

Volunteer Opportunities in the North West England District

The Bolton and Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire, Liverpool, and Manchester & Stockport Districts have agreed to form a single **North West England District** from 1 September 2024.

There were formal consultations with the Circuit meetings and the Synods of four Districts – Bolton & Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire, and Liverpool with the intention of bringing the proposal to the Methodist Conference of 2023. Following that Conference's agreement to the merger, Manchester & Stockport joined the conversations and voted via its Circuit Meetings and Synod in Autumn 2023 to become part of the new structure.

Some **context**: we have worked together as a North West region for many years, not least through the work of the Learning Network, but also in regular meetings and conversations. This is also in the context of a quite dramatically reduced membership across the whole region. It is evident that this membership will continue to decrease if the present trends continue. The structures we have within the five Districts are seen to be too large and cumbersome for the present reality, where we see falling numbers and decreased membership.

We are not intending simply to bolt the existing five Districts together, but rather to take this opportunity to do things differently, to create a different sort of structure where we collaborate more effectively, and specifically create Hubs that will help to serve the Circuits more effectively. The Hubs will each contain a number of subfunctions to connect people with particular interests and commitments together, to help resource local Circuits.

Three Hubs have been agreed:

Mission and Leadership (led by the District Chair)

Administration and Compliance (led by a lay District Secretary)

Ministry and Vocation (led by a lay or ordained District Secretary)

Some of the roles within the Hubs will be full time, some will be part time, and most will be voluntary. As well as these Hubs there will be four Mission Areas, focusing on specific geographical areas, namely groupings of Circuits to enable contextual approaches to mission, but without the governance responsibilities that the current Districts hold. There will be much more flexibility and freedom and opportunity to do things differently, essentially to focus primarily on mission.

The Revd Dr James Tebbutt has been nominated as Chair of the North West England District, and the other District leaders are also being recruited. Conversations will be taking place with the postholders presently employed in each of the current Districts about the new arrangements. The Expression of interest Form being shared with this document is intended to help encourage and recruit the volunteers needed to contribute to the functions and purposes of the new District.

Mission is what it is all about. There will be Mission Area Leads who will support the Mission Areas, who will be Deputy District Chairs. Their aim will be to promote mission across their area by connecting relevant parties and helping them to work together, enabling local relationships and initiatives to flourish, and ensuring more than anything else a real emphasis on mission. They will be presbyter appointments and each Mission Area Lead will have a representative role across the Mission Area. It is anticipated they may be part time appointments sitting alongside another presbyteral role (which could be within a local Circuit or some other chaplaincy role for example).

Finance is hugely important, and a Finance Subgroup is beginning to look at the budget, respecting the earlier commitment to be at least cost neutral (subject to inflation, or agreement to use realised assets for further resources if required to support circuits). It is anticipated that the paid posts and the work of the District Hubs will be funded from the current Connexional monies or from existing assessments, with wise use of available District Advance Fund or other available Trust monies to fund particular initiatives.

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Each of the current Districts relies heavily on **volunteers** filling many roles. If the volunteers were not there, the Districts would not be able to function, just as Circuits and local churches cannot function without volunteers.

The North West England District, although it will have a new structure, will be equally reliant on volunteers. Some of the tasks and roles will be the same as they currently are but some will be different. You are being invited to respond to what God may be calling to you to at this time, through this opportunity to express an interest in doing one or more of these voluntary tasks and, by so doing, to help develop and fulfil the work of the new District. This expression of interest will be subject to further exploration and safer recruitment, and so involves no final obligation at this point; but please do consider what you may be able to offer for, thank you.

The **current list of functions and tasks** is set out below (together with an occasional explanatory note: fuller explanations can be found in original Appendix 2 'Proposed North West District Governance and Hub Functions' to the formal consultation, a copy of which can be provided on request to: nwedcommunication@outlook.com). Some groups/networks will work at District level, others may have subgroups or networks that some of the time are also focused pragmatically in Mission Areas.

The **roles** required in most cases include both officers (chair, convener and/or secretary) as well as committee, group or network members (so various possibilities can be assumed, even where not stated). Please consider and indicate on the Expression of Interest Form whether you might be willing to become a member of a group or network, and whether you might also be willing to lead, convene or be a secretary for it.

What follows might seem to be a long list, which does reflect that there are many tasks to be done to help support Circuits and Mission, nonetheless, please simply find your way to exploring or offering for the roles, tasks or activities that might appeal to you. Thank you.

DISTRICT LEVEL:

- Synod: some will be members by virtue of their office, others will be representatives elected by their Circuits (the numbers required will be confirmed in Spring 2024)
- District Policy Committee (DPC) (which is the District Trustee body, and the key body between Synods): member/District trustee
- Scrutiny Group (a group that will support the processing of applications to the DPC)
- Other small groups, e.g.: Appointments/Nominations committee (for ministerial and lay appointments to district posts), District Leaders Reference and Support group(s): these groups will be partly filled by postholders in other roles, but expressions of interest are also welcome

HUBS:

Mission & Leadership

- City & Towns: those interested in engaging in city-centre churches, urban, suburban, town ministry networks (which will be configured according to interest)
- Communications (to connect and share good news, including through social media, website, etc.).
- Eco Church – champion(s) and network
- Ecumenical – officer(s) and network
- Formal Education liaison (with Methodist schools, and the education sector generally, including Further/Higher Education)
- Global Relations/Partnership link groups
- Inter/Multi-faith relationships
- Methodist Heritage
- Mission Development (developing/supporting the District Mission Plan & initiatives)

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- New Places for New People (and Fresh Expressions, Pioneering & Planting generally) – connecting existing District NPNP people & groups and supporting existing or new projects
- Public issues and social responsibility (advice & promotion, linking also to JDS in Ministries & Vocations Hub)
- Rural churches and mission – convener and network
- Stationing – District/Mission Area Lay stationing reps

Administration and Compliance

- Finance – Treasurer, Finance Committee
- Grants Committee
- Lay Employment Committee (to advise on/approve Lay Employment matters)
- Property – Committee/subgroups regarding e.g. consents, manses
- Reconciliation & Complaints Support
- Safeguarding Group – Circuit Safeguarding Officers, plus other relevant and interested parties
- Other Governance and Compliance matters: Archives; Disability Access advice; Food Safety; GDPR – District and Mission Area Data Champions; Health & Safety Advice (may be linked to Property)

Ministry and Vocations

- Authorisations for recognised ministry or lay presidency
- Candidates for Ministry support
- Chaplaincy – forums/networks to connect and project support for various types of chaplaincy
- Children and Youth (including 3Generate ambassadors) – connecting and supporting these groups and their leaders
- Continuing Ministerial Development and M.D.Review
- Justice Dignity Solidarity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Local Lay-Pastors and wider Lay Worker support
- Local Preaching & Worship Leading support and network
- Probationers and Early Years Ministry Group(s) support
- Reflective Supervision support
- Relationships with significant partners (Action for Children, All We Can, Christian Aid, Learning Network, Methodist Homes for the Aged, Methodist Women in Britain)
- Sabbaticals – secretary and panel/groups

Hubs & Governance Subgroup, on behalf of the Regional Review Group, v4 – 9.1.24