

Religious Society of Friends North East Thames Area Quaker Meeting SAFEGUARDING POLICY



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NETAQM SAFEGUARDING POLICY



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Safeguarding is protecting Children, Young People and Adults at risk from harm.
- 1.2. This document sets out the Safeguarding Policy of North East Thames Area Quaker Meeting. A separate Safeguarding Handbook holds related guidance for implementation of the policy and is referred to throughout this policy document. When any details of the Handbook need to be updated, this will be approved and minuted by Area Meeting or Area Meeting Trustees as appropriate.

Definitions

- **Children and young people** – anyone under the age of 18 years.
- **Vulnerable adult** – any adult aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves against the risk of significant harm, abuse, bullying, harassment, mistreatment or exploitation.

Advices and Queries

- 18 How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured and strangers are welcomed?
- 19 Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care.
- 22 Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others. Do you foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

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2. OUR RESPONSIBILITY

- 2.1. North East Thames Area Meeting are committed to making our Meetings and gatherings safe for children, young people and adults at risk so that they will be free from harm.
- 2.2. The policy applies to our Local Meetings, committees, employees, and Quaker activities.
- 2.3. The policy does not apply to hirers of Meeting Houses, who must take responsibility for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in their care. This responsibility is made clear in the standard conditions of booking.
- 2.4. The Area Meeting Trustees are legally responsible for protecting and safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk entrusted to the care of our Meetings.
- 2.5. This policy aims to comply with the current legislative and regulatory framework and follows the principles found within guidance issued by the Home Office, by establishing appropriate and constructive links with all agencies (statutory, voluntary and multi-agency groups) involved in safeguarding work.
- 2.6. The Statutory responsibility for safeguarding is held by:
 - Local Authority Social Services, which have a duty to investigate under legislation and regulations. (see Section 4 of the Safeguarding Handbook for Local Authorities relating to each of our Local Meetings).
 - The Police.



3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1. The Area Meeting recognizes the importance of our ministry to, and work with, children, young people and adults at risk entrusted to our care and the need to provide a safe and caring environment. The Area Meeting also acknowledges that abuse may take many forms. The following list is not exhaustive, but includes the main categories:

- **Physical abuse** – a deliberate act of physical force that could result in bodily injury, pain or impairment.
- **Sexual abuse** – direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without consent. This includes the inability to consent, pressure or inducement to consent or take part.
- **Online abuse** - Viewing, procuring or disseminating illegal pornographic images of abuse.
- **Emotional and Psychological abuse** – acts or behaviour which impinges on the emotional health of an individual, or which causes distress or anguish. Controlling and coercing behaviour that limits a person's freedom and diminishes their self-worth.
- **Neglect and acts of omission** – ignoring or withholding physical or medical care needs which result in detriment to an individual.
- **Financial abuse** – unauthorised, fraudulent obtaining and improper use of funds, property or any resources of a vulnerable person.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies mainstream opportunities to some groups or individuals.
- **Institutional abuse** – where the culture of an organisation places emphasis on running of the business or organisation above the care of the vulnerable person.
- **Spiritual abuse** - which is defined as coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context and is a form of psychological and emotional abuse that takes place within a faith context

Shared responsibility

3.2. Therefore, the Area Meeting is committed to:

- Valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people and adults at risk, as well as promoting their well being, welfare and protection.
- Making Members, attenders and employees aware of their duty of care under this safeguarding policy.
- Promoting a culture of informed vigilance for signs and risks of abuse.

Prevention of abuse

- 3.3. Area Meeting, Local Meetings, committees, event organizers, members, attenders and employees all hold a shared responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, financial, spiritual and discriminatory abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults at risk.
- 3.4. Area Meeting will ensure that those in a position of trust are aware that they must not engage in any abusive behaviour. For example, anyone in a position of trust must not allow or encourage a sexual relationship to develop (regardless of the age of consent for sexual activity) with a Child, Young Person or Vulnerable Adult for as long as the relationship of trust continues. Other types of abusive behaviour will also need to be guarded against.

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Responding to concerns

- 3.5. A Member, Attender or employee, should respond appropriately and promptly to all concerns, incidents and allegations when they are raised. A person responding should know how to record and report any such disclosure of abuse that is discovered or suspected and who to report it to and who not to tell, understanding the need for confidentiality. See Section 7 of the Safeguarding Handbook for guidance to individuals on responding to a concern.

Appointments

- 3.6. A Safeguarding Coordinator and an Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator must be appointed by the Area Meeting. See Appendix 2 for a role description for the Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant.
- 3.7. Area Meeting Trustees will appoint a named Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding.
- 3.8. Area Meeting may also appoint a Children's Advocate. The role description for this post is also given in Section 2 of the Safeguarding Handbook.

Training

- 3.9. The Area Meeting will ensure, through Trustees, Overseers and LM Clerks and Assistant Clerks, that:
- The up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) and appropriate training is arranged for Members, attenders and employees working with children, young people and adults at risk.
 - There is a process of safe recruitment of employees, who will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in current government guidelines, CCPAS guidance and our own Quaker Procedures and Guidelines for Safeguarding.
 - There is up to date provision of safeguarding information and training for the Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding, the Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator, Friends serving on committees, Trustees and relevant employees.

Preparing Local Meeting procedures and guidelines

- 3.10. The basis for a set of Procedures and Guidelines together with the appropriate forms for safeguarding people at risk from abuse to be followed by Local Meetings, committees, and event organizers, are included as Sections 3-8 of the Safeguarding Handbook.

Support for those affected by abuse

- 3.11. The Area Meeting's Overseers are encouraged and supported in the provision of pastoral care and support to those attending its constituent Meetings who have been affected by abuse, working with statutory agencies as appropriate.

Working with offenders

- 3.12. When someone attending an event within our Area Meeting is known to have abused Children, Young People or Adults at risk, the Trustees will ensure that the individual concerned is suitably supervised and managed, and will ensure that provision is made for the person's pastoral care. Boundaries will be set which that person will be expected to keep. There may be events where such a person's attendance will be deemed to be inappropriate.

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- 3.13. If an employee, member or attender of the Area Meeting is known to have abused Children, Young People or Adults at risk, the Trustees, together with the Area Meeting Clerk, will ensure the supervision of the individual concerned and offer them pastoral care. The Trustees will ensure that a risk assessment of that individual is undertaken and boundaries will be set which that person will be expected to keep. There may be events or activities which are not suitable for such an employee, member or attender to attend or undertake.
- 3.14. In the case of such an individual, it is the Trustees' responsibility to ensure that they do not work in unsupervised employment in any role with Children, Young People or Adults at risk (as this could potentially be a criminal offence) and caution should be taken to avoid the potential for any abuse of positions of trust held by such individuals. Specifically, the Area Meeting will need to consider seriously what roles such a person should be appointed to in the Area Meeting that might pose a risk.

Links with safeguarding agencies

- 3.15. The Safeguarding Coordinator will hold contact information for the statutory authorities and other organisations to support those people affected by abuse and to support parents and carers of the individual concerned. See Section 4 of the Safeguarding Handbook for current contact details for various support and statutory agencies.

Direct referrals to safeguarding agencies

- 3.16. Normally, where there has been a disclosure that requires referral to the statutory authorities for safeguarding, this will be made by the Safeguarding Coordinator or in their absence the Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator or the Trustee responsible for Safeguarding if neither are available.
- 3.17. Trustees expect Friends and attenders to follow this policy and the associated Procedures and Guidelines. However, any individual has the right to make a direct referral to statutory safeguarding or child protection agencies or to seek advice from the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS).
- 3.18. An individual, who feels that the Safeguarding Coordinator or the Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator has not responded appropriately, or who has a disagreement with the Safeguarding Coordinator or the Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator as to the appropriateness of a referral, is free to make a direct referral to the appropriate Local Authority Social Service, the NSPCC, CCPAS or the police.
- 3.19. In such a case, the individual must record their reasons for acting alone, citing what evidence they have, including names, dates and times that justify their actions for going outside of the agreed policy. Such evidence may be required, if there is a criminal court case. Ideally, any evidence should also be independently corroborated.

Reviewing this policy

- 3.20. This policy will be reviewed every three years. Area Meeting will be asked to approve any amendments.



4. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS, INCIDENTS AND ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Individual Responsibilities

- 4.1. Any member, attender, employee from within our Meeting may become aware of possible abuse in one of these ways:
- A child, young person or vulnerable adult discloses abuse
 - A Member, attender or employee observes physical signs or behavioural indicators of abuse
 - Someone mentions to you what they have observed that may constitute abuse
 - Someone admits abuse
- 4.2. If this happens they must listen, then document what has been disclosed and include what they themselves have said in response and then notify the Safeguarding Coordinator or Assistant as soon as possible. More detailed guidance for individuals is given in Section 7 of the Safeguarding Handbook.

Role of Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator

- 4.3. When a matter has been reported, the Safeguarding Coordinator or Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator shall, without delay:
- Collate and clarify the precise details of the incident, allegation or suspicion, in accordance with the Procedures and Guidelines,
 - If necessary, seek guidance from support agencies such as the NSPCC or CCPAS
 - Pass this information on to the appropriate Local Authority Social Services Department (See Section 4 of the Safeguarding Handbook) or to the Police.
- 4.4. The Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator shall assist and support the Safeguarding Coordinator and deputise in the Safeguarding Coordinator's absence.
- 4.5. A role description for the Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant is given at Section 2 of the Safeguarding Handbook.

Confidentiality

- 4.6. Suspicions should only be discussed with the Safeguarding Coordinator or Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator.
- 4.7. In the event of the matter being sexual or physical abuse, the parents, carers or guardians should not be informed. They may only be informed of any matter with the agreement of the appropriate Local Authority Social Services or the police, once a referral has been made.

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- 4.8. The problem of the Safeguarding Coordinator or anyone speaking to the parents beforehand is that parents could, quite understandably, become very upset and angry. They might confront or inadvertently alert an alleged abuser which might result in a child being silenced and an investigation by the authorities disrupted or ruined. Always check with the Local Authority Social Services as to whose task it will be to tell parents, carers or guardians. Where a vulnerable adult is not capable of making an informed decision then their relatives or carers may be told before contacting Social Services. However, Social Services should be contacted directly if the relatives are implicated in some way.
- 4.9. Once Parents, carers or relatives have been told they may need guidance, support and pastoral care from Overseers. Other agencies may also offer support.
- 4.10. Any investigation into abuse must remain strictly confidential. In all cases as few people as possible will be informed of the precise details.
- 4.11. To ensure an appropriate response, aspects of any disclosure may require that the circle of confidentiality is expanded in the following ways:
 - *The Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator* – the Safeguarding Coordinator (or Assistant) should be notified in all cases
 - *Clerk to the Trustees* - Since there may be a possible implication of legal action involving the Area Meeting, any reference to statutory authorities should be communicated to the Clerk to the Trustees who will determine if and when information should be passed to other Trustees and to the Charity Commission or the Area Meeting's insurers.

Other support

- 4.12. The Trustees will support the Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator in their roles, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- 4.13. The post holders listed in Section 1 of the Safeguarding Handbook may provide support but apart from those listed above should not be informed about details of an investigation of abuse.



5. DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECKS

- 5.1. The Safeguarding Coordinator and Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator will work closely with Local Meeting Clerks or the Friend appointed by minute as a verifier to help members and attenders obtain DBS checks.

What are Disclosure and Barring Service Checks?

- 5.2. Criminal records checks are just one aspect of ensuring that people working with children, young people or adults at risk are suitable to do so. The purpose of a criminal records check is to identify people who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable people. It also checks to ensure that the applicant is not legally barred from working with children or adults at risk.

The cost

- 5.3. Applications for Members and attenders are free.
- 5.4. There is normally a fee for paid positions. Please refer to Section 3 of the Safeguarding Handbook to identify the appropriate DBS Check service and any costs for paid employees.

Who needs to be checked?

- 5.5. Anyone working with, or having responsibility for children and young people in connection with Quaker Meetings should apply for a check. Regulations do not currently allow for checks to be made for people working with adults at risk (protected adults) unless the applicant is working with them in a residential setting.

Applying for a DBS check

- 5.6. Details of how to apply for a DBS Check and who can verify the application are given in Section 3 of the Safeguarding Handbook.

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6. APPROVAL OF THE POLICY

Agreed by Area Meeting Trustees on

Signature of AM Trustee for Safeguarding

Agreed by Area Meeting on

Signature of AM Clerk

The Trustees undertake to file a copy of the policy and any amendments subsequently published with the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) and Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Life.