

EALING PREPARATIVE MEETING CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. EALING MEETING HAS ADOPTED A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT WHICH FORMS THE BASIS OF OUR WORK WITH CHILDREN:

Children and young people are an important part of our Meeting. As members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Ealing we are committed to providing an environment in our meetings and gatherings for children and young people where they are safe and free from harm and can be nurtured physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

We recognise that this is the responsibility of all members of our meeting, and that we each have a responsibility to protect children from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and to report it if it is discovered or suspected.

We are committed to giving support and adequate resources to those who work with children on our behalf, and providing them with oversight. We are committed to adopting the procedures published by Quaker Life in Meeting Safety and in Criminal Records Bureau: procedures for use.

This statement applies to all events organised by Ealing Meeting and any other Quaker events held in, or based on our Meeting House: we encourage other users of our premises to work towards the same standards. We expect that any other Quaker event in which our children or young people participate will have a similar policy.

2. WITHIN OUR MEETING WE TRY TO MINIMISE SITUATIONS WHERE THE ABUSE OF CHILDREN MIGHT OCCUR.

We publish a code of good practice for volunteers working with children: this includes what should happen if the emotional, physical or sexual abuse of a child is suspected or alleged. All our volunteers have received a copy of the code and have agreed to abide by it.

3. OUR SYSTEM OF OVERSIGHT INCLUDES OUR CHILDREN. IT AIMS TO PROVIDE AN APPROPRIATE PERSON FOR THEM TO TALK TO AND RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM.

We try to ensure that all children and young people are aware who the members of the Children's Committee are, and who the Named Person is, and that they should be able to approach them, or anyone else they feel comfortable with, as necessary.

4. WE EXPECT OUR AGREED PROCEDURES TO APPLY TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE CARE OF CHILDREN – EVEN ON AN OCCASIONAL BASIS: WE ACCEPT THAT THIS IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND ADULTS ALIKE.

5. WE DEFINE THE EXTENT AND LIMITS OF VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH WRITTEN JOB DESCRIPTIONS.

We try to ensure that both those bringing children and those caring for them at Meeting understand these - particularly the point where responsibility passes from one to the other. To this end we publish information for parents and guardians ('When you bring your child to meeting at Ealing Quaker Meeting') and for volunteer helpers ('Information for volunteer helpers').

6. WE HAVE A SYSTEM FOR THE REGULAR MONITORING, OVERSIGHT AND REVIEW OF WORK WITH CHILDREN: BOTH ELDERS AND OVERSEERS ARE REPRESENTED ON THE CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE AND EACH YEAR THE COMMITTEE REPORTS ON ITS WORK TO PREPARATIVE MEETING.

7. WE REQUIRE ALL VOLUNTEER HELPERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE TO COMPLETE A VOLUNTEER HELPER'S FORM AND GO THROUGH AN AGREED VETTING PROCEDURE. ELDERS AND OVERSEERS AND NAMED PERSONS ARE ALSO REQUIRED TO GO THROUGH AN AGREED VETTING PROCEDURE.

This includes those of us who already work with children as teachers, social or community workers, child minders or carers. The process should in no way deter anyone from expressing an interest in volunteering, neither is it designed to ensure that only "experts" become involved.

8. WE TAKE UP TWO REFERENCES FROM EVERYONE WHO FILLS IN A VOLUNTEER FORM.

Two or three Friends – the Children's Convenor and an Elder and/or Overseer – will normally be responsible for this: they will also share experiences and expectations of working with children and discuss the choice of referee. They will answer any questions or uncertainties about our policy or processes. We are conscious of the need for confidentiality; all forms and references are kept together in secure conditions.

9. THE VOLUNTEER FORM ASKS ABOUT CONVICTIONS FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES OR OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN: AS PART OF THE PROCESS WE ALSO ASK ABOUT OTHER CONVICTIONS WHICH MAY BE RELEVANT. WE NEVER MAKE ENQUIRIES OF STATUTORY AUTHORITIES WITHOUT RECEIVING THE SPECIFIC APPROVAL AND PERMISSION OF THE VOLUNTEER.

10. ALL VOLUNTEERS ARE REQUIRED TO UNDERTAKE A PROBATIONARY PERIOD DURING WHICH THEY WILL BE OFFERED SUPPORT AND ADVICE FROM MORE EXPERIENCED VOLUNTEERS IN THE MEETING.

11. WE HAVE AN AGREED SET OF PROCEDURES WHICH ALL VOLUNTEERS, ELDERS, OVERSEERS AND OTHERS MUST FOLLOW IN SITUATIONS WHERE ABUSE IS SUSPECTED OR ALLEGED. WE RECOGNISE THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF ALL ADULTS IN THE MEETING TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO PROTECT CHILDREN.

It is our policy to always refer the situation to one of the named members of our Meeting who is professionally trained to respond to any such allegations or suspicions and liaise with the necessary authorities: in this we follow national Quaker policy, the procedures set down in legislation and the good practice employed by a range of child care agencies, including schools.

12. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT MUST BE A PART OF OUR POLICY TO EMPOWER THOSE IN OUR MEETING WHO DO NOT FEEL SAFEGUARDED FROM HARM OR WHO HAVE UNRESOLVED ISSUES ABOUT ABUSE IN THE PAST TO SPEAK THEIR TRUTH AND BEGIN THE PROCESS OF HEALING.

We recognise that this may not be possible within the confines of the Meeting: we publish and maintain a list of other available resources; these include telephone helplines for children and young people and adult survivors of child abuse. Elders and Overseers are aware of the importance of these issues in Friends' lives.

We recognise that this policy, which has been approved by a special Meeting of Ealing Friends, may be seen as being potentially unfair to adults - especially in respect of volunteer vetting and the procedures to be followed in cases of suspected abuse. We are convinced that this is a necessary price to pay in order to put children first and save both children - and the adults who work with them - from harm.