

SAFEGUARDING HANDBOOK

for the use and guidance of Friends in

**Hertford & Hitchin
Area & Local Quaker Meetings**

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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

This booklet has been put together for the specific use of Hertford & Hitchin Area meeting and its constituent Local Meetings.

Our purpose throughout the process has been to make our Safeguarding requirements as simple, as straightforward and as accessible as possible.

We need a realistic and flexible policy and structure that can be applied to the wide variety of local meetings within our Area Meeting. Convicted paedophiles have been associated with meetings, sometimes as respected and trusted Friends themselves. It is also necessary to comply with strict child protection laws alongside those that apply to the safety of our premises. We do not expect our children to be abused by Friends. We need to try our best to minimize the chances of its happening. But we also need to be realistic about the very few opportunities offered in ordinary circumstances for the children in our care to be abused.

Groups renting out rooms in our Meeting Houses have responsibility for their own safeguarding policy. It is appropriate to enquire about a safeguarding policy on room-hire application forms, but we do not need to see it.

The information that forms the foundation for this booklet has come from:

- Quaker Life (*Meeting Safety 2008 - 2015*)
- Churches Child Protection Advisory Service ("*Safe & Secure*")
- Local Friends with specific professional experience.

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) handbook "*Safe & Secure*" (available online) covers every possible situation likely to arise in every kind of organisation and so provides an informed and thorough back up to this present handbook. The CCPAS also provides regular updates which the Safeguarding Coordinator will receive as a matter of course.

The *Policy* and *Structure* Documents have both been accepted by Area Meeting and are presented here with minor adjustments needed to bring them up to date.

Although it is to be hoped that circumstances never arise when we have to take some action, we hope that this handbook provides the necessary support, particularly for those Friends who have no experience of child protection issues.

Friends will need to think through how the information in this booklet is best to be disseminated to its members. If a situation needing action should arise it would likely need a swift response, and so all Friends need to know who the Designated Friend is for their Meeting. Contact details for this Friend (*see Section 7*) will be found in the current List of Members and Attenders published by the Area Meeting.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY & GUIDELINES for HERTFORD & HITCHIN AREA MEETING

The policy will apply only to the time that children are involved in Quaker meeting activities. It will not protect against every eventuality occurring on Quaker premises and does not preclude the paramount need for parents to be responsible for and sensible about the care and security of their own children. Accordingly, the policy is also designed to protect the volunteers as much as possible against unfair allegations of abuse or negligence by children, their parents/carers or others.

Policy and Guidelines

1. An Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator will be appointed to advocate for and oversee all Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult matters.
2. A Designated Friend needs to be appointed by every Local Meeting to whom parents, children and others can turn with any concerns about the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The Designated Friend will have a safeguarding procedure to guide them.
3. Everyone who volunteers to work with children must have an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), registered every three years. If the CRB check reveals a problem the safeguarding procedure will be followed.
4. The best arrangement is that there should be two adult volunteers at each event: one male and one female. This may not, however, be practicable. There have been and will continue to be problems associated with having two volunteers at all times with children during children's meeting time. It is recommended, therefore, that children's meetings are timetabled to try to maximize attendance on the principle of fewer but better attended / supported meetings.
5. A Children's Meeting attendance register must be kept, be kept up to date and retained as a permanent record along with other Meeting documents.
6. A copy of this Policy and Guidelines together with Children and Young People in Quaker Meeting should be given to all parents, so that they are aware of their responsibilities as well as those of the Meeting. We advocate creating environments that are as safe as possible, but parents/carers attending Meeting are solely responsible for their children outside of Meeting time.
7. Children's Meeting is held both for the benefit of children and young people and so that parents/carers can attend adult Meeting. Parents/carers are expected to remain in the Meeting House while their children are in Meeting. Parents attending Meeting are responsible for their own children – not other people's children – unless they have also been DBS checked and agree to take on that responsibility.
8. Accurate times and dates of Children's Meetings need to be displayed on each Meeting House notice board and in the Books of Meetings to notify the public when Children's Meetings are held so as to avoid the problem of visitors arriving with children and expecting to go to adult Meeting for Worship

9. When organizing trips away from the Meeting House, all parents must be informed and give their consent. The volunteers must be informed of any special needs a child may have. The volunteers must consider potential safety hazards (for example hot sun, crossing roads, water, driving in cars &c). With very young children it is not desirable that they be left without their main carer.
10. Individuals and groups who use our properties for their own events are entirely responsible for safeguarding at those events. However, we reserve the right to make specific requirements for safeguarding where we think it is appropriate, and this should be made clear in Local Meetings' hiring terms.

SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE

In order to implement the Safeguarding Policy, the following structure has been put in place:-

At Area Meeting level

The appointment of a Safeguarding Coordinator whose role is to:-

1. Oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and ensure that it is regularly reviewed.
2. Be familiar with all documents and guidelines provided.
3. Be the Quaker Life Meeting Safety contact.
4. Be the CCPAS contact, have access to “Safe & Secure”, and to sift through the monthly updates.
5. Be the channel to Local Meetings for any essential information/awareness that comes to them (e.g. someone moving into the area from another Area Meeting)
6. Receive any disclosures from local agencies about those on the Sexual Offences Register.
7. Be the first point of contact for the Designated Friend bringing a concern forward.
8. Maintain contact with Designated Friends in Local Meetings.

(It would be an advantage if the Safeguarding Coordinator already had knowledge or experience in the field.)

At Local Meeting level

The appointment of a Designated Friend for Safeguarding whose role is to:-

1. Be the first point of contact for anyone in Meeting with a concern about child safety.
2. Be familiar with the basic information provided by Meeting Safety and Safe & Secure). This will guide them as to whether to deal with a matter themselves or seek advice from the Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator.
3. Be familiar with the requirements of CRB checks through the Disclosure & Barring Service, and to hold the necessary application forms and information about online applications through the Churches Agency for Safeguarding.
4. Provide all parents and any visiting families with information about arrangements for children and Young Friends and a copy of the Area Meeting Policy on Safeguarding.

(The Designated Friend should be drawn from within Overseers if possible as they are already familiar with everyone in the Meeting.)

Together

1. A good communication system needs to be in place to enable rapid contact between Designated Friends and the Safeguarding Coordinator should it become necessary.
2. Any change of appointee(s) should be notified to the Area Meeting clerk and all those involved in Safeguarding.

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE

The need to take action in respect of Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults (C &VA) can come about in several ways. For example a member of the Meeting might observe inappropriate behaviour of an adult or young person with a child; a child might disclose a specific incident; you might gain knowledge from outside sources that cause you concern. 'Abuse' may be actual physical or sexual mistreatment (or failure to protect the child from these), but it can also be emotional ill-treatment and neglect. Whatever knowledge or suspicion you have, this document gives a straightforward step by step process to guide anyone in any of our Local Meetings who has a concern about the potential or actual danger to a child or vulnerable adult, whether from inside or outside the Meeting. Don't wait for evidence. You don't at this stage need proof of your concern. Share it straight away with the Designated Friend (DF) in your local Meeting.

- Is the concern about someone in the Meeting?
- Is it about an adult or a child?
- Is it actual knowledge (by experience, disclosure or reliable information) or suspicion (by observation)?

The Designated Friend will then advise a course of action according to the seriousness or urgency of the case. The Safeguarding Coordinator (SGC) would be brought in at this point so that any decisions taken are in line with our Safeguarding Policy. For example the decision might be:

- to confer with Overseers / Elders to see if the situation can be handled by the Local Meeting;
- to draw on the wider Area Meeting resources to resolve the issue;
- to put in hand immediate contact with social services (if concerning a child) or the police (if concerning an adult).

At all times confidentiality must be maintained, sharing information suspicions &c only with the DF or SGF until any decision is taken to involve anyone else.

If you need advice about a child protection issue that is not connected with someone in Meeting, you can still talk to the Local Meeting DF who can advise you on the best way forward.

SAFEGUARDING CHECKLISTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE BY MEETINGS (as identified by *Quaker Life*)

Safeguarding is the term used to denote Child Protection, and the protection of Vulnerable Adults and Adults at Risk. Safeguarding in Meetings is the responsibility of each Area and Local Meeting. Meetings may find the following checklists helpful in identifying tasks that are needed to fulfil safe practice guidelines.

When recruiting volunteers meetings should:

- Produce guidance notes
- Ask people to consider the role they are asked to take on
- Ask people to fill out an application form
- Take up references
- Ask volunteers to go through the criminal records check procedure, through the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (CAS)
- Have a conversation to explore practice
- Support volunteers and agree a time span for the role
- Have clear accountability and oversight
- Offer training opportunities

When running activities when parents or guardians are not on site, forms should be used to provide:

- Medical information, particular and dietary needs
- Parental consent to take part in the activities
- Medical consent for treatment
- Parental contact details
- An awareness of participant needs
- Information in advance and updated for each event
- All data collected should be kept within guidelines

To protect children, Meetings should:

- Work to avoid abuse happening
- Be aware of the correct adult / child ratios (see CCPAS information online)
- Know who is the Area Meeting's safeguarding co-ordinator
- Have written guidelines covering child protection
- Encourage volunteers to spot signs of abuse
- Help volunteers know what to do if abuse is disclosed
- Be prepared
- Know where to seek expert advice

To ensure health and safety:

- Make sure insurance is appropriate for on and off site
- Carry out risk assessments
- Have an up to date first aid kit
- Check building safety
- Check fire safety equipment and procedures
- Keep a record of children's attendance
- Keep an accident and incident book
- Review all policies annually

To ensure ongoing effectiveness Meetings should:

- Inform Quaker Life whenever someone who is not the Clerk is appointed as a verifier.
- Keep the Area Meeting membership of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) up-to-date.
- Ask volunteers and relevant staff to obtain a new criminal records check every 3 years.
- Inform Quaker Life should a sex offender join, or be found to be part of the Meeting's community.

If your meeting can tick most of these points this is an indication that you are operating within the guidelines. If this is not the case your Meeting should review its practice.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE in QUAKER MEETINGS

Guidelines for Parents

There are people of all ages in Meetings, including many children and young people. The following information is designed to help those meetings run as constructively, enjoyably and safely as possible for all who are involved, children, parents/carers and volunteers.

Children normally meet in a designated separate area to hold their own Meeting, with activities and supervision organised by the volunteers that are appropriate to a wide range of children from babies to early teens. There are always two volunteers running children's meetings. Please inform the Clerk or Children's convenor if your child has any special learning needs or health issues such as allergies. Where the child is pre-school it may be necessary for parents to share the care. When the children join the adult meeting, parents/carers are again responsible for the children.

The children normally share in the Meeting with the adults from an agreed time, either at the start or the end of the adults' Meeting, for about 10 to 15 minutes. Please don't worry if they are restless in that time. Meeting for Worship will normally have a period for notices and reports. If your child wishes to leave before these that is fine, but please remember they are no longer the responsibility of the volunteers. Normally, our Meeting Houses are safe to wander in but there may be a gallery or staircase where falling is a risk, or there may be a garden with routes onto the road. Young children may prefer to be accompanied to the toilet by a family member and should be supervised if they are in a kitchen, as these can be hazardous places. Although we try to keep our gardens well-maintained and litter-free, sometimes rubbish – including bottles and cans of alcohol, condoms and even syringes - are tossed into gardens and haven't been noticed. (Please let someone know if you discover such objects in the grounds.) It is very important that you know where your children are. Under exceptional circumstances parents may not be in the Meeting for Worship next door, but if they are not in the Meeting House they must be contactable in an emergency. There is no one especially assigned to supervise the children and there may be equipment, for example gardening tools, which may be dangerous.

Unless your child is unhappy about being left in other people's care we expect that you will be able to experience the Meeting for Worship without having to worry about them. We hope that at some point you will be able to join the rota of volunteers. We do all that we can to ensure that those working with the children are responsible and trustworthy by requiring that all volunteers are cleared by the Disclosure & Barring Service. If you have any questions regarding any concerns about the classes please ask the Clerk.

CONTACTS LOCAL, AREA & NATIONAL

NOTE: Quaker contacts, for our Local Meetings and Area Meeting, and nationally, have been extracted to a separate appendix for easier updating.

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)

0845 120 4550 (24 hr), email: info@ccpas.co.uk website: www.ccpas.co.uk

Advice and support; safe practice guidelines

Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (CAS)

020 7467 4550, email: cas@methodistchurch.org.uk website: www.churchsafe.org.uk

Online applications for the Disclosure & Barring Service

Hertfordshire Children's Services

0300 123 4043 (24 hr) if suspected child abuse

Hertfordshire Adult Care Services

0300 123 4042 (24 hr) if suspected vulnerable adult abuse

0300 061 6161 (if in a care home)

Hertfordshire Head of Child Protection

01992 556937 for discussion

NSPCC

0808 800 5000 (will have discussion anonymously)

Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit

101

Calling 101 should automatically route you to the police in your area. However there has been concern expressed at the ability of some police forces to adequately respond to 101 calls. If you are calling Hertfordshire police from another area, or you have difficulty with 101, try:

01707 354000

PROFORMAS
(held by the Designated Friend)

Essential documents for copying by parents

- Safeguarding Policy
- Children & Young People in Quaker Meetings

Useful documents for copying for specific purposes
(taken from CCPAS's *Safe & Secure*)

- Child Protection audit
- Record – Action Sheet
- Accident & Incident form
- Transporting children – parents' consent form
- Risk Assessment
- Parental consent for activities / outings
- Parental consent for swimming

SAFEGUARDING REQUIREMENTS

Information on Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check with the Disclosure & Barring Service

Everyone who takes responsibility for children and young people in our Meetings must have an enhanced CRB check through the Disclosure & Barring Service. Even if your Meeting has no regular children's class, there should be two Friends checked and registered in case visiting Friends turn up with children.

The process of CRB checking is very straightforward and there is no cost involved. The Local Meeting Designated Friend (LMDF) holds copies of the application form or will help you apply electronically. You will need to fill in a form (paper or online) and choose from the DBS list which documents are going to be used to prove your identity. The advantage of using the electronic system (through the Churches Agency for Safeguarding) is that your check then becomes portable between jobs in different organisations.

The completed DBS form and ID documents need to be validated by the LM Verifier. This is usually the LM clerk or assistant Clerk but can be someone appointed by the LM who knows everyone in the Meeting. The form is then sent off to the Churches Agency for Safeguarding (who handle bulk applications on behalf of all churches) and the 'Enhanced Disclosure' will be posted back to you.