

Area and General Meeting Compliance Reporting

Friends will recall that in previous years, the annual return process was managed by Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC), who reported directly to Yearly Meeting. When QSC was laid down, Yearly Meeting agreed that reporting accountability for Area Meeting Governance would sit with Quaker Life Central Committee, who would report to Meeting for Sufferings, who would then report to Yearly Meeting.

This year, the annual return from Area and General Meetings, and the annual safeguarding return, were combined into a single online questionnaire. The report below updates the information minuted by Meeting for Sufferings, as more returns have subsequently been received.

Reporting as at 23 July 2024:

48 Area / General Meetings out of 73 total sent in their annual returns by the deadline. A further 17 have now been received, bringing the total to 65. This means that 8 returns are currently outstanding and the Recording Clerk is liaising with these Area and General Meetings directly. Here are some key findings from the 65 returns submitted so far:

- 4 Area or General Meetings which are registered charities reported not submitting their Annual Report to their regulator within the deadline for their most recent financial year. Some delays may have been due to the Charity Commission's new online submission system which took effect in 2023 and caused delays as trustees needed to register for it.
- 12 Area Meetings reported having had a vacancy or shared responsibility for either their Clerk of Trustees, Treasurer or Safeguarding Co-ordinator role during 2023. In some cases, although not all, this may indicate a difficulty in finding and appointing suitable Friends to serve.
- 6 Area Meetings are not registered with a third-party Safeguarding Advisory body; most of those registered are registered with Thirty-One:Eight.
- 22 Area Meetings report having Safeguarding Concerns arise in 2023.
- All Area Meetings have a Safeguarding Policy, which was being regularly reviewed by trustees, as were Health and Safety policies.
- Roughly half of Area Meetings have a complaints policy and code of conduct for employees and volunteers.
- 50 Area Meeting have a health and safety policy.
- 39 Area Meetings regularly consider their key risks and manage them using a risk register or similar system.
- 2 Area Meetings reported serious incidents to the Charity Commission or OSCR in 2023.
- 8 Area Meetings noted concerns about record-keeping of key information, although a majority of these had plans to rectify this which were in action.