

# **Quaker Prison Chaplains Handbook**

**Guidelines for Quaker prison chaplains and area meeting**

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Quaker Life, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ  
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[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)  
For more information about Quaker prison chaplains please contact:  
Marleen Schepers – [marleens@quaker.org.uk](mailto:marleens@quaker.org.uk) / 020 7663 1143

# Contents

Introduction

What do QPCs do?

Area meeting responsibilities

Preparing for Quaker prison chaplaincy

Getting started as a Quaker Prison Chaplain

Resources

Annex 1 Quaker Prison Chaplain – ROLE DESCRIPTION

Annex 2 Things that you may need to know, or could be of interest if you are new to the prison environment.

## **Introduction**

In the early days of Quakerism many Quakers were imprisoned for their beliefs. Ever since, there has been a continuing concern for prisoners, those who work in prisons and the conditions in prison. This was most famously done by Elizabeth Fry but is continued by Quakers today through the contribution of Quaker prison chaplains amongst others. At present, 84 prisons (out of 110) in Britain benefit from a Quaker prison chaplain (QPC).

Quaker prison chaplains work within multi-faith prison chaplaincy teams to offer spiritual support and friendship to prisoners and staff of all faiths and none. QPCs reach out to some of the most vulnerable people in our society when they are very often alone and unsupported within the prison environment. This witness by QPCs also functions as a valuable form of outreach, not just to prisoners and prison staff but others working in chaplaincy teams as well.

## **The Prison Chaplaincy**

The law demands that prisoners have access to a minister of their chosen faith, and prison chaplaincy teams exist to fulfil that task. In reality prison chaplains perform a much wider pastoral role. Some tasks are easy to define, such as visiting prisoners who are ill or are confined to their cell as a punishment, and ensuring that new or transferred prisoners receive a chaplaincy visit within 24 hours of arriving in prison. Others are less definable such as providing an external, 'neutral' presence around the prison. Chaplaincy team members need to be able to provide care and support for prisoners' individual problems arising from issues such as family problems, bullying or self-harm.

## **Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee**

Quaker Prison Chaplains' work is overseen by Quaker Life's Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee, which sets policy, determines priorities, and actively supports and engages in the work of promoting Quaker prison chaplaincy.

The committee also provides training, networking and support for Quaker prison chaplains. The committee comprises between six to eight Friends who are serving as Quaker prison chaplains. The Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee acts as Quaker 'faith adviser' to the National Prison Service Chaplaincy team on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting. They are responsible for formalising the appointments of Quaker prison chaplains.

## **Get involved**

If you are a member of Britain Yearly Meeting and think you might be able to work within a chaplaincy team to offer friendship and support to prisoners and those working in prison, consider talking to your Area Meeting about this service.

Alternatively, consider offering your support, either to a QPC personally or perhaps by accompanying them to Meeting for Worship in prison, if their prison regularly holds one, or to other activities carried out by the QPC in prison.

If you are a Quaker prison chaplain known to Friends House you will already know of, and been subscribed to, the QPC email network for Quaker prison chaplains. If you are a nominated Quaker prison chaplain and have not been invited to join this e-group, please contact [marleens@quaker.org.uk](mailto:marleens@quaker.org.uk)

*“We hope both new and experienced Quaker prison chaplains will find this resource useful. Prisons are very diverse and dynamic places and you may find not all of it applies to your situation. Please tell the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee if there are ways in which this resource can be improved. Your colleagues in the prison, as well as Quaker prison chaplains elsewhere, will have useful advice, ideas and encouragement too. We wish you well in your important ministry.*”

*Carol Robinson, Clerk to the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee, January 2016*

## What do QPCs do?

The contribution that each individual can make differs enormously. There are a few Quaker prison chaplains working nearly full time, others part time and some only visiting occasionally. Many QPCs are heavily involved in the day-to-day generic work of the chaplaincy team; others are available for occasional visits to prisoners who register as a Quaker. This depends upon the needs of the prison and the availability of the Quaker chaplain. Most QPCs find themselves in a uniquely positive position to work within a multi-faith chaplaincy team. Quakerism arose from and draws heavily on the Christian tradition, however the Quaker non-creedal approach and silent worship often acts as a bridge between different faiths.

Some QPCs might have a particular skill that they are able to make good use of whilst in prison. This can include practical help, drama, bereavement support, reading, creative writing, alternatives to violence training etc. All offer their friendship, conversation and a listening ear. Quaker prison chaplains' work is governed by the laws and rules of the prison service and QPCs may therefore not get involved in any prison related campaigning.

### Your role as a Quaker Prison Chaplain

#### Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p)

The Introduction, Chapter 6 (Yearly Meeting), Chapter 12 (Caring for one another) and Chapter 13 (Varieties of religious service - in particular from 13.45 to 13.54) will give you some insight into the work and challenges which Quaker prison chaplains face and the support they can get.

Please note that the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee is working on a proposal to update *Qf&p* references under the heading 'Prison Ministers, Visitors and Chaplains' and hopes to have the changes accepted by Yearly Meeting in the summer of 2016.

The relevant entries are 13.45 to 13.54 - "*Prison ministers, visitors and chaplains*"

The historical references are correct but the present situation in relation to government and the prison service in both England/Wales and in Scotland has changed.

The 'Home Office' no longer applies, as the contact and the administration of chaplains (formerly known as ministers) is now carried out by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

In Scotland the administration is carried out by the 'Scottish Prison Service', SPS.

The Prison Act 1952 referred to has been updated by Prison Service Orders and Instructions. The latest of these referring to chaplaincy is PSI 51/2011. This changes the reference from 'ministers' to 'chaplains'.

Internally to the Society of Friends there have been changes to the processes caused by changes in administration. The administration and support of Quaker

prison chaplains is now carried out by Quaker Life, no longer by Quaker Peace and Social Witness.

There is a statutory minimum role but the presence of a Friend in a prison may have a wider impact.

As 13.46 of *Quaker faith & practice* states the role has four functions.

To visit and be a chaplain to those in prisons registered as Quakers - this is the minimum statutory requirement and some QPCs are restricted to it by their Managing/coordinating Chaplain. Religious registration in prison does not necessarily reflect actual belief or membership. Prisoners have the right to attend 1 hour of worship of their 'registered' faith each week.

The prison service regards proselytising as totally unacceptable. It is therefore essential that prison chaplains are seen to be accepting of others beliefs and prepared to work in a multi faith environment.

To assist the work of the prison Chaplaincy - Most Chaplaincy teams are hard-pressed for time and resources with additional responsibilities inside and outside the prison to attend to such as race relations, suicide prevention, staff welfare and others. There are often opportunities to serve through consultation. Examine the Establishment's Business Plan to look at the range of work involved.

To be a Quaker presence in the prison, particularly in relation to staff - The environment of a prison and the quality of life of prisoners is very dependent on the commitment and motivation of the staff. The Chaplaincy has a key responsibility to minister to staff through its spiritual and pastoral work. This can happen through daily activity or work with prisoners and can also be more specifically addressed through staff meetings and events. Making people aware of your presence will give them the opportunity for contact.

To be a channel between the prison service and the monthly meeting [now Area meeting] – keeping Friends aware of prison issues.

## **Area meeting responsibilities**

### **What is the role of area meeting in appointing prison chaplains?**

Area meetings are responsible for nominating Quakers for service as Quaker prison chaplains and supporting them in their work. In addition to this, the work of QPCs is supported centrally through Quaker Life, by the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee and an annual conference.

Prisons are operated within the public sector or managed privately. Further information can be found at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/hmps/>

Many prisons provide expenses for Prison Chaplains and in cases where this is not available the Area Meeting contributes towards expenses.

The role of QPC can feel isolated and can become very challenging. It is good practice for area meetings to set up a support group for their QPC. AMs can help maintain Friends' awareness of their local prison(s) and the work of Quaker Prison Chaplaincy by inviting the QPC to speak and/or write regularly about the work, while always respecting the need for confidentiality,

A role description for a QPC can be found in annex 1

### **I am an AM clerk, what do I have to do?**

You may be contacted by a local prison seeking a Quaker chaplain for their prison chaplaincy team or you may be approached by a Quaker who is interested in becoming a prison chaplain. There may already be someone in a local meeting who is involved as a volunteer in the local prison. However the initial contact is made, the AM discerns who is an appropriate person to be put forward for the role of official Quaker chaplain for the prison.

### **What is the process for appointing a prison chaplain?**

Nomination of a Friend for the role of prison chaplain is the responsibility of the area meeting, in which the establishment (prison) lies, through their nominations committee. Nomination is normally for one triennium, however this is a specialist role which may only be coming to a level of maturity in three years. Therefore it is normal to review the nomination on a rolling basis, and only to replace the QPC when they indicate that they are ready to lay the work down unless the AM discerns a reason to request that the QPC lays the work down. Most chaplains are now paid by the prison as an 'employee'.

Once nominated the nomination is accepted by AM and duly minuted. The AM clerk is responsible for writing to the Governor (Director) and/or managing chaplain of the establishment and for informing Quaker Life and the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee.

The establishment will arrange for security clearance to counter terrorism clearance (CTC) level which may take an extended time. Once complete the application is

vetted by HMPS (or private prison) and finally endorsed by the faith advisor member of the QPCC.

QPC's are responsible for the pastoral and spiritual care of the Quaker prisoners in their establishment(s) therefore they should be experienced and in good standing. The QPC must be able to accept the restrictions that working in a prison requires, and is also responsible to the area meeting for the role that they are appointed to. There is no age limit, provided the QPC is mentally and physically able to do the work which may be physically demanding. Chaplains must undertake training courses including personal protection, radio and security training, before being allowed to start work.

## **Preparing for Quaker prison chaplaincy**

The routes into prison chaplaincy are varied. For the individual, there might be a sense of 'leading' into this role even though there are no immediate opportunities available. On the other hand a vacancy for a Quaker prison chaplaincy might arise which an area meeting deems as urgent to fill.

However one comes to chaplaincy, it is strongly recommended that, with the support of area meeting, those seeking to become prison chaplains should, at least during the period of appointment, seek to discern that the leading is right for them and faithful to their Quaker heritage.

Discernment at an early stage not only tests the sincerity of the leading but can also identify perceived shortcomings and gaps in knowledge and experience to be worked on once the appointment is made. The involvement of area meeting through this discernment process is personally supportive and true to the Quaker ideal that the service of chaplain is on behalf of all Friends who, importantly, share responsibility for it.

The process of discernment before appointment can also be thought of as a starting point for further discernment and reflection during the period of service as a Chaplain.

So what might a discernment process look like? Something that might be considered is a process which involves inward searching, testing with other Friends and being informed. This is not mechanistic or sequential but the aim is seeking clarity to confirm that your prison ministry is, as far as you can tell, a 'prompting of love and truth'.

'Inward Searching' – is this leading - at root - spirit lead? If prompted by conscience and concerns for social justice, how can this be managed in an apparently unjust environment? Is simply 'doing good' enough?

'Testing with others' – can you share your leading, ideas and concerns about Chaplaincy with others? Is it appropriate to hold a meeting for clearness, share with a support group or meet with other Chaplains?



'Being informed' – are you aware of the spiritual basis of Quakers, our heritage of social justice and contemporary approaches to criminal justice? Do you have any knowledge of prison organisation or wider debates about the justice system?

Although seeking clarity is the aim, the above process will not answer all of the questions you might have – indeed it may well raise other issues for you. But do not let this deter you. Perhaps it is best looked at preparing your heart and mind for the chaplaincy role that lies ahead.

Many chaplains have found that in the end what sustains them is personal spiritual and emotional resilience. So the more you can prepare yourself before appointment and grow into the role afterwards the more you will be enriched by your Quaker prison chaplaincy experience.

### **What training and support do Quaker prison chaplains receive?**

The support provided for QPCs centrally includes the work of the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee, this handbook and a QPC email-network, see introduction. Training and an annual conference are provided for QPCs, in conjunction with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

Those new to prison chaplaincy or wishing to explore their role in prison more deeply are encouraged to participate in a specially adapted 'Equipping for Ministry' course, which features a module on prison ministry. For more information about this training please contact Woodbrooke [www.woodbrooke.org.uk](http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk)

At the annual QPC conference participants have the opportunity to hear from experts on issues of interest to them in their service, join others in facilitated group sessions plus opportunities for informal networking, sharing and mutual support. For up to date information on the next QPC conference, usually held in October, please check [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)

# Getting started as a Quaker Prison Chaplain

## How do I become a Quaker prison chaplain?

The process for becoming a prison chaplain varies according to the individual circumstances of the prisons in your local area. AM's are responsible for the discernment of a leading for the work and the nomination process. The prison makes the actual appointment after security vetting.

The routes into prison chaplaincy are varied but there needs to be a vacancy within the chaplaincy before you can be appointed. See also chapter: Area meeting responsibilities.

## What do I need to know before becoming a Quaker prison chaplain?

A newly appointed Quaker prison chaplain (QPC) starting work in a prison will probably feel that he/she is entering a strange and challenging world. In this world, each QPC must simultaneously fulfil two roles, which may often complement each other, but can also at times conflict in ways, which are difficult to resolve. A clear understanding of this duality of role is essential from the start.

### Outsider

QPCs form a long-established part of the work of Area Meetings, and can see themselves as part of Quaker 'outreach', developing a Quaker witness in prisons. They have responsibilities to, and within, their Area Meeting which are addressed in some detail in *Quaker faith & practice* (sections 13.45-54, see also: Your role as a Quaker Prison Chaplain). In particular, they are advised that their love, concern and support is for all who are confined in, or who work in, the prison (section 13.47), not only the prisoners, but the prison officers, the governors ('directors' in private prisons) and all of the staff. In this role, they come to prisons from the community as 'outsiders'.

### Insider

A QPC's work in prison is governed by the laws and rules, both English (covering Wales also), Scottish and (increasingly) European, concerned with the confinement and rights of prisoners. These are embodied in the Prison Act (1952), the Prisons (Scotland) Act (1989), and the rules and procedures of the Prison Services of England (and Wales) and of Scotland, or in the contracts governing the operation of companies running private prisons.

The Prison Service produces a 'Standard for Religion' PSI 51 (available here: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2011> and through chaplaincies), which defines the duties of chaplains and practises for each religion in considerable detail. QPCs are engaged by either the Prison Service, or by the company running the private prison, in order to carry out the necessary duties defined by law. QPCs therefore have a duty and responsibility within the management structure of the Prison Service, or of the company employing them, and to their colleagues within these organisations. In this role, they work within the system as 'insiders'.

## What happens in prison chaplaincy?

The multi faith chaplaincy team together share the general work of the chaplaincy and rotate among them the daily job of 'duty chaplain'. This team will usually include, among others, the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Church chaplains and Imams. Team members will normally have full security clearance, draw keys and be permitted fairly free movement around the prison. Other visiting chaplains will usually be called in as required to visit as requested by prisoners; they generally do not draw keys, and must therefore be escorted around the prison. The actual role of a particular QPC depends crucially upon his/her membership, or not, of the chaplaincy team.

The law establishes that a prisoner has the right to be visited regularly by a chaplain of the religious faith he/she has registered. In addition, any prisoner who is sick, under restraint or undergoing cellular confinement has a right to a daily visit from a chaplain of religion, and there is a right to a similar visit soon (usually within 24 hours) after arrival at a prison.

The activities of a chaplaincy team are usually much wider and more diverse than these basic 'statutory' duties. There are prisoners' individual crises, for example arising from bereavement, bullying or self-harm, which require care and support. The Chaplaincy may provide some form of spiritual or other support for prisoners in need, depending on the resources available.

Religious services, and associated prayer or study groups, are provided on a faith, denominational, and sometimes ecumenical basis; these may involve participation of volunteers from religious congregations from outside the prison. Chaplains also attempt to provide a 'presence' around the prison by informal visiting in the workshops, classrooms and visits rooms, as well as on the residential wings. Prisons hold many small review meetings of staff with individual prisoners concerned with matters such as sentence planning, parole, protection (where there is a risk of self-harm or bullying), conduct, discipline, privileges and other matters, and chaplaincies can be involved. Chaplains are required to make confidential case notes and appropriate entries on the computer, internal log books and the Chaplaincy journal after an interaction with the prisoner.

Chaplaincies often organise special activities, sometimes involving external groups, such as drama, or AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project) courses, or the Alpha courses.

The emphasis of chaplaincy activity can vary greatly between different types of prison. The emotional issues encountered in women's prisons are very different from those in men's prisons. In women's prisons contacts with family find a special focus in the birth and caring for very young children in prison. Work with young offenders and juveniles has a characteristic buzz and liveliness, but also the difficulties of dealing with immature personalities. Concerns with family will often focus upon parental roles, and members of the chaplaincy team may find themselves acting as surrogate parents, and having always to be aware of the cautions and constraints embodied in the Children's Act. High security prisons contain a higher proportion of

older prisoners serving long sentences for serious offences. Chaplains must focus upon the problems of seeking rehabilitation, and of sustaining hope and family links over a long perspective. Open prisons contain many prisoners reaching the end of long sentences for serious offences, and facing the hope and terror of re-entering the wider community after a long absence.

Much chaplaincy activity impinges on the work of other departments of the prison, such as education, psychology, probation, and in particular, security. The Chaplain has a difficult and often stressful job in developing an imaginative chaplaincy programme while respecting the responsibilities and priorities of these other departments. This applies particularly to security issues. In this difficult role, chaplains require the cooperation, support and understanding of all those who work in the chaplaincy, including QPCs and other Friends who come as chaplaincy volunteers.

Much of the daily work of the chaplaincy team requires detailed knowledge of the prison's policy and procedures in many areas such as security, suicide prevention, prevention of bullying and race relations. A new QPC may feel quite inadequate in these matters, but it is the responsibility of the prison to provide the necessary training.

An officially appointed QPC (as distinct from a Quaker volunteer or Official Prison Visitor) may be regarded as a 'sessional' worker and as such is entitled to a fee, payable by the prison, when visiting a prisoner registered as a Quaker, and to travel expenses payable at 'the current public transport rate' or equivalent mileage allowance. The fee is paid at an hourly rate and is a statutory entitlement and is taxable. Some QPCs choose not to claim any payment. Others claim some or all their entitlement, which may form a necessary part of their personal income or form part of their personal giving. Prisons vary in their approach to expenses and you will need to discuss this with your Managing Chaplain. Chaplains working in a private prison will have to go through a formal appointment process, requiring them to sign an employment contract.

## **Who are Prison Chaplaincy Volunteers?**

Quaker prison chaplains, once appointed, may request, or indeed may already have in place, volunteers for support with Quaker gatherings in prison such as Meeting for Worship, studies or other activities. The volunteers do not come within the nominations process although such volunteers may wish to make this service known to their local or area meeting. Volunteers will have to undergo security clearance which may include CTC clearance depending on the level of prisoner contact they will have and the specific requirements of the prison in which they will serve. Suitability to be a volunteer does not automatically indicate suitability for the role of chaplain although candidates for nomination may well be found within the list of volunteers.

The group formerly known as the board of visitors is now known as the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB).

The IMB are responsible for holding establishments and their governors to account for maintaining a legal, safe and humane environment. Members of the board, all volunteers, are appointed by the Ministry of Justice to each establishment.

In the first instance anyone interested should contact the Ministry of Justice;  
[www.justice.gov.uk/about/imb](http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/imb)  
As with visitors there is no requirement for nomination or approval of the area meeting but friends interested may choose to inform their local and/or area meeting.

## **How do I fit in with other faiths?**

The laws and rules define prison chaplaincies almost exclusively in denominational or faith terms, by which each recognised religious faith is enabled to provide its own services and support to prisoners who have registered themselves within that faith. Prison Service policy recognises that the actual work of chaplaincies involves both 'faith-specific' and 'generic' work; this is an important distinction for QPCs.

Provision is made to appoint prison chaplains for each faith. This may be on a full time, part time or ad hoc basis as appropriate to the number of prisoners registering themselves for each faith and the needs of the chaplaincy.

## **What's the difference between a Quaker prison chaplain and a prison visitor?**

Official Prison Visitors (OPVs) are appointed by the Ministry of Justice on the recommendation of the Managing chaplain and the prison governor, to visit certain prisoners who have asked to have visitors, usually because they do not have any other visitors such as family.

The National Association of Prison Visitors (NAOPV) promotes and helps to maintain the work of Official Prison Visitors. The Lord Chancellor is ex-officio President, and the Association is run at national level by a small Executive Committee elected by OPVs, and also by a General/Membership Secretary who may be an OPV and a member of the Association. Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.naopv.com>

Official Prison Visitors do not need nomination or approval of their area meeting but may choose to advise their local/area meeting that they are undertaking this work.

## **How can I be 'Quaker' and a chaplain?**

Some of a QPCs most valuable work may be through sustained relationships with individual prisoners. Yet here the dual role of QPCs may create difficult tensions, which are in general familiar to any professional person who works with clients. The Quaker witness springing from shared worship must be to a loving relationship between equals, which is of its nature trusting and vulnerable. Such a relationship enables trust and self-respect in those to whom it is offered, and this can be deeply felt and valued by prisoners. Yet the Prison Service, and the managing or coordinating chaplain, will expect a QPC to have 'professional' relationships with prisoners, which involve, for all kinds of important practical – and security – reasons, a professional reserve intended precisely to limit the QPC's trust and vulnerability. Learning how in practice to live with these two roles can be difficult and painful. It is not made easier by the fact that many prisoners are not sophisticated in human

relationships, and may easily feel bewildered or betrayed by the limits that the QPC has to make in the nature of the relationship that he/she can offer.

It is important to be clear about the rules of confidentiality. As a part of the Prison Service, a QPC has a duty to pass on any information affecting the security of the prison, and also matters concerning self-harm or suicide, harm to other prisoners, or any significant infringement of prison rules.

An important issue is how much information about him/herself a QPC may share with a prisoner. Prison security demands that a QPC should not pass on any information which can identify or locate him/her (or any QPC) in the local community, and this obviously includes home addresses and phone numbers. This is important not just for the security of the prison, but also for the security of the QPC.

The limits of the relationship which a QPC offers may be tested when a prisoner is transferred to another prison. A QPC, with limited time or energy to contribute, may question whether he/she should respond to requests from increasing numbers of prisoners to keep in touch after they are transferred, or rather to dedicate their efforts solely to prisoners in their own prison. All correspondence must be via the chaplaincy and copies held on file and passed on to the QPC in the new establishment

In practice, prison rules generally prevent serving QPCs from contacting released prisoners, but this does not release the QPC from facing and responding to the issues of trust and truthfulness.

## **I've just been appointed a Quaker prison chaplain, how can I develop my ministry?**

A newly appointed QPC faces the challenge of developing his/her ministry in the prison to which he/she has been appointed. If this ministry is to be more than the legal minimum of visiting the rare Quaker prisoner on request, it involves a degree of participation in the chaplaincy team. This requires matching what the QPC has to offer with the needs of that particular chaplaincy and prison, and of course it requires establishing the personal relationships and trust necessary for working together in a team. QPCs have contributed valuably, often with other Friends from local Meetings coming in as chaplaincy volunteers. They may organise groups with a Quaker emphasis, perhaps a Meeting for Worship, including social time with talk and refreshments, or an informal group in which prisoners can meet Friends in an atmosphere which affirms Quaker faith of 'that of God in everyone'. The non-credal and non-liturgical nature of Quaker worship and community can often open a gateway to the spiritual needs of prisoners who might not otherwise attend chaplaincy activities. But in addition to these specific activities, most chaplaincies value the work of a reliable and caring person, particularly as his/her experience and knowledge grows, in the general day to day chaplaincy activities and duties described above.

The experience of newly appointed QPCs varies very widely. Some are welcomed into active chaplaincy teams and soon are involved to the limits of what they can offer. Others meet exclusion from everything except their basic legally-required

availability for Quaker prisoners, and they may need considerable faith and perseverance to keep going.

It is evident from the spirit of QPCs meeting at their annual conferences that working in prisons, for all its demands and challenges, is profoundly rewarding.

## **What personal challenges can I expect?**

Working in prisons can be emotionally very demanding, sometimes in quite unexpected ways. It is important that QPCs have good readily available support in their work from others with whom they can discuss openly and in confidence the difficulties and stresses that they may from time to time encounter, and who can in turn provide empathy and understanding.

Few things in prison are what they seem to be, and this ambiguity is a central problem in a QPCs work and applies both to perceptions of people and of situations. Prison officers who are responsible for the incarceration of prisoners are generally likely to experience a much more negative and sometimes violent aspect of prisoners' personalities than are QPCs. Some prisoners can be extremely manipulative and are likely to offer to Quakers the sort of behaviour that they imagine will find favour. Yet it may be that in relationship with a QPC or a Quaker group, the prisoner finds a rare opportunity to express some aspect of 'that of God' within, which cannot find expression in day-to-day prison life, and which it is so important to affirm. It can be hard to distinguish between these possibilities. It is important also to remember that, when several people in a prison have very different perceptions of a particular prisoner, each perception may be validly based upon very different personal experience and may reflect different facets of the prisoner's personality.

Prisoner's personal information is held centrally and this includes personal histories, details of crimes committed, sentences served, psychological assessment and reports, conduct and assessment of risks within prison, and so on. Without access to these files, QPCs will generally be unaware of prisoners' offences, since it is not normally good practice to ask a prisoner about his/her offence, and information that is volunteered can be a mark of trust. A QPC who is an active member of a chaplaincy team may well be permitted access to much, but not all of the information held. They will be required to use the confidential database, make case notes and update appropriate information.

Although the laws governing freedom of information provide prisoners with right of access to some of the information in their files, this does not include everything, and possession of information from files imposes a constraint of confidentiality into the relationship of a QPC to each prisoner. But more fundamentally, and particularly where serious violent crimes against the person are involved, it exposes the QPC to the sometimes bewildering and painful tension of seeking, and often finding, that of God in prisoners through personal relationship, while being aware of the details of the crimes for which they have been imprisoned.

## Resources

There is considerable information available to those considering Prison Chaplaincy as well as those already in post. The following is aimed at providing some basic information to help understand the criminal justice and prison systems, the Quaker approach to criminal justice, what it means to be a Quaker Prison Chaplain and finally Quaker activities which might be used in prisons either in addition to or as alternatives to Meetings for Worship where these cannot be arranged.

### **The criminal justice and prison systems**

Government websites provide up to date background information on contemporary issues and information on individual prisons. Examples are:

Ministry of Justice for England and Wales: [www.justice.gov.uk/](http://www.justice.gov.uk/)

National Offender Management Service:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service>

Scottish prison Service: <http://www.sps.gov.uk/home/home.aspx>

The chaplaincy service in prisons in England and Wales is governed by Ministry of Justice Prison Service Instructions (PSI) no.51. These can be found at:

<https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2011>

### **The Quaker approach to criminal justice and prisons**

There is no one policy statement on the Quaker approach to criminal justice. However a picture of the way Quakers see contemporary issues relating to criminal justice and prisons can be found in:

QPSW (crime, community and justice): <http://www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-information-and-resources>

Quaker United Nations Office: <http://www.quno.org/areas-of-work>

Various groups either recognised by or associated with Quakers also provide insights into the way Friends look at these matters. Examples of these are:

Quakers in Criminal Justice: <http://www.qicj.org/Pages/default.aspx>

James Naylor Foundation: <http://www.jamesnaylorfoundation.org/>



Quakers in Britain have pioneered criminal justice work that has become established within the system through non-governmental agencies:

Alternative to Violence Project: [www.avpbritain.org.uk/](http://www.avpbritain.org.uk/)

Circles of Support and Accountability: <http://www.circles-uk.org.uk/>

Restorative Justice: <http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/>

Organisations with whom Quakers are in sympathy also offer information which can be of use to Quaker prison chaplains. These include:

Howard League: <https://www.howardleague.org/>

Prison Reform Trust: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/>

Phoenix Trust: <http://www.theppt.org.uk/>

## **Being a Quaker Chaplain**

A contemporary book which deals with the reality of Prison Chaplaincy by a Quaker is, 'Confessions of a Prison Chaplain' by Mary Brown. This is available from the Quaker Bookshop: <http://www.quaker.org.uk/shop>

The two year Woodbrooke course 'Equipping for Ministry' includes a prison ministry option. Details can be found on:

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/equipping.html>

## **Quaker activities**

There is a range of Quaker materials which might form the basis of group work lead by Quaker prison chaplains. These include:

Hearts and Minds Prepared: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/learning-materials.html>

Becoming Friends: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/becoming-friends.html>

Friendly Bible Studies: <http://www.read-the-bible.org/FriendlyBibleStudy.htm>

Friends Fellowship of Healing: <http://www.quaker-healing.org.uk/publications.html>

# **Annex 1 Quaker Prison Chaplain – ROLE DESCRIPTION**

## **England and Wales**

### **Introduction**

The term 'prison minister' is no longer in use and the provision of faith and pastoral care is now under the auspices of the Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 51/2011 which is a public document. All ministers or priests are now called chaplains. The PSI is updated as and when required by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and includes appendices relating to all recognised faiths including Quakerism.

The Quaker Prison Chaplain undertakes to bear the Area Meeting's responsibility for ministering to the spiritual needs of prisoners who are registered as Quakers or are inquiring about Quakerism. The chaplain is also a living witness to Quaker values within the prison.

Appointments to the role of Quaker Prison Chaplain are subject to formal NOMS (National Offender Management Service) approval and the endorsement of the Quaker faith advisor (represented by the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee). The nominated person will be required to complete a security questionnaire and only after the clearance process has been successful will the prison make the actual appointment. Clearances last for up to 5 years, and are transferable between prisons, including between private and public sector establishments.

Most Quaker prison chaplains are employed by the Prison Service or private prison operator as 'Sessional Chaplains' and are entitled to be paid expenses and be compensated for their time. There are occasional opportunities to be permanently employed within the service.

Reports to the Managing Chaplain, head of the prison's chaplaincy department.

### **Specific duties**

Duties will vary depending on the needs of the chaplaincy department but may include:

- Visiting and providing religious and pastoral support to registered Quaker prisoners, or those expressing an interest in the Quaker faith
- Organising Quaker worship according to Prison Service Instruction 51/2011
- Co-ordinating volunteers where they are part of a Meeting for Worship or Quaker group held in the prison
- Providing a Quaker presence in the prison, and acting as a channel between the prison system and the Area Meeting, keeping Friends aware of prison issues. This usually includes providing an annual report to AM
- Providing pastoral care to prisoners and staff members as needed
- Possibly engaging in group activities with small numbers of prisoners
- Possibly undertaking statutory duties including visiting prisoners on reception, in the health centre (if there is one) and in the segregation unit
- Possibly providing bereavement support

## **Essential requirements**

- A resilient faith and good understanding of Quakerism and in membership of The Religious Society of Friends
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including empathy, patience, good communication skills and the ability to listen without judgement
- Personal qualities including impartiality, good judgement, a willingness to be flexible, a sense of compassionate scepticism, a professional approach and a robust sense of humour
- A willingness to recognise and follow prison rules and the ability to engage with other faiths and to work as part of a multi-faith team
- Depending on the prison environment, physical fitness sufficient to be able to climb stairs and walk some distance

## **Desirable requirements**

The following may be desirable requirements:

- Counselling skills
- Knowledge of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination practice
- Computer skills (These may be essential in some chaplaincy departments, depending on how records are kept)
- Experience of ecumenical or interfaith activities
- Experience of running discussion groups or workshops

## **Time Commitment**

This will depend upon the specific requirements of each prison chaplaincy department and the level at which one is willing and able to become involved. Hours and frequency of visits will be negotiated with the Managing Chaplain.

Seeing a particular prisoner on a regular (possibly weekly) basis will call for about an hour or so (but allowance has to be made for the additional time it takes to be admitted and released from the prison).

## **Continuous Professional Development/Support**

A Quaker Prison Chaplain will be expected to attend training specific to their prison, such as security awareness or key training, which their Managing Chaplain will arrange. Training is also available from the NOMS Chaplaincy Headquarters team, and Quaker prison chaplains are encouraging to seek their Managing Chaplains' support to attend relevant courses held at the Prison Service Training College, including Starting Out.

In addition, Quaker Life provides information on training and support, see [www.quaker.org.uk/qpc](http://www.quaker.org.uk/qpc)

## **Annex 2 Things that you may need to know, or could be of interest if you are new to the prison environment.**

### **Prison practice and procedures:**

#### The Managing or Coordinating Chaplain

The managing chaplain is responsible for religious ministry within the prison and he or she is usually in charge of the chaplaincy team. Some prisons, however, have retained the role of coordinating chaplain. The managing or coordinating chaplain should tell you when there are Quakers in your prison. Problems do sometimes arise in the prison environment. If you are worried about anything, discuss it with the managing or coordinating chaplain.

#### Prison Officers (Custody Officers in private prisons)

It is important to establish a good working relationship with the staff, especially prison officers who are in daily contact with prisoners. Introduce yourself to them during conversation whenever possible - they have spiritual needs, too. The prison is a community in which prison officers and non-uniformed staff members play a critical role in setting standards of care.

#### Official Prison Visitors

Prison visitors are appointed on the recommendation of the Managing chaplain and the prison governor, to visit certain prisoners who have asked to have visitors, usually because they do not have any other visitors such as family.

### **Prisoners and prisons: classifications**

Prisoners are classified according to sex, age and their escape potential. As a general rule, male prisoners over 21 go to local prisons if remanded in custody, or given a custodial sentence. Those serving short sentences complete them in local prisons but those with longer sentences are normally transferred to 'training' establishments. The latter are designated according to the degree of security they provide. Category A (often known as 'dispersal' prisons) are maximum security for those prisoners considered the most dangerous or those most likely to escape. Category B and Category C prisons correspond to intermediate levels of security, while at the other end, Category D open prisons are for prisoners who are trusted not to run away. There are also separate prisons which cater for sex offenders.

Male prisoners under 21 are dealt with differently. They are allocated to Young Offender Institutions from their remand place. Those aged 18-21 ('young offenders') are generally held in YOIs (young offender institutions) or in a young offender unit/wing which forms part of a larger prison. Those 15-17 ('juvenile offenders') are the responsibility of the YJB (Youth Justice Board) and may be held in any one of 12 YOIs that have separate accommodation for juveniles. Alternatively they may be placed by the YJB in LASU (Local Authority Secure Units).

There are a growing number of women prisoners who are less rigorously segregated than in men's prisons. Women's prisons are 'Open' or 'Closed' depending on the degree of risk posed by the women imprisoned. Remanded women are also housed in Women's prisons. Women prisoners have particular needs that cause great concern partly due to the impact of their custody on family members, there are some Mother and baby units.

Probation Officers (who may include YOT (Youth Offending Team) workers, the through care team, and the resettlement team).

The work of probation officers is separate from that of the Chaplaincy although it can be complementary. It is important for QPCs not to be drawn into 'welfare work' such as contact with the prisoner's family, employer, housing agency etc, without consulting the probation/through care/resettlement team.

## **The Visiting Order**

A Visiting Order (V.O.) is a formal request made by a prisoner for a visit from a person outside chosen by him. Although chaplains cannot perform their chaplaincy duties in any prison other than that to which they are accredited, they may visit a prisoner elsewhere by means of a V.O. However, the number of V.O.s issued for a prisoner is limited. 'Pastoral visits' are special extra visits which can be arranged through chaplaincies and may sometimes be available for QPCs to visit in other prisons.

## **What may be taken in and out of prison?**

The rules clearly state that nothing may be taken into prison nor anything out of it. For chaplains this includes conveying verbal or written messages or letters for prisoners for delivery inside or outside the prison. If a QPC wishes to provide reading material to individual prisoners or to the chaplaincy, advice should always be sought from the prison chaplain. You will probably be subject to search entering and leaving the prison - travel lightly! There are forbidden and controlled items; for example a mobile phone is forbidden and anyone taking one into prison is likely to be summarily dismissed. A controlled item could be a CD and permission from the security governor must be sought before attempting to bring it in.

## **Religious registration of prisoners**

When people are imprisoned they are required to register their religious faith with the prison authorities. Some will put themselves down as Quakers, but only a few will be in membership of the Society. If a prisoner wishes to change his faith registration this can be done by application through the chaplaincy.

## **Meeting for Worship**

Some prisons can facilitate a regular Meeting for Worship to act as a focus for Quaker work in the prison. Prisoners attending Meeting for Worship may not be

accustomed to long periods of silent worship and a more structured Meeting with opportunities for spoken prayer and ministry may be more suitable. Some governors permit named Friends accompanied by the QPC to attend for Meeting for Worship; in other prisons a dozen or so Friends receive Criminal Records Bureau investigation and, when cleared, two or three are allowed in, not necessarily with the QPC, to maintain a regular Meeting for Worship, and this has been found helpful. It has also been found helpful to start a Meeting for Worship by reading from the Bible and Advices and Queries or some other book. Some QPCs have preceded or followed Meeting for Worship with a period of general discussion. If it is possible refreshments of tea/coffee can help this process.

## **Prison Sources of Information**

The Chaplaincy office will have the relevant manuals about standards as well as newsletters, local instructions, copies of Briefing, The Prison Service News and the Prison Service Journal. In order to keep informed as an occasional visitor the QPC will be helped by such publications.

It is good practice to attend meetings of the Chaplaincy team and other meetings as advised by the Chaplain.

## **Relocation**

If a prisoner is going to be moved to another prison, ask if s/he would like to see the local QPC at the next prison. You may wish to make contact with the new chaplaincy to facilitate continuity.

## **Vulnerable prisoners**

In addition to segregation as a specific punishment for an offence, there is often a group of prisoners segregated under what is known as Rule 45. These are often referred to as 'vulnerable prisoners' (VPs). Many of these prisoners will have asked to be segregated (put on Rule 45 or 'on the number') because they fear attack from other prisoners. Many prisoners within this category may have been victimised because they have committed sexual offences against women or children, but others may be victimised because they are 'gay', or in debt to other prisoners.

Some prisoners under Rule 45 may be effectively isolated from the mainstream of prison life and require support from regular visits. It is important to visit them as often as you can, again bearing in mind that the coordinating chaplain is required to visit them daily. In other prisons whole wings may be dedicated to 'Rule 45' prisoners who may constitute a significant proportion of the whole population.

## **Remand**

People who are remanded in custody awaiting trial are supposed to be treated differently from convicted prisoners. According to prison rules they are not required

to work, may wear their own clothes and may receive more visits. Pressure resulting from overcrowding in local prisons can put these rights in jeopardy.

Although people on remand are not required to work, there may be little opportunity for them to work should they wish to. Some prisoners may spend many months on remand awaiting trial, and in some cases possibly several years.

The term 'remand' is also used to include those who have been convicted but await sentence.