



Practice Update: Appointing an ARO in the Absence of a Pastor

Purpose

To provide a clear process for appointing an Adsafesafe Responsible Officer (ARO) in local churches or church groups where there is no assigned pastor, ensuring safeguarding responsibilities are maintained and appropriately overseen.

Scope

This process applies to:

- Small or remote churches/groups without a current pastoral appointment.
- Situations where the ARO role must be undertaken by a lay leader or elder not employed by the Conference.

The Process

1. Identification of Local Leader

The local church/group, in consultation with the Conference, identifies a suitable lay leader (e.g., senior elder or contact person) to assume ARO responsibilities.

2. Conference Confirmation

The Conference Secretary confirms the absence of a pastor and endorses the proposed lay leader as the appropriate person to take on the ARO role.

3. Screening Requirements

The identified ARO must meet Adsafes's clearance requirements, even if they are not a paid employee or credentialed minister. This includes:

- Holding a valid **Working With Children Check (WWCC)** or equivalent, which must be verified by the appropriate **Conference ACA** (especially where conflicts of interest may arise).
- Being checked against the **Adsafe database** by the **Risk Management & Investigations (RMI)** team to confirm there are no recorded concerns or historical issues that would make them unsuitable for the ARO role.
- Completion of any required **Adsafe training** or **Code of Conduct declarations** relevant to their role as ARO.

4. Conflict of Interest Check

Where the ARO and ACA are spouses or close relations, WWCC verification for both roles should be conducted by the **Conference ACA**, not by one another, to avoid perceived or actual conflict of interest.

5. Record Keeping

- Adsafes must be notified of the ARO appointment and clearance so that central contact records are updated.
- The Conference must ensure oversight mechanisms remain in place and that safeguarding responsibilities are monitored.

6. Ongoing Communication

The appointed ARO should:

- Be included in relevant training and updates.
- Be supported by the Conference and Adsafes where needed.
- Maintain regular contact with both the ACA and the Conference contact person for safeguarding issues.