

A Governance Structure and processes for London Area Meeting

(Version 3.3 - 29/04/25)

This paper sets out the proposed structures and key processes for London Area Meeting. It builds on the proposals in paper D of the Invitation to Commit (2023) and is recommended by the London Development Group as a coherent system which is consistent with *Quaker Faith & Practice*, especially Qf&p chapters 4 and 15 (<https://qfp.quaker.org.uk>). It is offered to the Joint Meeting of the 7 Area Meetings for consideration and decision.

Some aspects of the structures and processes (such as the minimum number of Trustees) will be built into the Governing Document of the charity, so we need to be committed to those for the medium term, as they will be relatively hard to change. Others (such as whether to have an outreach committee) will be included in the set of terms of reference we will need, so they can be changed fairly easily. And some (such as the frequency of various meetings) can be experimented with in the short term, to see what works best.

It is assumed that all committees and groups can choose whether to meet in person, online or blended. LAM in session will normally meet blended.

'The source of all authority in Quaker communities is the guidance and direction of the Spirit' [Book of Discipline Revision Committee]

London Area Meeting in session [see Qf&p 4.02 – 4.11]

London Area Meeting (LAM) in session holds ultimate authority for matters affecting the worship, witness and work of the 35 Local Meetings (LMs) in London. It normally meets, blended, six times each year for all-age worship, for fellowship and learning, and for business. As with all meetings for church affairs, LAM business meetings are rooted in worship and silent listening.

The LAM Clerk and two Assistant Clerks (or a Clerking team of three), and the Membership Clerk are nominated by the Nominations Committee and appointed by LAM in session. The AM Clerks are responsible for the business of LAM in session. A small Arrangements Committee (also nominated by Nominations Committee and appointed by LAM) supports the Clerks, including with the practicalities of the meetings and making arrangements for the non-business elements of the meetings (eg inviting speakers). LAM Elders are responsible for the right holding of LAM sessions.

Committees of Area Meeting

Nominations Committee [see Qf&p 3.22 – 3.24]

AM Nominations Committee seeks the guidance of the spirit to bring to AM the names of Friends to serve on groups or in roles for a specified length of time (normally a maximum of two three-year terms).

The Nominations Committee comprises twelve Friends with knowledge of Friends across London and is diverse in age and experience. Names to serve on AM Nominations Committee are brought to LAM by a temporary nominating group appointed from the body of the AM in session. The Nominations Committee uses advertising, offers of service, suggestions from other Friends, and advice from LMs to inform its discernment. It seeks to

bring forward names of Friends who are diverse in geography, age and experience. It ensures that training and support is available, helping to broaden the pool of those able to serve.

Trustees and all other committees are nominated by LAM Nominations Committee and appointed by LAM in session, as detailed in the sections below. LAM and committees may also appoint short term “task and finish groups” as needed, asking the Nominations Committee to bring them the names of suitable Friends to serve.

A schedule of other regular nominations will be drawn up, including: Treasurer; Safeguarding Coordinators; Registering Officers; Membership Clerk; LAM's representatives on Continuing Yearly Meeting; members of Quaker Life Representative Council; representatives to Junior Yearly Meeting.

Eldership and Pastoral Care Committee

This committee is nominated by the AM Nominations Committee from within the body of appointed Elders and Pastoral Friends and is responsible for Eldership and Pastoral Care during LAM in session, for support to other Elders and Pastoral Friends in LMs (including ensuring that support is provided from outside a LM in times of difficulty) and for convening gatherings of all Elders and Pastoral Friends from across LAM at least once a year. The committee reports to LAM at least once a year. It can send specific minutes to LAM and to Trustees.

Children, Young People and Families Committee *[Qf&p 4.05]*

This committee is made up of members and attenders with LM-level, regional and YM-level experience. It liaises closely with the BYM Youth Worker for London and the London Link Group to encourage and support activities for children, young people and families across London, and to build links with BYM and European initiatives. The committee reports to LAM at least once a year. It can send specific minutes to LAM and to Trustees.

Outreach Committee *[Qf&p 4.05]*

This committee draws on members and attenders with enthusiasm and experience of outreach. It links closely with outreach projects initiated by LMs or groups of LMs, growing such projects where appropriate and enabling Friends across London to learn from success. It can initiate new outreach activities. The committee reports to LAM at least once a year. It can send specific minutes to LAM and to Trustees.

LAM Trustees *[Qf&p chapter 15]*

Between [eight and twelve] Trustees plus a Clerk to Trustees and a Treasurer are nominated by the Nominations Committee and appointed by LAM in session. Trustees nominate and appoint their own Assistant Clerk. The trustee body should be as diverse as possible, including an intention that at least one Trustee should be under the age of 35.

Trustees normally meet six times each year. Their minutes are included in the papers for LAM in session and are available on the LAM website. Trustees report to LAM at each meeting in writing or in person. Each Trustee takes responsibility for communication with [about three] LMs, including their own, worshipping with Friends locally occasionally.

It is laid on Trustees to ensure that the charity is well run, solvent, and meets all legal requirements, including health and safety and safeguarding. Trustees must ensure that arrangements are made for the appointment, appraisal and performance management of

paid staff; oversight of operational work including financial management, property management, maintenance of buildings; statutory reporting; ensuring that LAM receives the information needed to carry out its discernment; and that practical arrangements are made to enable the church to follow its spiritual calling as discerned in gathered meetings for worship for church affairs of LAM or within individual LMs. Trustees work very closely with AM-in-session on the development of strategy for the Area Meeting.

The Clerk of Trustees line-manages the senior staff member of LAM, who in turn manages paid staff working centrally for the AM and in individual meeting houses.

Trustees execute some of their responsibilities by receiving minutes and reports from the committees that are answerable to them.

Trustees appoint a small Nominating Group from within their own number to bring forward names of Trustees to serve on the committees answerable to Trustees, the Assistant Clerk of Trustees, and any other Trustee roles (such as Safeguarding Lead – see below).

Committees answerable to Trustees

For committees directly answerable to the Trustees, two members are nominated by Trustees' Nominating Group and appointed from within the Trustee body, and the remaining members are nominated by LAM Nominations Committee and appointed by LAM in session. The Clerk of Trustees is an *ex officio* member of all committees answerable to Trustees (but is not included in the numbers of committee members shown below).

These committees normally meet quarterly and report to Trustees as needed, as well as reporting to LAM at least once each year. Schemes of delegation between Trustees, each of these committees and LAM set out the detail of delegation of responsibilities by LAM and by Trustees.

Finance Committee

This committee has a total of 6 to 10 members and meets as needed. It has responsibility for budgeting, accounting and financial strategy, and its work is supported by staff. It convenes a meeting of LM treasurers at least once each year.

Property Committee

This committee has a total of 6 to 10 members and meets as needed. It carries all the property responsibilities previously held by LQPT, and its work is supported by staff. It convenes a meeting of clerks of LM premises committees at least once each year.

Employment Committee

This committee has a total of 4 to 6 members and meets as needed. It sets the terms and conditions of staff, makes appointments and recommends staffing levels and structures to Trustees, in consultation with Finance Committee.

Other AM-level responsibilities and appointments

Safeguarding - A lead Trustee for safeguarding ensures that the safeguarding policy and procedures of LAM are regularly reviewed, updated, communicated and adhered to. This Trustee works with the appointed AM Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator to offer advice and support to LMs as needed. [Given the size of the AM, it

may be agreed to appoint an additional Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator.] They convene a meeting of LM contacts at least once every year, which normally includes some training provision. LM contacts continue to draw on the advice and support of Thirtyone:eight (including their 24/7 helpline) and the BYM Safeguarding Officer.

Elders and Pastoral Care Friends [*Qf&p 12.05 – 12.19*] - Elders and Pastoral Friends are nominated by LMs according to the needs of each LM and appointed by LAM in session. Where there is a District, names will be considered by that body and then brought to LAM for confirmation of the appointments.

The Eldership and Pastoral Care Committee (see above) convenes meetings of Elders and Pastoral Friends and arranges for AM-wide training opportunities. More locally, Elders and Pastoral Friends may find it helpful to provide mutual support within a cluster of LMs or a District.

Other Appointments – In addition to roles listed elsewhere, LAM appoints one or more members of Quaker Life Representative Council, three Registering Officers, and members of LM Premises Committees. LAM forwards the names of Friends to serve as Quaker Prison Chaplains [*Qf&p 13.45 - 52*] to the Ministry of Justice,* on nomination from Friends near the relevant prison, which may be more than one LM acting together. Those LMs then provide support to the Quaker Prison Chaplain.

[* - technically it's the Secretary of State (Justice) who makes the appointment]

Membership [*Qf&p chapter 11*] – all membership decisions are taken by LAM in session. Applicants for membership are visited by one member of their local meeting and another suitable visitor from another LM, by arrangement with neighbouring LMs, or through a District, or perhaps drawing on a pool of potential visitors held by the LAM Membership Clerk. Visit reports are read out and considered at their LM, and/or the District where applicable. Their recommendations are forwarded by minute to LAM in session for final discernment. At LAM the visit reports are read out again, unless LAM decides on another way for it to be sufficiently well informed to take such decisions. Alternative ways of becoming a member can be used, as set out in *Qf&p 11.11*.

Similar processes apply to the endings and transfers of memberships. Deaths must also be recorded by LAM in session. LMs may wish to agree minutes of record of the lives of deceased Friends and may send those which may be suitable as a basis for a Testimony to LAM for discernment – it is the LAM in session which makes this decision and also discerns whether to send a Testimony to Yearly Meeting.

The Membership Clerk works with staff to arrange transfers of membership, maintain accurate records (including the register of members), ensure all record-keeping is compliant with GDPR, and submit the annual Tabular Statement to the Yearly Meeting. In practice, member and attender lists are compiled and kept up to date by the LMs and copied to LAM. Each year local meetings give the numbers to the LAM staff who compile London's input to the annual Tabular Statement.

Weddings and funerals [*Qf&p chapters 16 and 17*] – The couple applies to their local meeting Clerk/Elders and Pastoral Friends who forward the request to the London Registering Officer team. The Registering Officer arranges a meeting for clearness, consulting with local Elders and Pastoral Friends as needed, and makes the practical

arrangements, advised by the couple and in liaison with local Friends. LAM appoints the Meeting for Worship for marriage. The legal formalities (including reading out the request in meeting) are guided by the Registering Officer.

Where Friends worship premises-free, or in a meeting house with limited space, the wedding may be held in another meeting house anywhere in the AM, or indeed at a non-Quaker venue, under the care of their own meeting.

Funerals are handled at local level, including burials, interments, scattering of ashes and memorial meetings. The LM can arrange for local Elders, Pastoral Friends or a locally-appointed Funeral Advisor to make the arrangements, with the family. Friends should be mindful of other Friends who may have known the deceased and of the deceased's service beyond their LM. Deaths of members are notified to LAM. LAM's Funeral Advisor(s) advises as needed on conduct of funerals. Friends can arrange to use another meeting house in the AM if more appropriate, with the arrangements made by the LM of the deceased.

Local Meetings [Qf&p 4.31 - 38] - Local Meetings are structurally unchanged but on average their members have fewer AM-level roles, freeing up energy for other activities. Groups of LMs choose to do things together if they wish, whether in the same groupings as previous AMs or in new informal groupings/clusters. These can include thematic clusters (focussing, for instance, on a shared involvement in outreach or a particular form of witness). Groups of LMs can choose to become a District, taking on some responsibilities formally delegated to them by LAM – see details in separate paper - <https://londonquakers.org.uk/districts-proposal/>

LAM and its Trustees support the outreach, community work and witness initiated and carried out by LMs and groups of LMs, making provision for them in budgets. The AM staff team provides support to LMs, clusters of LMs and Districts, particularly around property, finance, websites and communication. Where LMs choose to retain and manage their local bank accounts, their Treasurers operate a system which is standardised across the AM, with training provided. Consolidation is done at AM level. Many LMs choose not to have a separate account, and therefore do not need a Treasurer, though someone is needed for a few minor tasks (such as paying in any cash and cheques) and to do fundraising. Premises Treasurers are no longer needed.

Numbers of roles

It is worth noting that the proposals in this paper substantially reduce the total number of AM-level roles which Friends in London need to fill. It has been calculated that the change from having seven AMs plus LQPT and London Quakers to having the structure described above reduces the roles required from almost 200 to about 80 (not counting members of local Premises Committees and Elders and Pastoral Care Friends, which are appointed by AM, but operate mainly at LM level). That means that each LM has to find, on average, 3 or 4 fewer Friends to help to run the Area Meeting, in addition to the reduced need for local treasurer roles described above. These changes free up time and energy for local activities.

