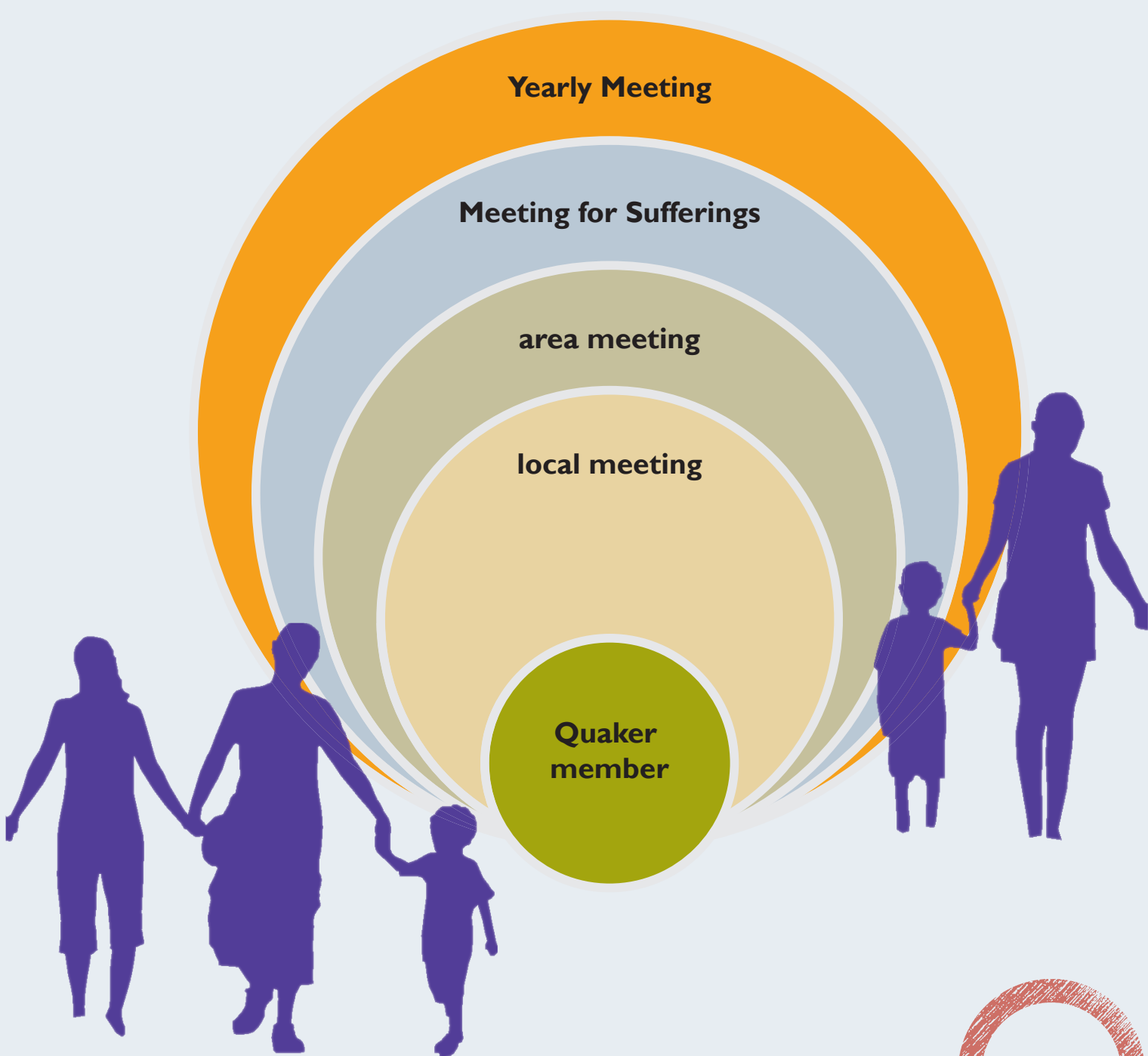


# Quakers in Britain

## A short guide to our structures



# A Quaker

Quaker meetings for worship are open to everyone.

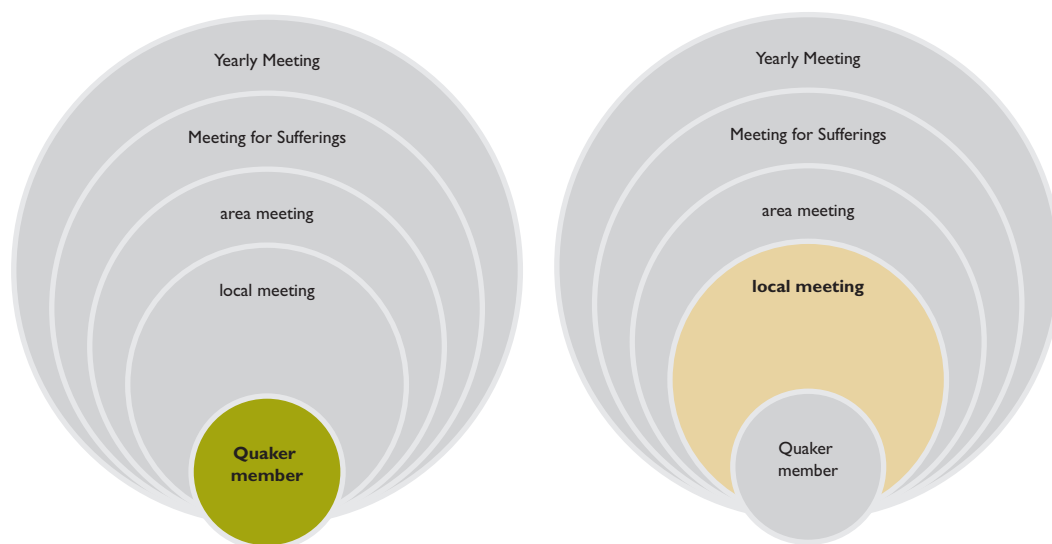
When a person attends a particular Meeting frequently, they are known as an 'attender'.

Individuals can become a Quaker member through a simple process. It is a two-sided process involving the individual on their spiritual journey and their Quaker faith community.

All members and attenders are encouraged to play a part in Quaker activities – perhaps contributing time, energy, skills and money. Members may also be invited to serve in particular ways, such as being a clerk or joining a central committee.

*Quaker faith & practice* is our book of procedures and the collective experiences of Quakers. The fifth edition was published in 2013 and is available from the Quaker Centre bookshop.

There is more information about belonging to a Quaker meeting in chapter 10 of *Quaker faith & practice*, and about membership in chapter 11.



## Local meeting

Your local meeting is your worshipping community. Most Quakers are linked to a local meeting.

Local meetings...

- hold meeting for worship; organise, encourage and support worshipping groups
- welcome newcomers and encourage all to be involved in the Quaker community
- involve and support children and young people, and their parents
- offer loving support to each other
- let people in the area know about Quakers and the meeting
- form links with other churches and faith communities in the area
- hold business meetings about local Quaker matters
- take care of premises and collect contributions on behalf of the area meeting
- prepare for area meeting (see page 4) and send representatives to it
- report to area meeting as appropriate.

The way local meetings work is explained in sections 4.31 to 4.38 of *Quaker faith & practice*. All meetings are different and work in slightly different ways. The local meeting clerk, or other people active in the local meeting, should be able to help you find out more about how your local meeting works.

Other people can also help, including elders, overseers and treasurers. Because we take turns at the different Quaker jobs, you will find there are a number of people who can tell you how things work.



# Area meeting

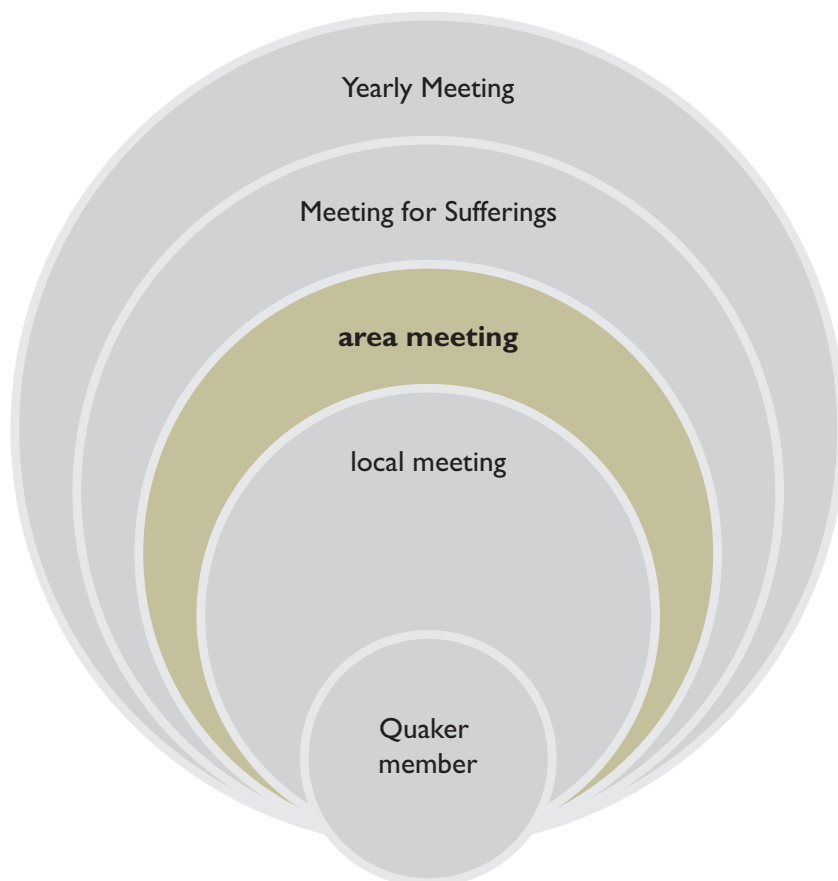
Area meetings are made up of a number of local Quaker meetings. Area meeting is the primary business meeting for Quakers and is also a worshipping community. Area meetings are charities and appoint trustees who work on behalf of all Quakers in the area.

When a person joins Quakers, they become a member of the area meeting.

Area meeting:

- oversees and supports local meetings
- is responsible for the list of members
- appoints elders and overseers
- is responsible for Quaker marriages
- records deaths
- is legally responsible for owning and managing buildings, finances, and employment
- sets policies, including safeguarding, and health and safety
- can communicate on behalf of local Quakers with Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting
- sends a representative to Meeting for Sufferings.

The way area meetings work is explained in sections 4.01 to 4.30 of *Quaker faith & practice*. Different area meetings work in slightly different ways – for example, section 5.09 of *Quaker faith & practice* explains more about area meetings in the London region. The area meeting clerk, or other Quakers who have been active in the area meeting, should be able to help you find out more about how your area meeting works.



There are also national bodies in Scotland and Wales. General Meeting for Scotland and Meeting of Friends in Wales act on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting to represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Scotland and in Wales. There is information about General Meeting for Scotland in section 5.03 of *Quaker faith & practice*; and about Meeting of Friends in Wales in section 5.04.

# Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings is the standing representative body of Quakers in Britain. It meets five or six times a year, and attends to the business of the yearly meeting through the year.

Members of Meeting for Sufferings have to be appointed. The representatives come from:

- all area meetings in Britain
- Quaker bodies in Scotland and Wales, and Young Friends General Meeting
- Yearly Meeting committees
- Britain Yearly Meeting trustees
- Britain Yearly Meeting staff.

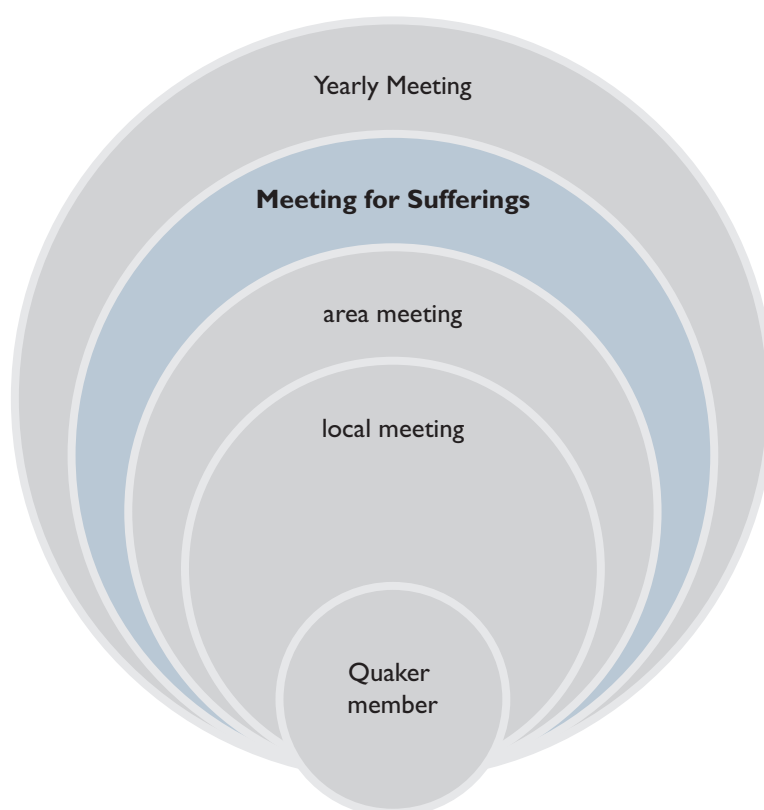
Meeting for Sufferings leads the vision for all Quakers in Britain. It decides the priorities and sets the direction of the yearly meeting in the Long Term Framework. It helps communication throughout the yearly meeting and reviews and tests concerns sent to it by area meetings.

Meeting for Sufferings:

- takes decisions
- implements yearly meeting decisions
- receives information from other parts of the organisation
- helps other parts of the organisation
- informs Quakers about its work
- is a worshipping community.

Meeting for Sufferings is the visionary, prophetic body for the whole Yearly Meeting. Trustees, who are appointed by Yearly Meeting, oversee the operations of the central charitable organisation. Meeting for Sufferings gives guidance on policy issues referred to it by BYM Trustees. All trustees are members of Meeting for Sufferings.

The way that Meeting for Sufferings works, and the reason it is called Meeting for Sufferings, is explained in chapter 7 of *Quaker faith & practice*. There is also information at: [www.quaker.org.uk/sufferings](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sufferings).



# Yearly Meeting – a gathering and an organisation

## Yearly Meeting – the gathering

British Quakers hold an assembly once each year. All members can attend (and attenders, with permission).

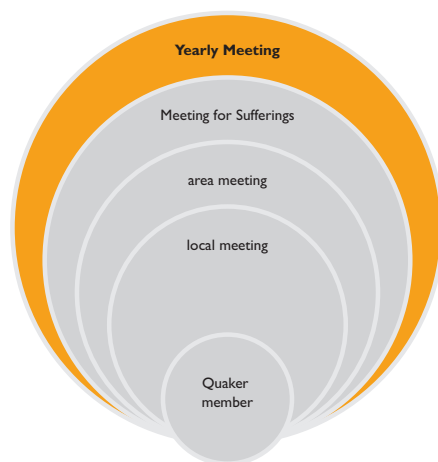
The Yearly Meeting has a range of committees which oversee different parts of Quaker work. Quakers from throughout Britain are appointed to these committees.

Yearly Meeting has a variety of purposes, including:

- reflecting on current concerns
- receiving reports from Yearly Meeting Trustees, Meeting for Sufferings, and committees
- making decisions as the constitutional authority for all British Quakers.

The way Yearly Meeting works is explained in chapter 6 of *Quaker faith & practice*. There is also information at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

## Britain Yearly Meeting – the organisation



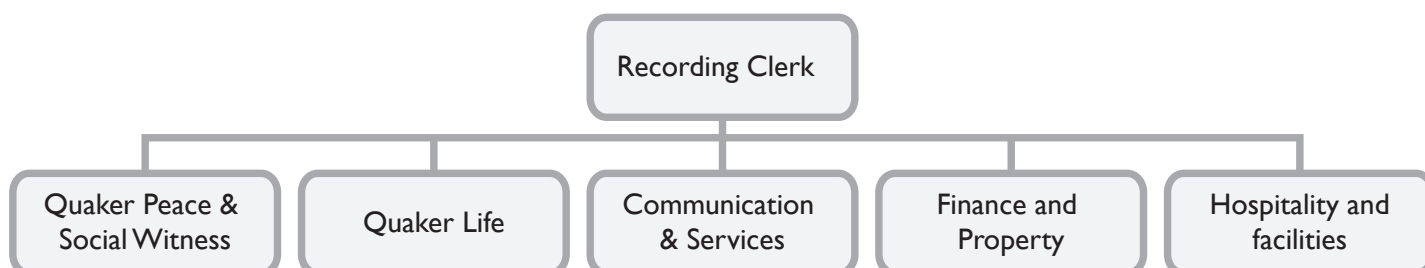
Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is the national body of British Quakers. It is a registered charity (Number 1127633) and has trustees, appointed by Yearly Meeting. All area meetings are separate charities and are linked to Britain Yearly Meeting.

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) Trustees are appointed by Yearly Meeting to act on its behalf as managing trustees of the work, assets and property held by BYM. The constitution and purpose are set out in *Quaker faith & practice* sections 8.16 to 8.19.

Much of the centrally managed work is based at Friends House in London. The organisation employs about 150 staff, who undertake work on behalf of the Yearly Meeting. The staff are overseen by Yearly Meeting trustees. They work within five departments, reporting to the Recording Clerk, who is the senior member of staff.

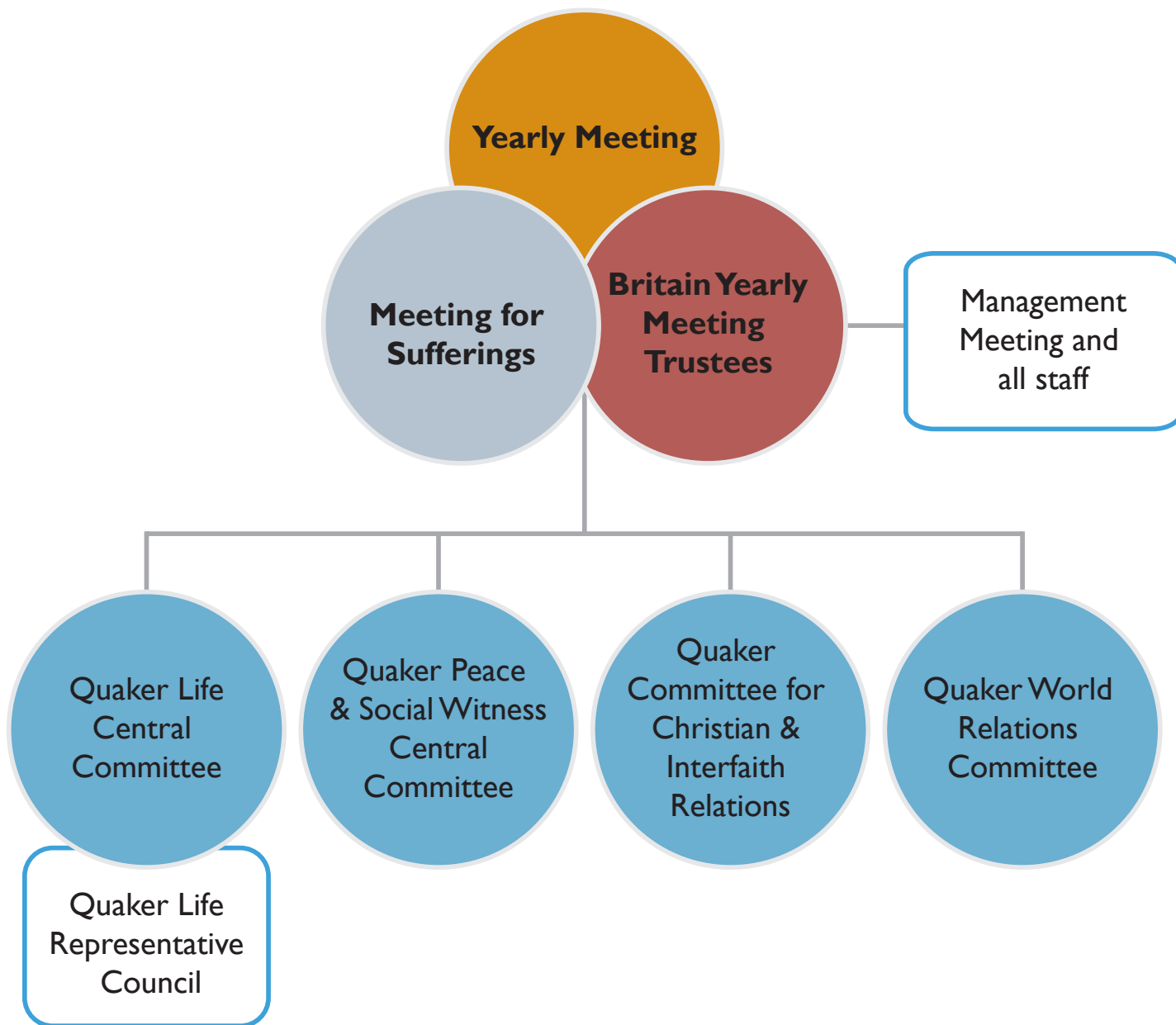
This work is funded by contributions from individual Quakers and Quaker meetings; charitable trusts; the café and letting rooms at Friends House; and investment income.

The way Britain Yearly Meeting works is explained in chapter 8 of *Quaker faith & practice*. The annual report is available online at [www.quaker.org.uk/bymtrustees](http://www.quaker.org.uk/bymtrustees). Our website includes a lot of other useful information about the work of Britain Yearly Meeting.





# A very simplified diagram of Yearly Meeting committee structures



There is a different version of this diagram in chapter 8 of *Quaker faith & practice* (fifth edition).

This booklet was produced in October 2014 by the Recording Clerk's Office. For further copies or more information please contact Juliet Prager; email [julietp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:julietp@quaker.org.uk) or phone 020 7663 1101.

Britain Yearly Meeting is a registered charity, number 1127633.

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