



# Are you considering employing a paid sessional children's worker?

*Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?*

A&Q 19

## Why employ a sessional children's worker?

Maybe your meeting is struggling to find volunteers? Maybe you need someone with the energy to get things running? Maybe you have a thriving children's meeting, but need someone to coordinate everything that's going on? There could be many reasons for wanting to employ someone.

## Is it right for you?

For some meetings, employing a sessional children's worker is a great asset and helps to provide a thriving children's meeting for worship. In some cases, it may be that this helps to provide not just weekly opportunities for children to gather in worship together, but also to offer a service in their community hosting after-school clubs, evening gatherings for youth groups and intergenerational weekend events. For much smaller meetings, sessional children's workers may just come in for a couple of hours a month to facilitate activities for a handful of young people. It might be that they spend their time at a different meetings each Sunday so that they have regular hours of work supporting a wider area.

It is important to note that what works for one meeting may not work for another. Your circumstances and needs should be considered carefully before discerning the approach you may take.

## The role

A really clear role description is essential. This isn't baby-sitting. Consider how the job is advertised; there is a sample job description on the Quakers in Britain website (see Resources).

Consider the team around the employed children's worker. Your meeting is likely to get the most out of this role if they are well supported and not just left to get on with it. Might it be good to have the programme for children's meeting for worship planned in collaboration with a Friend who has previous experience – or cares deeply about the spiritual enrichment of the young people as well as their inclusion in your community? Would it help to have at least one volunteer in the sessions - not just to have a safer ratio of adults to children, but also to keep the children's meeting connected to the adult community? Who will be responsible for getting out equipment? Ordering resources? Printing? Bringing fruit snacks? It really helps to be very clear about who does what from the outset.

Who will 'manage' your children's worker? How often will someone talk with them about their work? How will you evaluate how well they are doing in the role? What will you do if their work/attendance/attitude is not good enough? It may help to find a Friend in your meeting who has experience of managing people to either support you in this or to take on the role themselves.

## Time

Would it be right to only pay a children's worker for the hour that they are running children's meeting for worship? What about the setting up and packing down? The planning and preparation they may need to do?

Whether they are self-employed or not, your children's worker is going to want some time off – possibly in the summer for a holiday – but also at other weekends where they may have an important commitment to attend. How will you cover this? If you have established a team around the worker, this could be quite easy. Will they be paid for their time off? You will need to look at the law around the type of worker that you have to make sure you are treating them properly.

What do you do if they are unwell? It is important to know their rights and have a contingency plan for these occasions.

## Quaker or not?

Whilst it may seem obvious that someone identifying as a Quaker will bring an important dimension to this work, it may be that such a person is not available to you. What if no Quakers respond to your advertisement? Maybe this isn't the most important thing. Think about the qualities that you want from a sessional children's worker: someone who cares about the children, someone who puts children at the centre of what they do, someone who is comfortable being alongside children, someone who advocates for children's needs. Of course it is important that someone working with the children in your community aligns closely to Quaker values – this should be tested during the recruitment process – but if you have a Friend from the meeting helping to plan the programme of children's meeting for worship, perhaps your employee can be selected for these other important qualities.

## Self-employed sub-contractor or employed with contracted hours?

If you (and your employee) want a lot of freedom in the relationship, it may suit you both for them to be self-employed. In this case, they will submit invoices to you for any work that they do and you pay these. They are responsible for paying tax directly to HMRC. Self-employment may be easy for someone who is already doing similar work and is looking to just add a few hours each month. It may be quite a lot to expect from someone who has no experience of this – perhaps a local student, or older teen who is already part of your meeting – who expects cash in hand like a baby-sitter might.

If your Area Meeting already employs people in roles such as wardens, it may be simple for them to add your children's worker as a contracted employee with agreed hours and all the rights that come with this (sick pay, holiday pay, pension contributions etc.). This may seem daunting to a small meeting, but for anyone who has experience of doing this, and access to the right software on a computer, it is not so difficult.

## Resources

This webpage has a lot of guidance around employing people including example policies, procedures and job descriptions:

[Employment and volunteering | Quakers in Britain](#)

This handbook gives extensive support for Quaker employers including legal guidance:

[Quaker Employers Resource](#)