

Employment: Synod Trust and Local Church

To employ someone is a major undertaking and responsibility and, if done well, can be a source of flourishing for the person involved and the church they serve.

To help enable this the Synod Trust is willing to act as joint employer for local church workers in partnership with local churches. The United Reformed Church (Eastern Province) Trust will act as paymaster in such situations.

(This applies for new posts or workers, and especially where Mission grants substantially fund the employment. For existing employees a TUPE, Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) may be necessary and Trust agreement would need to be sought separately.)

Exploration

Any employment, whether independently by a local church or jointly with the Synod Trust, must start with a conversation with a member of the Mission Team:

training@urceastern.org.uk youth@urceastern.org.uk 01223 830770

They will guide the elders through the [Synod Guidance - local church employment](#) to help specify the role, the process, responsibilities, and the documentation required. This is a crucial step and will require engagement, commitment and time to enable a successful employment.

A member of the Mission Team will also accompany the church(es) through any Mission grant application.

Preparation

Where the local church(es) wishes the Synod Trust to act as joint employer the Synod Clerk or other designated person, will finalise the documents listed under DEFINING THE ROLE. They will also coordinate ADVERTISING and FILLING THE ROLE.

The Synod Clerk or a member of the Mission Team, will be part of the interview panel. The Synod Clerk or other designated person will also act as the Line Manager, and the local church(es) will need to appoint a Local Line Manager to support the employee.

Implementation

When an offer has been accepted the Synod Clerk or other designated person, will draft the contract, share the New Starter form, arrange pay roll, coordinate the induction, and enter the new employee into the Synod Trust's Staffology HR system.

(This gives the employee access to the Staff Handbook, policies, and absence system.)

Continuation

As the employment proceeds the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, will act as HR support to the local church(es) and the employee. Both the local church(es) and the employee will have equal call on them for support and intervention.

In all HR matters, notably probation review, appraisal and disciplinary, the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, will coordinate the process. No changes to the job description or nature of the employment shall be discussed or happen without their involvement.

The Local Line Manager's primary role is to support the employee and to liaise with volunteers, with the elders' meeting (or steering group of the project [or equivalent]) and on their behalf with the Synod Clerk, or other designated person. Every effort must be made to ensure the employee is treated fairly and that all relevant policies are followed.

Worked Example

The local church(es) has worked through DESCRIBING and DEFINING THE ROLE with a member of the Mission Team. In the job summary of the application pack the following text will be included:

A local line manager will also be appointed. The employer will be United Reformed Church (Eastern Province) Trust through the URC Eastern Synod jointly with the local church(es).

The Synod will then coordinate ADVERTISING, FILLING and STARTING THE ROLE.

Induction

The Synod Clerk, or other designated person, will be responsible for ensuring the employee is aware of the Staffology HR system and general HR matters.

The Local Line Manager will be responsible for ensuring the new employee is aware of all the people, activities, resources and processes for them to undertake their role.

Local Line Manager

The Local Line Manager is the only person who should be managing the employee in the local situation.

The lines of communication and responsibility need to be very clear. Elders and Church meetings, and individuals can raise questions and ideas, but these need to be directed to the Local Line Manager and/or the Synod Clerk, or other designated person.

Absence

The employee will be responsible for ensuring holiday requests are approved by the Local Line Manager prior to submission and will inform the Local Line Manager of any sickness or unplanned absence. (The employee will note in the Comments section confirming that the Local Line Manager has approved the holiday or been informed of the absence.)

Probation Period

Starting a new role can be a challenging time as there are a lot of things to learn and discover. Regular meetings will take place with the Local Line Manager to discuss the job, receive feedback on performance, and to evaluate progress, set goals and determine training needs. These meetings will be documented using the Probation Review form in Staffology. These will then be reviewed by the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, who will raise any questions with the Local Line Manager and/or employee. (Both the employee and Local Line Manager are encouraged to contact the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, if they have any questions or concerns.)

At least a month before the end of the probationary period a formal review will take place between the Local Line Manager and the Synod Clerk, or other designated person. Based on evidence from the Probation Review forms a decision will be made as to whether the probationary period has been successful, unsuccessful or should be extended.

In the case of successful completion this will be confirmed verbally by the Local Line Manager and in writing by the Synod Clerk, or other designated person.

In the case of unsuccessful completion or extension the Local Line Manager and the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, will meet with the employee.

Expenses

Expenses relating to the employment should be claimed using the appropriate form, approved by the Local Line Manager and agreed by the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, before passing to the Finance Officer.

Any other expenses relating to local church activities should be claimed from the respective church Treasurer.

Changes to terms and conditions

Any changes to terms and conditions of employment will be notified in writing within one month of the changes occurring and with the agreement of the employer, Local Line Manager and employee, except those that are imposed by statute and cannot be altered unless the statute is changed. No changes will be implemented without prior consultation.

Reviews

Alongside the annual reviews it is encouraged to routinely review the employment from both the employee and the Local Line Manager's perspectives.

In all HR matters, notably probation review, appraisal and disciplinary, the Synod Clerk, or other designated person, will coordinate the process. No changes to the job description or nature of the employment shall be discussed or happen without their involvement.

Finance

Each employment situation will necessitate different financial agreements between the church(es) / Mission Partnership and the Synod to reflect the distinctive nature of each post. The sources of funding will vary in their detail so the management of the financial relationship and the reconciliation of revenue and costs will be determined on an individual basis for each case. (Agreed between the Trust (as employer), the Synod Finance Officer and the local church Treasurer(s).) (In accordance with VAT Notice 700/34 because staff are jointly employed there is no supply for VAT purposes between the joint employers.)

The Synod Trust is ultimately responsible for each employment and will ensure that employment obligations are met.

In general terms:

- Employment costs will be calculated on either a fixed basis or a fixed/varying percentage as agreed prior to the commencement of employment (and will include any redundancy payments where applicable).
- The Synod Trust will periodically invoice the local church(es) for its (their) agreed share of the employment costs.
- Invoiced costs are payable within 14 days of the date of invoice
- If the role receives grant funding for employment costs from an external source (not the local church or Synod Trust) then this will need to be transferred to the Synod Trust upon receipt.


Probation Review Form

Probation Review

Interim review date

Date

dd/mm/yyyy



Feedback to Employee

Feedback to Employee

Evaluation of progress

Evaluation of progress

Goals Set

Goals Set

Training Needs

Training Needs

Other Comments

Comments

Attach Document

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