to 21 earning over £10,000 still retain the right to opt in manually.

What do you need to do?

- **Assess Your Staff Every Pay Cycle:** You must check the age and earnings of your workforce every time you run payroll. You must automatically enrol any worker who is aged between 22 and State Pension age and earns more than £10,000 a year (£833 a month or £192 a week).
- **Set Up a Pension and Pay Contributions:** You must choose a qualifying workplace pension scheme and pay financial contributions into it. The minimums within the UK are different to what the Methodist Church requires you to make. You should default to Methodist Church guidelines.
- **Write to Your Staff Individually:** You must write a letter or email to every member of staff within 6 weeks of their start date or the date they become eligible. The letter must clearly explain how auto enrolment affects them and outline their legal right to opt out or opt in.
- **Complete a Declaration of Compliance:** You must officially declare your compliance online to The Pensions Regulator within 5 months of your duties start date. You must complete this legal declaration even if you do not have any staff members who meet the criteria to be automatically enrolled.
- **Re-enrol Staff Every 3 Years:** Every three years, you must look at any employees who previously opted out or stopped their pension contributions. If they are still eligible, you must automatically put them back into the scheme and submit a fresh re-declaration to the regulator.

### 13. Fixed Term Contracts (FTCs):

Guidance and legislation around Fixed Term Contracts (FTCs) is fluid. An employee is considered to be on an FTC if their contract is not permanent and specifies a particular end date or terminates upon the completion of a specific task or project.

#### Key Requirements & Best Practices:

- **Equal Treatment:** Employing bodies must ensure that employees on an FTC receive the same pay, conditions, and benefits package as permanent staff. They must also be informed of any permanent vacancies during their employment.
- **Automatic Termination:** An FTC ends automatically on the stipulated end date without the need for formal notice. However, it is considered good practice for an employing body to confirm their intentions in writing well in advance.
- **Renewal and Permanency:** An employee who has been on successive FTCs for 4 or more years will automatically achieve permanent status unless the employing body can demonstrate a "purely objective" business reason to remain on a fixed term.
  - Example 1: If an employee completes a 3-year FTC and is offered a 2-year extension via a second FTC, they achieve permanent status at the start of the 4th year.
  - Example 2: If an employee works under a single 5-year FTC, they do not achieve permanent status at the 4th year; however, any extension granted after the initial 5 years would confer permanent status.
- **Ending a Contract Early:** If an employing body needs to end an FTC before the agreed date, they must ensure the contract contains a "notice clause" allowing for early termination. Without this, the employing body may be liable to pay the employee for the remainder of the contract term.

### 14. Workplace Harassment and Third-Party Protection:

The Methodist Church is committed to a "zero-tolerance" approach to all forms of workplace harassment. Under the updated Worker Protection Act, employing bodies must navigate a shifting two-tier legal framework regarding their preventative duties:

- **Current Active Duty (Worker Protection Act):** Employing bodies are under an active, statutory duty to take proactive "reasonable steps" to prevent the sexual harassment of workers. As of 6 April 2026, reporting sexual harassment is officially classified as a protected disclosure under whistleblowing legislation, protecting workers from any detriment or dismissal for speaking out.
- **Enhanced 2026 Duty (Employment Rights Act Reforms):** Effective October 2026, the law significantly raises this compliance threshold. Employing bodies will be legally required to take "all reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment. This introduces a much higher, evidence-based standard of proof for employers.
- **Third-Party Liability (October 2026):** Also starting October 2026, explicit employer liability for third-party harassment is reintroduced. Employing bodies will be held directly liable if an employee is harassed by a third party (such as church members, contractors, visitors, or members of the public) unless the Church can prove it took all reasonable steps to prevent it. Crucially, this third-party liability covers all protected

characteristics (including race, age, religion, and disability), not just sex-based harassment.

**Financial and Enforcement Penalties:**

Failure to meet these preventative obligations exposes the employing body to direct enforcement action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). If an incident occurs and reaches an employment tribunal, a failure to demonstrate active, proactive preventative measures will result in a mandatory compensation uplift of up to 25% added to any award. (Additionally, the time limit for employees to lodge a tribunal claim expands from 3 to 6 months from October 2026.)

**Mandatory Preventative Actions:**

To satisfy both current and upcoming legal thresholds, Circuits and Churches must actively maintain the following four pillars:

- **Risk Assessments:** Conduct and document tailored risk assessments for roles with high public or third-party interaction (e.g., Pioneers, Pastoral Lay Workers).
- **Public Codes of Conduct:** Display clear signage and "Codes of Conduct" in church buildings stating harassment of staff by any visitor or member will not be tolerated.
- **Mandatory Training:** Ensure employees, line managers, and core volunteers complete accredited harassment awareness and bystander training.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Provide a transparent, confidential, and logged reporting trail to capture and address incidents immediately.

**15. Scrutiny/Approvals:**

The Methodist Church maintains a strict process for creating, validating and ending roles.

As a matter of best practice, Circuits are asked to include a District representative on all interview panels. While the final decision rests with the Circuit, having a District voice present ensures robust accountability and alignment with Connexional standards.

Note: No vacancy may be advertised, no appointment may be made, and no employment may be terminated by an employing body without prior approval from the District Lay Employment Advisor, acting under the authority of a District Leadership Team (CPD 438A (5)).