

1 Summary of Safeguarding Policy & Procedures

This is a summary of the Area Meeting's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. It covers all the local meetings in the area, plus area meeting activities. The full version is available from local and area meeting clerks and on AM/LM websites.

Quakers recognise that every person, adult or child, is made in the image of God and thus deserving of respect, value and care. This is reflected in our acknowledgement of "that of God in everyone".

"How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome?"
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Children and young people need love and stability. Are we doing all we can to uphold and sustain parents and children and others who carry the responsibility for providing this care?"

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Abuse is unacceptable. Everyone, including children and vulnerable adults, have a right to participate in Quaker communities without suffering harm. We are committed to keeping everyone safe.

Quakers recognise that of God in everyone. All children, young people and adults deserve respect, value and appropriate care. Our care extends to people who are potentially vulnerable to abuse, and to those who may be perpetrators. We recognise abuse can include physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and other forms.

Quakers may be open to risks because we foster a culture of welcome and trust for everyone. Very often an abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult. Abuse can be hidden and manipulative.

Responsibilities

We all have a responsibility for safeguarding our children, young people, and adults at risk. Ultimately, trustees hold responsibility on behalf of the area meeting. One trustee is appointed as Area Meeting (AM) Safeguarding Coordinator and to act on behalf of the Area Meeting in dealing with an allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect. This includes liaising with statutory agencies which have the legal duty to investigate. Contact details for the Safeguarding Coordinators are on the poster displayed in each meeting house, and on the next page. The main policy contains more contact details.

Safer Recruitment, Training and Good Practice

We recognise we need to follow national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, as this reduces risks. The following roles will be appointed, trained, supported and monitored in accordance with government guidance on safer recruitment: volunteers and employees who work with children and young people or adults at risk; overseers or those with oversight responsibility (pastoral care); trustees;

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Safeguarding Coordinators and Deputies; advocates for children and young people's work. For these roles, as well as our spirit-led Quaker nominations process, we have role descriptions, personal details forms and self-declarations, discussions about safeguarding, references, criminal record checks (DBS) where the role is eligible, and a probationary period. Sometimes we do need to turn people down if they are not suitable. However, our processes need not be daunting, when done with care.

Everyone in those roles will have a safeguarding induction, some training and refreshers, and agree to the Code of Conduct. In addition, our clerks, elders, nominations committees, and staff with other roles, will have a safeguarding induction: and will be encouraged to have training.

We ask everyone involved in Quaker activities to be familiar with our general Code of Conduct, our good practice guidelines, and any specific safeguarding arrangements for the local meeting (recorded in an appendix to the Policy). When we need to, we use the online Safeguarding Manual from Thirtyone:eight, the specialist safeguarding organisation that supports Quakers. They have a 24-hour helpline: 0303 003 1111.

We will arrange opportunities to raise awareness throughout the Area Meeting of safeguarding issues in local and area activities, and with children, young people and adults at risk.

Each local meeting's room hire agreement will require that organisations and individuals hiring rooms on our premises take full responsibility for safeguarding for all their activities. It will also require that any organisation using our premises will have their own safeguarding policy which follows national good practice, and have their own insurance in place.

Procedure for responding to concerns or allegations of abuse

The 5Rs are a useful reminder: Receive, Reassure, Recognise, Respond and Refer. Listen well. Make sure the child or adult involved is safe at the present time. If you think someone is in immediate danger, do not delay – call the police on 999 straight away. Make a written record of what you have been told, and who told you, ideally using the form in the Policy appendices. Sign it, with your name, date and time, and keep it safely with your notes. Under no circumstances should a volunteer role-holder or employee carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. This could increase the potential harm to the person at risk, and prejudice any investigation. Report concerns as soon as possible and within 24 hours directly to the:

AM Safeguarding Trustee/Coordinator:

Patricia Bradbury email: tricia.bradbury42@gmail.com

AM Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator/s:

Carole Pannell, email: caroleannpannell@gmail.com

Marina Manassei, email: marina@manassei.com

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They will collate and clarify information, record it and pass it to statutory agencies who have the legal duty to investigate where appropriate. If you (the person raising the concern) are clear that the matter needs to be reported to Children's/Adults' Services or the Police, then you should raise the concern directly, and then inform the Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator.

If another Quaker is contacted first (such as an Overseer or an Elder) then either you or the other Quaker must contact the Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator as soon as possible to make the report.

If the Safeguarding Coordinator is not available, or if the suspicions in any way involve them, then report to a Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator. If there is no Deputy, or if they are not available or are involved, use Thirtyone:eight's helpline 0303 003 1111. All contact details are in section 2.3 of the Policy. Then inform the Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator (unless involved). Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.

Pastoral care and working with those who may pose a risk

As far as possible we will help all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of the Area Meeting and its local meetings to access pastoral care and support - working with statutory agencies as appropriate. The AM itself is a worshipping community, not a professional safeguarding agency, and cannot provide professional care or support. If an incident happens within the Quaker community, the Safeguarding Coordinator will make sure that arrangements are made to support everyone affected, and liaise with outside organisations. We need to bear in mind that there may be people involved with the meeting who are survivors or victims of past abuse.

When someone attending the local or area meeting is known to have abused others, or is under investigation, or is known to be a risk to children or vulnerable adults, the local and area meeting will supervise the person and offer pastoral care. Arrangements will be put in place to protect children, young people, and adults at risk. This will include supervision and setting boundaries for that person in the form of a contract, which they will be expected to keep. Such a person should not work with children, young people or adults at risk, or be allowed unsupervised contact. There may be events where such a person's attendance will be deemed to be inappropriate. These boundaries will be based on an appropriate risk assessment and through consultation with appropriate parties. This is the responsibility of the Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator, working with other role-holders as appropriate.

Where such a risk exists or is reasonably suspected, it is important that the risk is managed robustly, with the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults given priority over subjective opinions or concerns about upsetting the person posing the risk. Think "What if...?" and contact Thirtyone:eight or the BYM Safeguarding Officer if in any doubt about the action to be taken.

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The Safeguarding Co-ordinator will inform other trustees. Seeking advice from outside the meeting can be very helpful, from Thirtyone:eight or Britain Yearly Meeting's Safeguarding Officer.

Caution should be taken to avoid the potential for any abuse of positions of trust held by such individuals. Specifically, area and local meeting nominations committees will need to consider seriously what roles such a person should be appointed to that might pose a risk.

Those who have been mistakenly or falsely accused will also have support needs, and Elders and Overseers may need to support them.

Review

Annually, each local meeting's safeguarding practice will be reviewed by the local meeting Clerk(s), local Convenor of Children's Committee, and the local Convenor of Overseers, or their equivalents, the DBS Verifier, and Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator (if appointed). They will report on this in their local meeting's Annual Safeguarding Report to Area Meeting Trustees, using a form which asks key questions about practice in the local meeting, and provides assurance to trustees. Trustees will consider and review the Policy and Procedures, and actual practice, based on a report from the Safeguarding Coordinator, and any updates from Britain Yearly Meeting and Thirtyone:eight. There will be a more comprehensive review every three years.