Meeting House Matters

Notes from events in 2025

Contents   Page

There is an archive of the notes from past meetings on the BYM employers' pages of the website, www.quaker.org.uk/employers.

About these notes

The notes in this document were taken during a Meeting House Matters discussion. They are taken by those present and shared to try to help us all get a flavour of the conversations that took place. There is a small amount of editing to get them into this form for the follow-up notes. They may not be entirely accurate but serve as close a record of what was shared during the time together.

There may be times when the views expressed are of individual's and not quite the same as the view of Quakers in Britain. Please get in touch with us if there is anything that has been shared that you think should be edited or removed.

In person events in 2025: https://forms.quaker.org.uk/mhm-25/

- ~~Winchester LM on Thursday, 1 May~~
- ~~Cardiff LM on Thursday, 12 June~~
- Darlington LM on Tuesday, 21 October

Online events in 2025 (no booking required for online and blended online sessions)

- ~~Wednesday, 12 February~~
- Wednesday, 20 August
- Tuesday, 16 December

Join Zoom Meeting
https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=aYxukeWCrw0Z80E9OuxIuJuZvXr8do.1

Contact details

Ollie Waterhouse

oliverw@quaker.org.uk | www.quaker.org.uk/employers | 020 7663 1007

---

12 June 2025 (Cardiff) – Quaker structures / policies and lone working

This time there was a full day event at Cardiff LM and alongside a blended session for people to join online. The three key sessions that we held during the day were:

- **Session 1:** Where are we in the Quaker structure? What's our support? (repeated session).
- **Session 2:** Policies for meetings, lettings / hire, public liability insurance.
- **Session 3:** Exploring lone working – What is a lone worker? What support do lone workers need? (blended)

Notes

Where are we in the structure, what's our support?

See the notes from previous time this session was run.

Meeting policies and what is needed to run a room hire business

Lettings / hire policies

There are a few examples of the way that rates are organised in different places. These are examples based on the conversation and may not exactly look like what any meeting discussed has in place.

Example 1

- Rates set according to other similar providers in the locality.
- 25% discount for charities and community groups.
- No charge for Quaker groups.
- Discount offered to groups hiring for a block of 3 months or more (on discretion of the warden)

Example 2

- Rate set by local meeting, in comparison with similar buildings in locality.
- No discount for charities, justified by AM being a charity and rates already competitive.
- Discretional charge for Quaker groups. LM can decide and implement with autonomy.

Example 3

- Trustees work with LM to set hire rates, based on similar local providers.
- Regular hirers, 50% discount in comparison with a one-off hire.
- Minute required from LM / AM for free hire given to Quaker Concern. Balance of cost to be made from LM / AM funds.

Example 4

- Rates set in comparison with similar premises locally and approved by trustees.
- Peak / off-peak system in place so there are options available for groups to hire the space based on their budget.
- There is a small permanent committee space for Quaker groups to use by booking. It can be booked out to hirers at the warden's discretion.

Example 5

- All hire managed centrally by trustees / management and rates set at this level, based on similar providers locally.
- Discount offered for long-term hirers, who pay on a frequent basis.
- Quaker groups are free but cost of Quaker Concern to be covered by LM / AM.
- Commercial discount offered for under-used slots.

There was a conversation about needing to think carefully about who is using the building together. Examples of this are.

- Not putting a meditation group in at the same time as a brass band rehearsal.
- Care over when organisations such as Circles use the building. Are there other people who may be at risk based upon other users? How are public spaces in the building managed? Could there be risk?

Terms and conditions (whose responsibility?)

There was also a brief chat about where the responsibility sits for drafting the terms and conditions of hire. Ultimate accountability for them sits with trustees but they may not be the best places to draft the document even though they will most likely be needed to sign them off. Terms of hire should be the same across the whole charity. However, wardens or workers may know the day-to-day work and need better than trustees and may be given the task of initially creating a draft.

Among other things terms of hire should include the following:

- The hire is on the basis that groups align with Quaker values.
- Safeguarding of participants within a hirer group is the hirers responsibility.
- Hirers are responsible for assessing the risks to their users.
- An expectation that hirers will have their own public liability insurance in place.
- First-time hirers will need to be checked, and a new booking won't be confirmed until checks have been carried out.
- A link to hire charges.
- Hirers need to comply with fire regulations, legal and those displayed in the premises.

In terms of policies such as risk assessment, safeguarding or insurance. It is enough that we require those to be in place. It is not good practice to ask for a copy of those or to check them as that may make you, as the building owner, complicit in the hirers practice.

Other

Fire behaviour: we will come back to fire behaviour at another session. This needs some research.

Entry systems: we have discussed these in the past and they came up again. This is something that we could come back to again in future.

Requests

Charity hirers: Do you have a list of your hirers with national contacts details? Please gather and share what you have with Ollie, oliverw@quaker.org.uk. We would like to compile a list of possible hirers that can be shared as potential customers for Quaker premises.

Compiling the topics: Is there anyone who would like a task of going through past notes from Meeting House Matters and Wardens' Talking? There are notes from 2020 right up to now which cover a huge range of topics. Would anyone be willing to go through the notes and collate and edit them into a usable document? If you would like to offer to help please contact Ollie, oliverw@quaker.org.uk.

Lone working

The blended session in the afternoon was on Lone Working. This was a time where we learned about what lone working is and how we can be supportive of employees or volunteers who regularly work alone. The presentation has been sent with the slides as a PDF, which you can ask for by email, oliverw@quaker.org.uk.

Health & Safety Executive (HSE) definition of lone working

"Work performed by individuals who operate by themselves without close or direct supervision. This doesn't necessarily imply that the worker is physically alone; rather, it indicates that they are in a separate location from the rest of their team or manager. For instance, a retail worker putting stock away by themselves is considered a lone worker, just as a meter reader entering someone's home qualifies as a lone worker.

If an employee cannot be seen or heard by a colleague, they are deemed a lone worker, whether that applies for all or part of their working day. This also encompasses staff who work from home."

Watch this film on Youtube about lone working and the HSE, https://youtu.be/P2MxIL0jopM.

Legislation

Employers have a Duty of Care to ensure their workers are 'reasonably safe' and put measures in place to satisfy this. This also extends to contractors and self-employed people doing work for your business. Although there is no specific law related to lone working, general health and safety legislation must be complied with:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007
- Health & Safety Offences Act 2008
- Employees have a responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others.

Things to consider

Taken from the slides.

- Talk to lone workers about their needs.
- Can the job be performed safely with one person? Are there any specific risks: Ladders, heavy equipment.
- What about in an emergency?
- Are there any known medical conditions that might impact a loan worker's safety?
- Factors that may increase risk include being a trainee, pregnant, or disabled.
- Working on and off the premises.
- Communication, check in and out with a supervisor, pre-arranged numbers to call, and how to summon help.
- The risk of violence or aggression.
- Security of the building.
- Effects of isolation on people.

After the initial presentation we worked through a series of scenarios that each have some questions to consider the lone working aspects. These are all in the slides and can be used as part of local consideration about lone working.

Lone working links

- Health & Safety Executive, https://www.hse.gov.uk/
- QiB lone working policy template, https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/er-example-lone-worker-policy-04-2025
- Duty of care blog, https://peoplesafe.co.uk/blogs/do-employers-have-a-duty-of-care-to-employees/
- Health & Safety legislation, https://peoplesafe.co.uk/guides/health-safety-legislation-guide/

1 May 2025 (Winchester) – Quaker structures / Hiring a professional manager

This time there was a full day event at Winchester LM and alongside a blended session for people to join online. The three key sessions that we held during the day were:

- **Session 1:** Where are we in the Quaker structure? What's our support?
- **Session 2:** Exploring the questions and queries brought by the participants
- **Session 3:** Appointing a professional manager – learning from experience and things to look out for. (blended)

Notes

Where are we in the structure? What's our support?

The presentation (pdf) sent with these notes is on the basic Quaker structures from the perspective of a Quaker worker. Only small images of each slide are in these notes. If you haven't got a copy of the presentation and would like it, please email oliverw@quaker.org.uk.

What is a Quaker community?

As a faith community the primary purpose is to offer regular public meetings for worship. To enable public worship to take place the following should be considered:

- Nurturing and sustaining the spiritual life of the community and the pastoral care of those associated with it, including welcoming newcomers
- It offers education and support for individual members and attenders, not just MfW.
- Taking responsibility for all its own business and hold regular meetings for church affairs

What does the community need to make that happen?

- Pastoral care and nurture for people of all ages with a special focus on children & young people
- Witness activities: which may be actively engaging on an area of Concern, or upholding an individual acting under Concern
- Holding events and activities to build community and offer fellowship for Friends of all age
- Role-holders and workers who know their roles and are well supported to deliver
- Governance for the charity that is proportionate and meets the needs of the community.

What spiritually underpins this work?

Quaker faith and practice 13.33, https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/13-33/.

> As Friends, we cannot separate our religious calling from our practical work for the kingdom of God. As Friends concerned for wardenship, we make our contributions in the local community to those who come to our meeting house. We appear to offer our facilities, but in fact we offer our love.

> Quaker Home Service conference on wardenship, 1981

Also see within Quaker faith & practice, 13.33 to 13.40 which talks about wardens, their work and how to support them in their role. The section refers to wardens but has relevance to all employees and voluntary role-holders.

What does the Quaker structure look like? (from a worker perspective)

Local Meeting

- The place where worship is held.
- Most commonly where the work takes place.
- Local decisions are made and is often the place where Concerns begin before being taken further in the structure.
- Most commonly, where support and management for workers is held.

Area Meeting

- Also a worshipping community.
- The place where church and charity governance is usually held locally (there are changes to Quaker charity structures in some parts of Britain).
- Quaker membership is held at area meeting level.
- Local representation to national Quaker structures is at area meeting level.
- Are there other workers doing similar work in your AM or charity? Can you connect with them?

Connections with other organisations?

- With others doing similar work in neighbouring area meetings?
- As part of Quaker charity merging possibilities.
- General or Regional Quaker meeting.
- Friends Trusts Limited (FTL). Property sale or purchase, some changes to buildings.
- Grants organisations e.g. Quakers in Britain, National Churches Trust, and other possibilities listed by Ecclesiastical.

Yearly Meeting

- Joining and network or event such as Meeting House Matters.
- Connecting with others doing similar work nationally.
- Quaker Life via Local Development Workers.

Who else might we work with?

Role-holders locally and within our area meeting including:

- Members of premises / wardenship committee (if there is one).
- Finance role-holders, treasurer, bookkeeper.
- Clerks (local or area meeting).
- Trustees or sub-groups of trustees (of area meeting or Quaker charity).

Questions and queries brought by the participants

Here is a list of the points raised at the session. We explored them during the conversations.

- Keeping sight of the spiritual in all the practical issues.
- Discerning overall priorities.
- Speedy action on issues when they arise V Quaker processes when we are all volunteers.
- Doing the "right" thing by our employees – i.e. doing a professional job when we are volunteers.
- Managing letting / hiring properties with problems due to the age of the building.
- Lack of expertise but weight of responsibility.
- Dealing with tenants and increasing regulation.
- Dealing with the large amounts of money matters "properly" yet not bureaucratically.
- We're getting old!
- Cultural thinking – does it need to change or have a reset on?
    - Health & Safety
    - Risk assessments
    - Safeguarding
- Record-keeping for Meeting House.
- More effective use of the building / grounds, involving the local community.
- Promoting Quakers beyond just a historic building.
- Engaging volunteers. Not enough people available to volunteer.
- Volunteers are a resource, but often lack time.

Appointing a professional manager – learning from experience and things to look out for
Some questions

These are the conversation points that were considered during the session. There was time as a whole group together and time in smaller groups to explore our own scenarios.

- How is the role of a professional manager viewed?
- What does "professionally" actually mean. Volunteers can be professional in their work, but employees are more accountable for their work.
- What differences are there if the role holder is a Quaker or a non-Quaker?
- Consider: Managing work and Managing people. Managing people can include other employees, volunteers and potentially those giving Quaker service.
- What are the types of work we can see being done "professionally "that have traditionally been covered by Friends giving service. In this age of compliance and regulation, is there work where it is "better" to pay for someone to do it?
- Do we pay people so that they are able to give service to the Meeting?
- Do we need to revisit our structures to include integration of paid employees?
- How do we support our employees, volunteers and role holders? Do we develop clear policies and procedures to support people?
- How do we manage people, whether employed or otherwise?
- Do we need professional line management and management structures? Do we provide management training? How do we ensure continuity when Trustees change?
- How do we recognise and use employee knowledge and expertise? Do we accept that employees can have a role as advisors to Trustees etc? Do we recognise that our employees can often be advisors to the charity or act as executive officers of the charity?
- Is there consistency in employment practice throughout the charity? Is it understood that all employees are the responsibility of the Trustee body?
- Do we pay attention to potential conflicts of interest if we ask employees to take on roles within the Meeting?

12 February 2025 – Thinking about Meeting House Matters events in 2025

This week's meeting was a chance to look at the programme of Meeting House Matters across 2025. The theme for the events in 2025 is going to be:

What is in the toolbox for supporting the running of Quaker premises and Quaker Workers?

We will explore this theme throughout the year. It will include many if not all the following parts throughout 2025. Once a final plan for the year has been put together it will be shared so you know what will happen at each session.

- Bringing in a professional Manager
- What are the key policies that are needed in place?
- Exploring the relationship between trustees, AM and workers
- Sharing documents online
- You are here → Structure of BYM and how workers fit within it
- All meetings need → Some meetings need → exploration on the support that keeps meetings running
- Employer / employee – what support is available?

Meetings will be at the following times in 2025:

- Thursday, 1 May 2025, Winchester
- Thursday, 12 June 2025, Cardiff
- Wednesday, 20 August, online
- Tuesday, 21 October 2025, Darlington
- Tuesday, 16 December, online

Each in-person meeting will have a blended session during the afternoon for everyone to join. As there has been there will be notes to follow-up from every session held.

Notes from 12 February

Other things that we might include as part of the plan for 2025

- Not having a warden and how can we cope?
    - o Interaction with hirers when we are not present.
- Outsourcing, now having problems with that meeting. What is dropping between the cracks?
- Practical things, a this is how you do it guide on:
    - o Installing public wifi
    - o Setting up access and calendar systems
- How to find new hirers, where might we look?
    - o Example, banking hubs: https://www.cashaccess.co.uk/hubs/
- Line management / task management and how to set up? Professional V volunteer management options.
- A crash course in Quaker structures and Quaker governance.
- Support on employing people – could there be a central HR consultant?
- Fewer Quakers mean there is a blurring of the line between service and staff (conversation).
- Property strategy – checklists.
    - o Disposal of premises, helping with decision-making.
- Use of premises by people other than the Quaker community.
- Spreadsheet that calculates staff holiday and TOIL.
- Using AI, what can we use it for? Is it safe to use?

Signposting to support from BYM

Property

Property pages of the Quaker website, www.quaker.org.uk/property. These pages include:

- Property Guidance Sheets: www.quaker.org.uk/documents/property-guidance-sheets-2019
- Meeting House Handbook Template: www.quaker.org.uk/documents/meeting-house-handbook-template.
- Ideas on grants for property.
- Sustainability and buildings advice.

Contact property support: propertysupport@quaker.org.uk

Employment

Employers and volunteer support is on the website, www.quaker.org.uk/employers. These pages include:

- Employers resources (updated annually): www.quaker.org.uk/documents/er-quaker-employers-resource-2018.
- A suite of template documents and guidance for Quaker meetings looking to engage workers on a paid or voluntary basis.

Contact: supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk

Money

Advice and support for treasurers, www.quaker.org.uk/treasurers. On this page:

- Treasurers Guidance Sheets: www.quaker.org.uk/documents/treasurers-guidance-sheets-nov2019.
- Find further advice and support for treasurers on managing Quaker finances and contributions.

Quaker charities (usually AMs)

Support for trustees on the running of Quaker charities, www.quaker.org.uk/trustees.

- Trustee handbook (2024 edition): www.quaker.org.uk/documents/quaker-trustee-handbook
- Many other example and template policies and guidance given in advice for running Quaker charities.

Data safety

Information and support for managing data safety in your LM and AM, www.quaker.org.uk/datasafety.

- Data protection handbook: www.quaker.org.uk/documents/data-protection-handbook-for-meetings-2019
- Other guidance and support for Quaker good practice in data handling and management.

Safeguarding

Advice and support for Quakers on safeguarding, www.quaker.org.uk/safeguarding.

- Model safeguarding policy for AMs: www.quaker.org.uk/documents/model-safeguarding-policy-for-area-meetings.
- Other pages to support good practice, DBS and PVG checking.

Contact: safe@quaker.org.uk.