# Quaker Prison Chaplains Handbook

**Guidance for Quaker prison chaplains and area meetings**

Published in 2016 by Quaker Life,

updated in 2018,

revised in 2020 by QPCC

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www.quaker.org.uk

For more information about Quaker prison chaplains: chaplainsupport@quaker.org.uk**Contents**

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In the early days of Quakerism, many Quakers were imprisoned for their beliefs. Since that time there has been a continuing concern for prisoners, those who work in prisons and the conditions in prison. The reforming work of Elizabeth Fry is well known but one of the ways that a Quaker presence continues today is through the contribution of Quaker prison chaplains. At present, just over 65 prisons (out of almost 120) in the UK have a Quaker prison chaplain (QPC) as a member of the prison chaplaincy team.

Quaker prison chaplains work within multi-faith chaplaincy teams to offer faith and pastoral support to both prisoners and staff of all faiths and none. This ministry leads QPCs to walk alongside prisoners through their sentence, reaching out to some of the most vulnerable people in society when isolated and without hope. The witness of a QPC is also a form of outreach within the prison and to others working in the chaplaincy team.

Quaker prison chaplains’ work is governed by codes of conduct within the Prison Service and therefore QPCs may not get involved in any prison-related campaigning or share information acquired through their work without prior permission.

## The Prison Chaplaincy

Prisoners register their faith on arrival in prison and may request to change it at any time during their sentence. The law requires that prisoners have access to a chaplain of their registered faith through weekly worship and faith study, and prison chaplaincy teams exist to meet this need as well as to offer a much wider pastoral role. Some statutory tasks are clearly defined, such as visiting prisoners who are ill or segregated and ensuring that new or transferred prisoners receive a chaplaincy visit within 24 hours of their arrival. Chaplains also support the bereaved and terminally ill, and may be involved in taking funerals and memorial services. Other pastoral tasks are less definable such as providing care and support for prisoners’ individual circumstances, perhaps difficulties contacting family or issues around bullying or self-harm.

## Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee

Quaker Prison Chaplains’ work is overseen by Quaker Life’s Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee (QPCC) which sets policy, determines priorities, and works to promote Quaker prison chaplaincy within Quakers in Britain.

The QPCC also provides training, networking and support for Quaker prison chaplains. The committee comprises between six to eight Friends who are serving Quaker prison chaplains. The QPCC acts as the Faith Adviser about Quaker matters to the national Prison Service Chaplaincy team on behalf of Quakers in Britain. The committee is responsible for formalising the appointments of Quaker prison chaplains through endorsement.

## How to get involved

If you are a Member of Quakers in Britain and are considering if you have the skills to work in a chaplaincy team to support prisoners and those working in prison, speak to those who know you well in your Area Meeting about this service.

As a way of discerning whether this ministry is for you, consider offering your support to a serving QPC. It may be possible to accompanying them to a prison Quaker group, if their prison holds one, or to other activities carried out by the QPC in the prison. This will give you an opportunity to experience the prison environment and ways of working, which are not for everyone.

If you are a Quaker prison chaplain known to BYM, you will already be subscribed to the QPC email network for Quaker prison chaplains, which will give you regular updates and offer support and guidance. If you are a nominated Quaker prison chaplain and have not been invited to join this e-group, please contact chaplainsupport@quaker.org.uk

We hope both new and experienced Quaker prison chaplains will find the revised guidance in this handbook a helpful reference. Prisons are very diverse and dynamic places and you may find that not all of the guidance applies to your situation. Your colleagues in the prison, as well as Quaker prison chaplains at other establishments, will have useful advice, ideas and encouragement too. Please let the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee know if there are ways in which this resource can be improved. We wish you well in this important ministry.

We hope area meetings will find the revised guidance for nominating QPCs a more flexible process for finding a suitable Friend when a prison vacancy arises. Please contact the QPCC for support and advice in this process.

Judy Roles Clerk to QPCC December 2020

# 1: What do QPCs do?

The contribution that each individual QPC makes differs enormously. There are some contracted QPCs working nearly full time, others both paid and volunteer working part time and some visiting occasionally. Many QPCs are 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. The level of involvement depends upon the needs of the chaplaincy team and the availability of the Quaker chaplain, and may vary over time. Most QPCs find themselves in a uniquely positive position within a multi-faith chaplaincy team. Quakerism has its roots in Christianity but its non-creedal approach and silent worship can act as a bridge between different faiths.

Some QPCs may have a particular skill that they are able to offer within their role as a chaplain. This might include drama, creative writing, music, bereavement support, Alternatives to Violence or Restorative Justice skills, etc. All QPCs can offer support through non-judgemental listening and befriending. This can be where the most rewarding encounters of this role are to be found.

## The role of the QPC in Quaker faith & practice

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

[***Qf&p* references were updated on-line**](https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/) **in 2016.**

* The heading *Prison Ministers,* *Visitors and Chaplains* now reads *Quaker chaplains and prison visitors***.**
* 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 term *Home Office* no longer applies. [Her Majesty’s Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice now carry out the administration of chaplains (formerly known as ministers).
* In Scotland the *Scottish Prison Service*, SPS, carries out the administration.
* The Prison Act 1952 has been superseded by *Prison Service Orders and Instructions*. The current *Prison Service Instruction* (*PSI*) governing the main work of chaplaincy is [PSI 05/2016 Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners](https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2016)
* Within the Society of Friends there have been changes to processes in administration. Quaker Life has replaced Quaker Peace and Social Witness in carrying out the support of Quaker prison chaplains.

*Quaker faith & practice* 13.50:

A Quaker prison chaplain has four tasks:

* to visit and minister to those in prison who have registered themselves as Quaker;
* to assist the work of the prison chaplaincy;
* to be a Quaker presence in the prison, particularly in relation to staff;
* to be a channel between the prison service and the area meeting, keeping Friends aware of prison issues.

Where it is possible for the Quaker prison chaplain to arrange an occasional or regular meeting for worship, these can be of great value. Suitable Friends from the area meeting are often welcome in the prison to assist with these, subject to completing security clearance.

*Quaker faith & practice* 13.51:

When prisoners are under restraint or punishment, in segregation or in the hospital wing, they will be in particular need of spiritual comfort and reassurance. The Quaker prison chaplain has a right and duty to visit a prisoner registered as a Quaker, whether in membership or not.

A full description of the QPC role can be found in Annex 1.

# 2: Considering Quaker prison chaplaincy

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

However one comes to consider this ministry, it is strongly recommended that those seeking to become prison chaplains should discern with the support of their area meeting, 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 gaps in knowledge and experience that can worked on if an 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 nomination can also be considered a starting point for continuing discernment and reflection during the period of service as a chaplain, to ground it in Quaker spirituality.

If a Friend is considering applying for an advertised chaplaincy post, this discernment process should be undertaken by the individual with support from Friends in their AM.

**What is the process of discernment?**

Consider a process which involves inward searching, testing with other Friends and by wider confirmation. This is not mechanistic or sequential but the aim is seeking clearness, to confirm that your motivation is, as far as you can tell, a ‘prompting of love and truth’.

*Inward Searching* – is this leading, at root, spirit led and 'what love requires' ? If it's prompted by conscience and concerns for social justice, how can this be managed in an apparently unjust environment? Is ‘doing good’ and being there alongside others enough? Are you able to share the spiritual basis of Quakerism with others?

*Testing with others* – can you share the nature of your leading, ideas and concerns about chaplaincy with others? Is it appropriate to hold a meeting for clearness, or share with a support group or meet with other chaplains?

*Testing by wider confirmation* – are you aware of our Quaker heritage of social justice and our contemporary approaches to criminal justice? Do you have any knowledge of the prison system and the lived experience of prisoners?

Although seeking clarity is the aim, the above process may not answer all the questions you might have – indeed it may well raise other issues for you. Do not let this deter you. It is best looked at as preparing heart and mind for the chaplaincy role ahead.

Many chaplains have found that what sustains them is their faith 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 the experience of being a Quaker prison chaplain.

If becoming a chaplain doesn't seem the right way forward for you at this moment, you might wish to consider a more informal role volunteer role within the chaplaincy, supporting the QPC perhaps as part of a prison Quaker group. There are also other routes into prison work such as being an Official Prison Visitor or becoming a member of the Independent Monitoring Board. See Appendix:2 for more information about this roles.

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

The support provided for QPCs centrally includes the work of the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee and its network of regional groups, as well as this handbook and a QPC email-network (*see Introduction).* Face-to-face, on-line training and sharing forums are organised in conjunction with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

*Going Inside* is the prison-specific role training course essential for nominated QPCs. It covers the spiritual basis for this ministry and how to develop in the role, as well as practical issues about working in prisons, building trusting relationships, and on-going training and support. The course is facilitated by experienced QPCs and offered annually to all new prison chaplains.

At the annual QPC conference, participants have the opportunity to hear from experts on relevant issues, to join others in facilitated group sessions and informal networking which offers mutual support. For up to date information on the next QPC conference, usually held in October, please check [www.quaker.org.uk/chaplaincy](http://www.quaker.org.uk/chaplaincy)

# 3: Area meeting responsibilities

## What is the role of area meetings in nominating and supporting 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, QPCs are supported centrally through Quaker Life, by the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee, which organises an annual conference, training and regional support groups. The Area Meeting to which the QPC belongs should cover any expenses incurred by the QPC travelling to and attending the annual QPC conference, QPC training and QPC regional meetings.

Most prisons provide expenses for volunteer (unpaid) prison chaplains but in cases where this is not available, the QPC's Area Meeting should contribute towards expenses. Prisons are operated within the public sector or managed privately. Further information can be found at [www.gov.uk/hmpps](http://www.gov.uk/hmpps)

QPCs are responsible for the pastoral and spiritual care of any Quaker prisoners in their prison(s) on behalf of their Area Meeting. They should therefore be experienced Friends in membership and in good standing. In addition the QPC must be willing to accept the restrictions and security protocols that working in prison requires.

The role of the QPC can feel isolated and may be very challenging at times. It is important that the QPC's Area Meeting ensures emotional and spiritual support is offered either by a suitable Friend or by a designated group, with clear confidentiality protocols in place.

AMs can help maintain Friends' awareness of the work of prison chaplains and their local prison(s) by inviting QPCs to speak and/or write annually about their work, while mindful of the need for confidentiality.

A full description of the QPC role can be found in Annex 1.

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

You may be contacted by your local prison seeking a Quaker chaplain for their chaplaincy team or you may have a Friend who is interested in becoming a prison chaplain. There may be someone in a local meeting who is already involved as a volunteer in the local prison, or you may receive a request from a neighbouring AM with a prison vacancy unfilled. However the initial contact is made, the AM nominations committee discerns who is an appropriate person to put forward for the role of the official Quaker chaplain for that prison.

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

However a vacancy arises, the nomination of a Friend for the role of prison chaplain is initially the responsibility of the area meeting in which the prison lies, through their nominations committee. If for any reason this area meeting is unable to find a name and the prison is located close to an adjoining Area Meeting, that neighbouring Area Meeting may ask its nominations committee to find a suitable Friend.

Which Area Meeting makes the nomination may depend on the number of prisons located there, the number and size of the Local Meetings and their proximity to the prison. The AM clerking teams should liaise together to seek an equitable arrangement and ensure the vacancy is filled. Support is available in this process from the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee if requested.

Once nominated, the nomination is brought to the AM in which the Friend is known and the acceptance is duly minuted. The AM clerk is responsible for writing to the Governor (or Director) and the Managing Chaplain of the establishment *and for informing the QPC Committee via*chaplainsupport@quaker.org.uk. It is important that clerks communicate with the QPCC so that it can monitor the progress of the appointment and offer support and training to the new QPC at the appropriate time.

There is no age limit, provided the QPC is mentally able and physically mobile. The work can be physically as well as emotionally demanding. Chaplains must undertake prison induction training which includes security and key training, before being able to draw keys and start work. They should also complete the QPC role training within twelve months of being appointed.

Nomination for Quaker roles is normally for one triennium, however this is a specialist role which may only be coming to a level of maturity after three years. Therefore it is normal practice 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 ask that the QPC do so.

When a QPC lays down the role, the clerk of the QPC's area meeting informs the clerk of the AM in which the prison is located, where this is a different AM. The clerk also informs the QPCC and the nomination process begins again as outlined at the start of this section.

This nomination process has been revised to be simpler, clearer and more flexible in response to unfilled vacancies. Key changes in this revision are:-

* the nomination committee must know the Friend being considered personally, not through recommendation by another AM
* once appointed, the QPC is supported by the AM in which they worship and are known

**AM support for QPCs employed by HMPPS**

Employment changes were introduced by HMPPS in 2017 for those chaplains previously employed on a sessional basis. Following an open interview process, there are now a small number of QPCs who have been appointed to a permanent contract. Although this is a different route to the area meeting’s nomination process described above, any applicant will need to be endorsed by the QPCC Faith Advisor using the faith criteria set out in Annex 1.

When a vacancy arises in these posts, HMPPS may re-advertise it as a Quaker post or it may be reconfigured .

Employed QPCs should be supported financially and emotionally by the AM in which they worship.

**How are security clearances arranged?**

The prison arranges for security clearance to counter terrorism (CTC) level, which may take some months to be processed. The Managing Chaplain should email the new QPC with the security clearance forms once the AM appointment is made. Both potential QPC and the AM clerk should stay in regular contact with chaplainsupport@quaker.org.uk to ensure this vetting process is progressed and completed.

The clearance application is undertaken by HMPPS and then endorsed by the faith advisor member of the QPCC.

# 4: Getting started as a Quaker Prison Chaplain

The process for becoming a prison chaplain varies according to the individual circumstances of the prisons in your local area. [See previous chapter: Area Meeting responsibilities.]

## What defines my role as a QPC?

A newly appointed Quaker prison chaplain (QPC) starting work in a prison will probably feel that s/he is entering a strange and challenging world. The laws and regulations, covering both England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and those of the European Union incorporated into United Kingdom law, concerned with the confinement and rights of prisoners, govern a QPC’s work in prison. These are embodied in the PrisonAct1952, the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989, and their respective rules and procedures of England and Wales and of Scotland whether in the public or contracted sectors.

The *Prison Service Instruction* *Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners* (PSI 05/2016) <https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2016> defines the duties of chaplains and the practices for each faith in considerable detail. QPCs are required by the Prison Service (or the company running the private prison) 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 the company employing them) and to their colleagues within these organisations whether they are volunteer chaplains or employed chaplains.

QPCs form a long-established part of the work of area meetings, and are themselves 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 section:1 of this handbook). In particular, they are advised that their love, concern and support is for all who are confined in, or who work in prisons (section 13.47), not only prisoners, but prison officers, governors (‘directors’ in private prisons) and all other staff.

## What time commitment is required?

The amount of time per week or per month given to this role depends on the particular requirements of each prison chaplaincy team and the extent to which the QPC is willing or able to become involved. Hours and frequency of visits are negotiated with the Managing Chaplain. There are sometimes delays in getting started but don't be discouraged. This can be caused by all sorts of internal processes. Keep in touch with the Managing Chaplain and with other QPCs in your area and the QPCC regional co-ordinator.

Seeing a particular prisoner on a regular (possibly weekly) basis calls for a few hours (allowing time to get into and out of the prison). There may also be opportunities to offer a day or more to the chaplaincy team. The needs of the chaplaincy team fluctuate over time so it may be possible to become more involved if you wish, once you are known to the team.

An officially appointed QPC may be entitled to a fee payable by the prison when supporting a prisoner registered 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 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. The question of expenses and fees can be a grey area. Please contact chaplainsupport@quaker.org.uk for further advice.

## What happens in the daily work of prison chaplaincy?

The multi-faith chaplaincy team together share the work of the chaplaincy and rotate among them daily jobs such as that of ‘duty chaplain’ to cover 'statutory duties' (see below). Anglican, Roman Catholic, Free Church and Muslim chaplains are usually part of the core team. Other chaplains may cover one or two days or may be called in as required to visit prisoners registered in that faith; they generally draw keys, but if not, they will be escorted around the prison with a key holder.

The law gives all prisoners the right to be visited regularly by a chaplain of the faith s/he has registered. In addition, any prisoner who is sick, in segregation or undergoing cellular confinement has a right to a daily visit from a member of chaplaincy. There is also a right to receive a chaplaincy visit within 24 hours of transfer to a prison. These visits by chaplains are referred to as 'statutory duties'.

Religious services and associated prayer or study groups are provided weekly on a faith, denominational, and sometimes ecumenical basis; these may involve participation of volunteers from religious congregations outside the prison.

In addition to these faith and statutory duties, the activities of a chaplaincy team are wide and diverse. There are prisoners’ individual crises, for example arising from bereavement, bullying or self-harm, which require pastoral support. The chaplaincy may provide pastoral or spiritual support for prisoners in need, as resources allow.

Chaplains also provide a ‘presence’ around the prison by informal visiting in workshops, classrooms and visits rooms, as well as on residential wings. Prisons hold many small review meetings of staff with individual prisoners which are concerned with matters such as sentence planning, parole, protection from harm (where there is a risk of self-harm or bullying) and chaplains are usually included. Chaplains are required to make confidential case notes on C-Nomis (the prison database) and in the chaplaincy's red journal after any significant interaction with a prisoner.

Chaplaincies sometimes organise special activities involving external groups, such as drama, music, a relevant exhibition, or courses such as AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project) or a faith course.

The focus of chaplaincy pastoral support 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 should 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 there focus upon encouraging rehabilitation and of sustaining hope and maintaining family links over a long stretch. Open prisons include many prisoners reaching the end of long sentences for serious offences, and facing the hope and fear of re-entering the wider community after a long absence.

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

The daily work of the chaplaincy team requires a good knowledge of prison policy and procedures in many areas such as security, suicide and self-harm protocols, prevention of bullying and race relations. A new QPC may initially feel quite inadequate in these areas and it is important to ask and take advice from experienced colleagues while you learn your way. It is the responsibility of the prison to provide training specific for your prison so speak to the Managing Chaplain. The Prison Service Chaplaincy team run faith and pastoral care courses which you may be eligible to access and the QPCC organises annual training specific to prison chaplains, *Going Inside*. (See Section: 2 and resources in Appendix:3).

## What is the faith profile of chaplaincy teams and where do Quakers fit in?

The *PSI for Faith & Pastoral Care* *of Prisoners* defines prison chaplaincies almost exclusively in faith and denominational terms, by which each recognised religious group is permitted 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 ‘faith-specific’, ‘generic’ and 'pastoral' work; these are important distinction for chaplains.

The PSI makes provision 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 registered for each faith and the needs of the chaplaincy. For the core members of the team, faith-specific activities form a small part of their work while at the same time being the most enriching.

Since the number of Quaker-registered prisoners is small, the opportunities may appear limited but many managing chaplains with previous experience of Quakers in their team, may wish to include a QPC who is willing to become involved in generic and pastoral work.

Chaplaincy team meetings are organised regularly by the managing chaplain, usually monthly. All appointed chaplains including QPCs should be informed of the dates and agenda for these and should receive the minutes. It is good practice to attend meetings of the chaplaincy team and other meetings as advised by the managing chaplain.

## 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 role of a QPC requires navigating difficult tensions which are in general familiar to any professional person who works with clients. The Quaker witness seeks to build a respectful relationship between equals, which is of its nature truthful and open. Such a relationship enables trust and self-respect in those to whom it is offered and this can be deeply valued by prisoners. At the same time, the Prison Service, overseen by the managing chaplain, will expect a QPC to have ‘professional’ relationships with prisoners, which involve, for all kinds of important emotional and security reasons, a professional reserve intended to create safe boundaries around personal safety. Learning how to maintain these boundaries can be difficult. It is not made easier by the fact that many prisoners are not sophisticated in human relationships and may feel bewildered or betrayed by the limits that the QPC has to make in the nature of the relationship that s/he can offer. Other prisoners may seek to take advantage of the relationship. A QPC needs to develop a sense of compassionate scepticism to become a 'safe pair of hands' and credible to both prisoners and other staff.

As part of this, it is important to be clear about the rules of confidentiality. As a member of the Prison Service (whether volunteer or paid), a QPC has a duty to pass on any information affecting the security of the prison and also to raise any concerns of self-harm or suicide, harm to other prisoners or any significant infringement of prison rules.

Another important issue is how much personal information a QPC may share with prisoners. Prison security requires that a QPC does not pass on any information which can locate themselves or anyone else 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. Chaplains should also avoid discussing current family or personal issues with prisoners which could leave them vulnerable.

The limits on the relationship that a QPC can offer may be tested when a prisoner is transferred to another prison or released. To maintain professional relationships, chaplains are discouraged from contact once prisoners move on. Sometimes a single letter is permitted but this must be discussed with the managing chaplain first. Any correspondence must be via the chaplaincy and copies held on file.

In practice, prison rules impose a number of safeguards on chaplains' relationships with prisoners but this does not release the QPC from facing and navigating the issues of trust, personal integrity and truthfulness when building appropriate relationships with prisoners.

# 5: How can I develop my prison ministry?

A new QPC faces the challenge of developing his/her ministry in the prison to which s/he 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 contribute 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’. (see Appendix :2)

The non-credal and non-liturgical nature of Quaker worship and community can often open a gateway to the spiritual as well as other needs of prisoners who might not otherwise attend chaplaincy activities. 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 earlier.

While some QPCs 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 in the hope of more involvement. It can take a while for this ministry to grow. Prisons move slowly and there can be delays for all kinds of reasons. However if a QPC finds the opportunity, this role offers a way of witnessing to 'that of God in everyone' in an extraordinary community of wide diversity and need where faith plays a more significant role than it does in wider society. For all its demands and challenges, this ministry is profoundly rewarding.

## Continuous Professional Development and Support

A Quaker Prison Chaplain will be expected to attend training specific to their prison, which their managing chaplain will arrange. Training is also available from the HMPPS Chaplaincy Headquarters team and Quaker prison chaplains are encouraged to seek their managing chaplains’ support to attend relevant courses held at the Prison Service Training College, such as *Starting Out, World Faiths* and *Pastoral Skills*.

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

## 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 this 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 offer empathy and understanding.

Few things in prison are what they seem to be and this ambiguity is a challenge in a QPC's 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 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 is important also to remember that, when several people in a prison have very different perceptions of a particular prisoner, each perception may be valid but 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 case notes, details of offences, psychological reports and assessment of risks within prison. Without access to this information QPCs will generally be unaware of prisoners’ offences, since it is not good practice to ask a prisoner about his/her offence. A QPC who is active within a chaplaincy team will be given access to C-Nomis, the secure prison database, and will be required to use this database to enter case notes and check 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.

# Annex 1: QPC Role Description (England and Wales)

## Introduction

The provision of faith and pastoral care for prisoners is set out in the Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 05/2016 (link below) which is a public document. The PSI is updated as and when required by Her Majesty’s Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) and includes appendices relating to all recognised faiths and denominations 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 Quaker or are inquiring about Quakerism. The chaplain is also a living witness to Quaker values within the prison.

Quaker appointments to the role of QPC are subject to formal HMPPS vetting and the endorsement of the Quaker Faith Advisor (on behalf of the Quaker Prison Chaplains Committee). The nominated Friend will be required to complete an online security vetting process. Only after this clearance process is successful will the prison make the actual appointment.

Some Quaker prison chaplains are employed by the Prison Service or private prison on a sessional basis and paid for their time and travel expenses. There are also occasional opportunities to be permanently employed within the Prison Service.

All QPCs report to the Managing Chaplain, who is head of each prison’s chaplaincy team.

## Specific duties

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

* Attending chaplaincy team meetings, including receiving agenda and minutes
* 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 Instructions <https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2016>
* Co-ordinating any Quaker 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 in reception, in health care 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
* The ability to engage with other faiths and to work as part of a multi-faith team
* Computer skills
* Depending on the prison environment, physical fitness sufficient to be able to climb stairs and walk some distance at a good pace. Mobility aids are not usually permitted for security reasons.

## Desirable requirements

The following may be desirable requirements:

* Accredited faith study such as *Equipping for Ministry* course
* Experience of ecumenical or interfaith activities
* Experience of facilitating groups or workshops
* Counselling skills

## Faith Criteria for HMPPS Quaker Prison Chaplain posts:

* To be in Membership of the Society of Friends and in good standing
* To have a sound knowledge and understanding of Quaker Faith and Practice
* It is desirable but not essential to have completed the *Equipping for Ministry* or similar course

# Annex 2: Some key prison terminology explained

## Prison staff and procedures

Managing Chaplain

The prison service is organised in a formal hierarchy of responsibilities in which officers must follow orders given by those above them. The managing chaplain is responsible for religious ministry within the prison and for managing the chaplaincy team. They are always your first point of contact. If you have any problems or questions including anything to do with Quaker prisoners, always speak to them first and make sure they know where you are and who you are seeing.

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

Prison Officers (Custody Officers in private prisons)

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

Officers are overseen on a daily basis by a team of supervising officers (SO) and each residential unit is run by a Custodial Manager (CM).

Probation Officers

Inside prison probation staff are now referred to as POMs (prison offender managers) who are based in OMU (Offender Manager Unit). Outside in the community probation officers are referred to as COMs (community offender managers). There are prison probation staff in the YOT (Youth Offending Team), the through care team and the resettlement team.

The work of Probation is distinct from Chaplaincy although it can be complementary. It is important for QPCs not to be drawn into 'welfare work' such as contact with a prisoner’s family (in case of contact restrictions) employers, housing agency etc, without first consulting the probation team.

Prison Chaplaincy Volunteers

QPCs may request, or indeed may already have in place, volunteers for support with Quaker gatherings in prison such as Meeting for Worship, Quiet groups, faith studies or other activities. The volunteers do not come through a nominations process although such volunteers may wish to make their service known to their local or area meeting. Volunteers 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. They do not normally carry keys and they are supervised by the QPC while they are in the prison. Suitability to be a volunteer does not automatically indicate suitability for the role of chaplain although candidates for nomination may well be found within these volunteers.

Official Prison Visitors

The Ministry of Justice, on the recommendation of the managing chaplain and the prison governor, appoints an Official Prison Visitor (OPV) to visit a specific prisoner in the visits hall who has applied to have a visitor, usually because s/he does not have any other regular 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.

It is not permitted to be an OPV and a QPC at the same time, either in the same or different prisons.

Independent Monitoring Boards

The IMB are responsible for holding prisons and their governors to account in maintaining a legal, safe and humane environment. Each prison has its own team.

Anyone interested in this volunteer role should visit <https://www.imb.org.uk/>

As with official prison visitors (OPVs) 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.

'Nothing in, nothing out'

Prison rules clearly state that nothing except basic essentials may be brought into prison and nothing can be taken out. For all staff including chaplains this includes a list of physical items but it also includes conveying verbal or written messages or letters for prisoners for delivery inside or outside the prison. It also includes taking out any personal details relating to a prisoner including their name and number.

If a QPC wishes to provide reading material to individual prisoners or to the chaplaincy, advice should always be sought from the managing chaplain. Donations can be made and entered in the chaplaincy donations file. Items for individual prisoners are not permitted. You will probably be subject to a search entering and leaving the prison so travel lightly and check your pockets before you leave your car! There is a list of forbidden and controlled items at the prison gate; 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 or a DVD and permission from the security governor must be sought before bringing it in.

Sources of prison information

The chaplaincy office has relevant manuals about standards as well as local Notices to Staff, internal newsletters, faith publications for prisons and the Prison Service Journal. In order to keep informed as an occasional visitor, QPCs will find it helpful to know where these publications are kept or how to access them on the prison intranet.

## Prisoners and prisons: classifications

Prisoners are classified according to sex, age and their individual potential risk to the public if they were to escape. 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 other establishments. These are designated according to the degree of security they provide. Category A (often known as ‘dispersal’ prisons) are high security for those prisoners considered the most dangerous in terms of public risk and those on the longest sentences. Category B and Category C prisons correspond to lower levels of security, while at the other end, Category D open prisons are for prisoners near the end of their sentence who are trusted not to abscond. Sex offenders are sometimes held in separate prisons or on separate wings in main prisons due to the risk of attack by other prisoners.

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).

Female prisoners are also categorised but are less rigorously segregated than men. Women’s prisons are either ‘Open’ or ‘Closed’ depending on the level of risk, since the number of women in prison is much smaller and there are therefore fewer prisons. Remanded women are also housed in women’s prisons. Women prisoners have particular needs that cause great concern partly due to the impact of custody on other family members. Most women's prisons have dedicated mother and baby units.

Religious registration of prisoners

When someone is imprisoned s/he is invited to register their faith while they are in the prison system. A prisoner can change their faith registration at any point during their sentence and this can be done by request to the chaplaincy and is updated on CNomis. It is good practice for the chaplain of each faith involved in the change, to visit them to ensure there is no coercion and it is their own free decision. Only a few of those who register Quaker will be in Membership of the Society and most of those who register are influenced by their experience attending a Quaker group. It is possible for a QPC to support an application for Membership in custody and it can be very meaningful for the prisoner during their sentence. When s/he is transferred to another prison, it is helpful to inform the QPC at their new prison (either by phone or secure email) or the QPCC if you do not have this information, so that their Quaker journey can continue.

Remand prisoners

People who are remanded in custody awaiting trial are entitled to be treated differently from convicted prisoners. According to prison rules they are not required to work, they 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. In these cases, having a job gives them some income and is better for their mental health.

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

Quaker Worship in prisons

Some prisons can facilitate a regular Meeting for Worship to act as a focus for Quaker work in the prison. Other QPCs have found that offering a multi-faith Quaker-led meeting allows those of any faith or none to attend, not just those registered Quaker.

Prisoners attending Quaker-style worship may not be accustomed to long periods of silence 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 Quaker meetings; in other prisons, two or three vetted Friends are allowed in to maintain a regular Quaker meeting when the QPC is not available. It can be helpful to start a Quaker Meeting by reading from the Bible or *Advices and Queries* or some other book. Some QPCs have preceded or followed their meeting with a period of general discussion. If it is possible refreshments of tea/coffee can help this process.

Relocation

If a prisoner is being moved to another prison, ask if s/he would like to see the QPC at the next prison. It is helpful to make contact with the new chaplaincy to facilitate continuity.

# Annex 3: 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/)

Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-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) 05/2016

<https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis/prison-service-instructions-2016>

## 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 at:

Crime, community and justice work: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-justice/crime-community-justice>

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/>

James Naylor Foundation: <http://www.jamesnaylerfoundation.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/

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

The two-year course run by Woodbrooke ‘*Equipping for Ministry’* is currently being reviewed and has previously included a prison ministry strand. Please check on the Woodbrooke website for this and other prison and chaplaincy related courses:

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/equipping-for-ministry/>

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: <https://bookshop.quaker.org.uk/>

## Quaker activities

There is a range of Quaker materials, which QPCs might use as the basis of group work.

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learn/resources/>

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