



Britain Yearly Meeting
of the Religious
Society of Friends

May 2016

Quaker Recognised Bodies: introduction

In December 2015, Meeting for Sufferings approved recommendations to replace the Listed Informal Group system with a new process for Quaker Recognised Bodies (see minute [MfS/2015/12/15](#)). This new relationship will clarify the benefits and responsibilities for each Recognised Body and Britain Yearly Meeting.

Registration as a Quaker Recognised Body will begin in June 2016, initially for a pilot of a few (invited) groups. More information should be available from July at www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups.

Following the pilot, group registrations will continue during 2016 and set-up should be completed in 2017. Section 6 (page 4 of this document) has more details.

This paper explains the context and options for a Quaker group considering whether to register as a Quaker Recognised Body with Britain Yearly Meeting. The following questions and topics are included:

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1. What is a Quaker Recognised Body?

A Quaker Recognised Body is an independent group where concerned Friends (and others) may explore a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker organisation because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity.

2. Why are Quaker Recognised Bodies replacing Listed Informal Groups?

The current structure of Listed Informal Groups, as described in *Quaker faith & practice* 13.19 (fifth edition), is no longer sufficient for the current variety of groups. The Quaker Recognised Body structure will offer more appropriate support for individual arrangements, the benefits that groups can expect and the responsibilities groups accept from their role within Britain Yearly Meeting. For many Friends, much of the heart and energy of the Society lies in these groups, a number of which cross Local and Area Meeting borders.

It matters to Friends, and to the Society corporately, that these groups uphold a Quaker ethos - core Quaker ways and values. This is particularly relevant where groups interact beyond Britain Yearly Meeting where their work may be seen as representative of Britain Yearly Meeting as a whole. Their passion and commitment to particular areas of interest both strengthen and deepen the life of the Society and can breathe energy into more formal structures.

The introduction of Quaker Recognised Bodies marks the emergence of a community that explores new ways to “meet together and know one another in that which is eternal”. Following Meeting for Sufferings' decision in December 2015, the designation of "Listed Informal Groups" was laid down and the structure of "Quaker Recognised Bodies" was formally adopted.

3. What is the purpose of registration as a Quaker Recognised Body?

Any group, including groups who were Listed informal Groups, will be asked to go through the same registration process. The purpose of registration is to:

- establish clear relationships
- recognise benefits and responsibilities
- promote the visibility of groups in the Society
- support a community which celebrates its mutual richness and upholds the accountability of its members to each other and the Society in ways that are explicit yet fair and transparent
- recognise the Britain Yearly Meeting staff member who will act as a Staff Link for the group
- acknowledge and uphold the Quaker ethos of the group's activity
- confirm the nature of the group and their participation within the Quaker Recognised Body structures.

4. Can any group register?

Registration is intended to be as inclusive as possible. As outlined above, only groups that uphold a Quaker ethos can be registered. A group is eligible to register if its Quaker values and witness are upheld through its objectives, governance and arrangements:

Objectives might include one or more of the following:

- providing a discerned Quaker voice and action on a topic (theological, political, social or environmental), or geographical area
- offering an opportunity for Friends to meet and develop a Quaker perspective and their interest on a topic
- providing practical and spiritual support to Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting or to the Society as a whole, whether in Great Britain or overseas
- providing services founded on Quaker values.

Governance means:

- having aims, purpose and manner of proceeding consistent with Friends' testimonies, such as ways of running business meetings and nominations;
- appointing a clerk or convener who is a member or attender listed by an area meeting, and a treasurer;
- confirmation of the group's Quaker ethos by showing that sufficient of its management committee, trustees or governors (as applicable) are members or attenders listed by an area meeting. Non-Quaker members of Quaker Recognised Bodies are naturally also expected to be welcomed for the richness and insight they bring from other sources.

Arrangements require the group to:

- meet at least once a year
- be accountable for the funds it holds from subscriptions or donations.

New and emergent groups (not yet ready to meet the criteria for registration) may request temporary listing for up to two years until they are ready to apply for full registration as a Quaker Recognised Body. Registration is granted by minute of Meeting for Sufferings (registration is required for groups accepted as Listed Informal Groups before 2016, who wish to become a Quaker Recognised Body).

5. What types of Quaker Recognised Body are there?

Registration offers four different options for eligible groups:

1. **Emergent** groups. Temporarily listed for up to two years. In this period they would be usually be treated as Free-standing groups.
2. **Linked** groups. Linked by minute from (or appointed by) part(s) of the formal structure of Britain Yearly Meeting such as: area meetings, central committees, Meeting for Sufferings, General Meeting for Scotland, Meeting of Friends in Wales etc.
3. **Free-standing** groups. Quakers who have come together to learn about or work on a particular topic. Groups are likely to have members who are geographically

dispersed; with membership open to, but not necessarily restricted to, all interested Friends and attenders.

4. **External** groups (regulated externally). Set up with a board or management committee, a clear constitution and regulated or supervised through an external body such as the Charity Commission, Companies House (where a charity is also a registered company), OFSTED, the Care Quality Commission etc.

This is a very diverse set of groups. Recognition of these differences in the new structure helps Britain Yearly Meeting to offer appropriate oversight, upholding and support for the group's Quaker processes.

6. How does registration work?

The application form for registration as a Quaker Recognised Body will be linked from www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups or available from The Recording Clerk's Office at Friends House from July 2016.

The administration of Quaker Recognised Bodies will be co-ordinated by the Recording Clerk's Office. Each group's application will be assigned a member of the Britain Yearly Meeting staff to serve as a Staff Link between Britain Yearly Meeting and the group.

The group will need to provide details of their structure and governance arrangements, as well as information about their activities and funds. They will also be asked to prepare a minute recognising their responsibilities as a Quaker Recognised Body (a template example is included on the application form).

The eligibility of the group to register will be considered based on the details supplied. In case of doubt, information may be sought from trustees, Britain Yearly Meeting committees or meetings. The group and their Staff Link will also consider the Britain Yearly Meeting benefits that may be useful for the group and any issues in making them available (such as including them in future departmental work plans). If the group is eligible, Meeting for Sufferings will be requested to make a minute granting registration.

It is not intended that Linked groups appointed by an area meeting (or other Britain Yearly Meeting body) for its internal purposes, should be eligible to register as a Quaker Recognised Body. Eligible groups linked to a Britain Yearly Meeting body will *either* have appointed members from more than one body, *or* if appointed by a single body, also have non-Quaker beneficiaries. Eligible groups are expected to make their membership and activities available to all Friends and attenders across Britain Yearly Meeting.

7. What are the benefits and responsibilities of registering?

Registering as a Quaker Recognised Body offers benefits and also brings responsibilities.

Benefits will vary from group to group, but might include:

- Helping Quakers to know about the Group and its work
 - listing on a webpage
 - inclusion in the Book of Meetings

- access to display space at the Yearly Meeting Groups Fair
- sharing information via Britain Yearly Meeting communications channels
- a 'Quaker Recognised Body' logo
- advice on communicating with Quaker structures and committees
- Support from a Britain Yearly Meeting Staff Link
- Information sharing and joint activities
 - gatherings and events
 - assistance or advice on leaflets and display material
- Advice and support from staff or committees on
 - charity registration
 - trustee appointment
 - property and legal matters
 - IT issues
 - web and social media use.

Although most benefits are free to the Group, some assistance may also be offered at a charge (perhaps a legal request). The Staff Link will be able to advise when this applies and on the timescales needed for Britain Yearly Meeting to plan their budgets in advance so that the necessary resources become available to provide the benefits requested (whether or not these benefits are charged).

Responsibilities will vary depending on the type of group.

All Quaker Recognised Bodies are expected to:

- uphold a Quaker ethos
- respond in a timely way to requests from their Staff Link for information to confirm their continued registration, plan resources to assist the group and carry out periodic reviews
- proactively inform either their area meeting clerk, oversight committee and Britain Yearly Meeting Staff Link of any potential issue involving reputational risk to the Religious Society of Friends.

8. Relationship between Quaker Recognised Bodies and Britain Yearly Meeting

Quaker Recognised Bodies need to ensure proper oversight and accountability:

- **Linked** Groups are expected to share their annual report and accounts (or summary of their activities and funds) with their area meeting and their Staff Link;
- **External** Groups are asked to confirm that their audited report and accounts are publicly available through external regulators;
- **Free-standing** and **Emergent** Groups are asked to forward a summary of their activities and funds to their Britain Yearly Meeting Staff Link (in consultation with any relevant bodies such as area meetings or Quaker Stewardship Committee).

An annual renewal of registration will be carried out for each Quaker Recognised Body via their Britain Yearly Meeting Staff Link. The group may cease to be eligible if their activities or constitution has changed in a way that would make the group ineligible to register if it were applying for the first time.

Each registered group (or for Linked groups, their linked body) may at any time request the group be removed from the register of Quaker Recognised Bodies which will be done by minute from Meeting for Sufferings.

9. Suggestions for collaborative working

Quaker Recognised Bodies may have knowledge, skills and contacts that complement those of central staff. Where possible, Recognised Bodies and Britain Yearly Meeting are encouraged to share skills, working together to strengthen and increase Quaker worship and witness.

In some instances, Quaker Recognised Bodies may be more flexible and energetic, able to respond more easily in dynamic situations. A Quaker Recognised Body could provide a test-bed for a central committee to initiate new ways of working and witness. Some Recognised Bodies may be able to develop joint projects with central committees and staff.

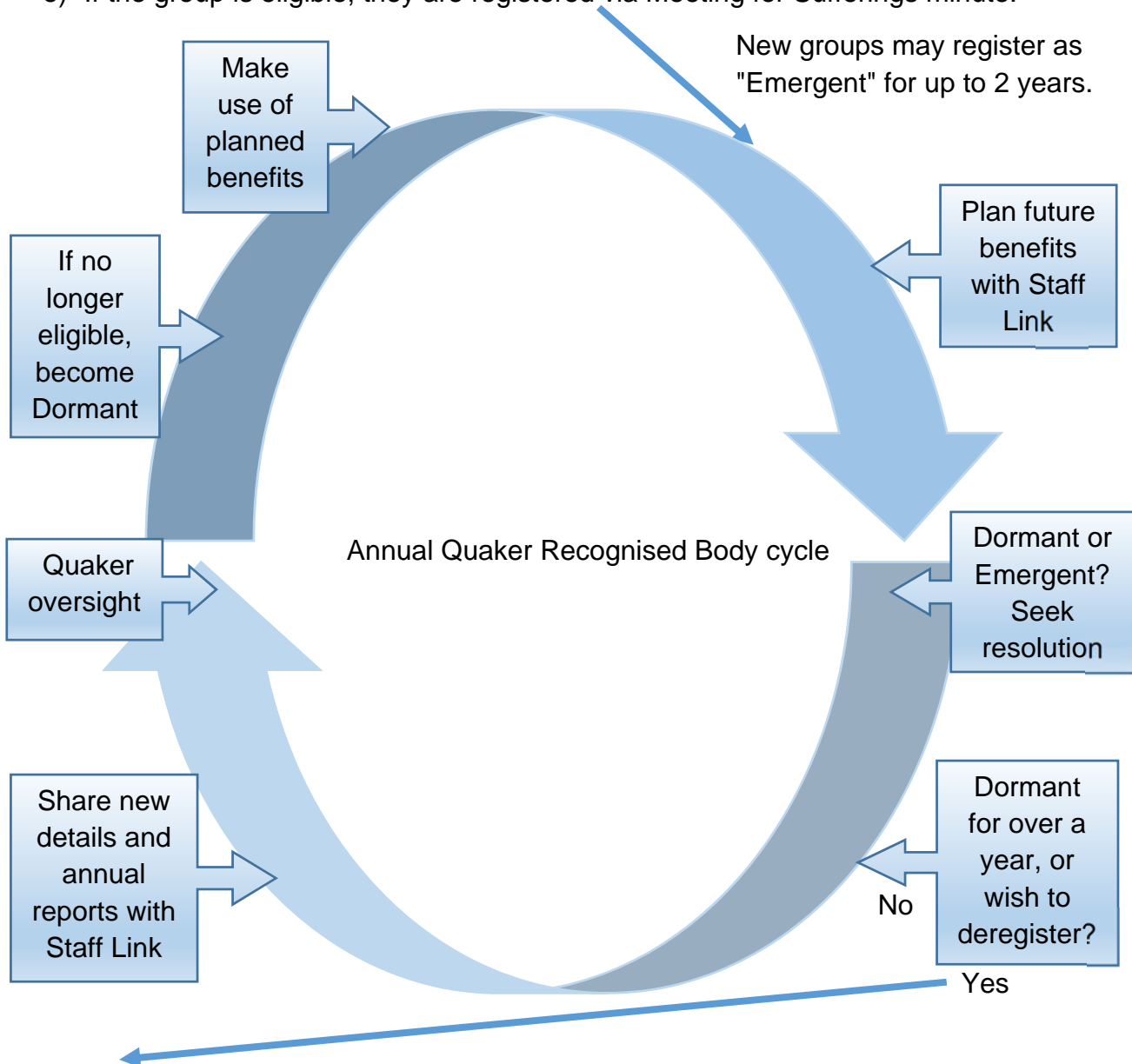
10. Further resources

A central quality of a Quaker Recognised Body is that it values and nurtures its Quaker ethos – Quaker values and ways - such as their use of the Quaker Business Method. We suggest the following sources and materials that may be useful to help reflect on and nurture this Quaker ethos:

- The Q-bit – an inquiry into our Quaker identity by the trustees of Quaker Social Action – available to download from:
www.quakersocialaction.org.uk/Pages/FAQs/Category/our-publications
- Wilson, Roger (1949) Authority, Leadership and Concern – Swarthmore Lecture, Quaker Books, London
- Testimonies: www.quaker.org.uk/more-about-testimonies
- Eccles, Peter (2009) The Presence in the Midst – Swarthmore Lecture, Quaker Books, London
- Ambler, Rex (2013) The Quaker Way – a rediscovery, Christian Alternative Books, UK
- Larrabee, Arthur (2007) Leadership and Authority in the Religious Society of Friends – Walton Lecture, Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Florida
- Mace, Jane (2012) God and decision-making – a Quaker approach, Quaker Books, London
- Quaker identity and the heart of our faith – Conference papers and study material for use in meetings for learning, based on a Quaker Life Conference held in April 2008, available by request from Quaker Life, Friends House
- Kaal, Felicity The Future of Quakerism – in Friends Quarterly (May 2010)
- A new course at Woodbrooke 18th-20th November 2016 “Being of Good Heart” – for groups and organisations (details in the Woodbrooke 2016 programme)

11. Summary of the life of a Quaker Recognised Body

- New groups begin forming, or are set up by a linked Britain Yearly Meeting body.
- Groups (or their linked body) consider registering as a Quaker Recognised Body.
- Each group completes and submits an application form.
- Each group is assigned a Britain Yearly Meeting Staff Link support person.
- If the group is eligible, they are registered via Meeting for Sufferings minute.



Linked groups wishing to deregister ask their linked body to prepare a minute, other groups prepare their own minute and pass it to their Britain Yearly Meeting Staff Link. Minutes (unnecessary if a group is Dormant) and relevant information go to Meeting for Sufferings. Removal from the list of Quaker Recognised Bodies follows a minute from Meeting for Sufferings.

12. Contact details for queries

Up to date information should be available online at
www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups

For any queries, please send emails to groups@quaker.org.uk or send postal queries to:

Recording Clerk's Office (Groups)
Friends House
173 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BJ
