

Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

December 2020

Dear Friends

# Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults: new ways of working

It is many years since Quaker meetings in Britain updated our approach~~es~~ to safeguarding. In that time, people have become more aware of the importance of good practice and legislation has changed. Area Meetings (AMs) are now asked to make some changes to improve safeguarding across Quaker communities.

There are four key changes:

1. In every AM, one of the AM Trustees will act as Safeguarding Co-ordinator
2. Area and Local Meetings will use ‘safer recruitment’ for nominating and appointing some roles
3. Each AM will send a short written annual report to Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)
4. AMs are asked to update their policies and procedures using the model documents provided by BYM

These changes have been agreed by Quaker Life Central Committee, following careful consideration, consultation with expert agencies, and discussion with Friends who hold safeguarding roles in local and area meetings.

# Area Meeting Safeguarding Co-ordinator

AM trustees hold responsibility for safeguarding, on behalf of the AM. They decide what policies and procedures are needed, and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Because safeguarding needs to be embedded in the trustee body, AMs are now asked to appoint one Trustee to take on responsibility for acting as Safeguarding Co- ordinator. This could be an existing trustee, or an additional appointment, depending on circumstances in your area.

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AMs can share the load by appointing one or more deputy co-ordinators. (Exact arrangements can be decided by the AM. Smaller meetings may prefer to have just one role of safeguarding trustee).

* + Deputy co-ordinators do not have to be trustees
  + Practical tasks can be delegated to deputy co-ordinators
  + It may be helpful to appoint one deputy co-ordinator within each local meeting

There is more information about the roles and responsibilities of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and other role-holders in the model documents, and particularly in the toolkit, section A1.

# Safer Recruitment

AMs should follow what is known as ‘safer recruitment’ nominations and appointment processes for some roles:

* + those who work with children and young people, or adults at risk, whether as volunteers or employees
  + trustees
  + safeguarding coordinators and deputies
  + advocates for children and young people’s work
  + overseers or those with oversight responsibility (pastoral care)

There is more about this in section 3.3. of the model safeguarding policy; and relevant forms in section C of the toolkit.

# Annual Report to BYM

To help BYM support AMs, and to ensure consistency across the Yearly Meeting, AMs are asked to complete a straightforward report for BYM every year. The single page pro-forma can be found in section A6 of the toolkit.

# Model safeguarding documents for AMs

Britain Yearly Meeting staff, working with Friends and advised by an expert agency, have created a set of model safeguarding documents for Quaker area meetings. AM trustees are asked to adopt these model documents, alongside additional resources appropriate to local need.

The new documents have been introduced to improve standards and provide a consistent approach to Safeguarding across all Quaker meetings. They follow modern good practice, adapted to the Quaker context. BYM will publish updates when necessary, to help you keep your documents up-to-date.

The documents contain:

* **Policy and procedures -** a 3-page summary, plus the longer more formal document
* **Toolkit** with additional resources including some practice guidance and forms for different situations

Meetings which have recently developed new documents may choose to postpone until the next time they review safeguarding arrangements. However, all AMs should have adopted the new policy and procedures by 31st December 2022.

I know some Friends have been waiting eagerly for this message - and others will feel daunted by the amount of material and some of the changes suggested. If so, I hope I can reassure you that all of this is a really positive step forward in demonstrating our commitment to keeping children and vulnerable adults safe.

Talking with Friends around Britain, I know we all want our meetings to grow. We want new people to experience Quaker worship - young people, families, ex- offenders, and seekers from all walks of life. Keeping the doors wide open means *we have to make sure everyone is safe,* and can be fully included in our Quaker communities.

Your AM will take time to get acquainted with the new ways of working. BYM staff will be happy to help and support you where possible, and we also welcome feedback; let’s work together to make this work. And thank you and other Friends for taking this forward.

In Friendship



Juliet Prager

Deputy Recording Clerk