

Safer Recruitment in Manchester and Warrington Area Quaker Meeting Frequently Asked Questions

“Safer recruitment is an essential part of keeping people safe in our meetings”

Mark Mitchell, Safeguarding Officer, Quakers in Britain

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What is Safer Recruitment?

A process used prior to appointing to some roles within the Area Meeting, designed to reduce the risk of appointing anyone who may cause harm to children and young people or adults at risk.

Why do we need Safer Recruitment?

According to the Safeguarding Policy adopted by our Area Meeting in December 2022, *“The AM will follow established good practice in safer recruitment for volunteers and staff.....This aspect of prevention is used by all organisations with reliable safeguarding arrangements, to reduce risks of abuse.....”*

Everyone in the following roles will be appointed, trained, supported and monitored in accordance with government guidance on safer recruitment; DBS checks will be carried out for eligible roles:

- *those who work with children and young people [aged under 18], or adults at risk, whether volunteers or employees*
- *trustees*
- *safeguarding coordinators*
- *advocates for children and young people’s work*
- *members of pastoral care teams”*

In our Area Meeting, this list also includes Members of Receiving Group (for (ex)/offenders)

See also ***MWAM Safer Recruitment Policy, Section 2.7** below

What are the steps involved in Safer Recruitment?

There are 6 steps:

- a) DBS (criminal records) check
- b) 2 references
- c) Sign the Code of Conduct
- d) Safeguarding Induction (part of being welcomed into the role)
- e) Probationary period (3-6 months followed by an informal chat)
- f) Regular Safeguarding training (online and/or in person)

When does the Safer Recruitment process take place?

When you are approached by a member of the Nominations Committee about one of the roles that require Safer Recruitment, it will be explained to you that you will need to complete stages a), b) and c) above, prior to your nomination being brought to Area or Local Meeting. This is to avoid embarrassment in the unlikely event that your DBS check or references make your appointment unsuitable.

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Steps d), e) and f) take place after appointment.

What is a DBS check?

DBS stands for “Disclosure and Barring Service”

It is a criminal records check, arranged via the DDC (Due Diligence Checking) service.

How do I get a DBS check?

Every Local Meeting has at least one DBS Verifier who will take you through the process. You can use a Verifier from a different LM if you prefer, and you should do so if you yourself are the Verifier or you are closely related to your LM Verifier.

You will need to provide the Verifier with evidence of your identity.

You will receive a DBS certificate which details any criminal convictions; if there are none, it is described as “unblemished”.

Your Verifier will receive an email to say that your DBS certificate has been sent to you. You will need to show them this document, either in person or online, and they will sign a form (to be stored securely at the Area Meeting Office) confirming that it is unblemished.

What happens if any criminal records are shown on my DBS certificate?

- a) The BYM Safeguarding Officer will be sent a notification, and you will simultaneously be sent an email from DDC, informing you that someone from the recruiting organisation will be in contact.
- b) You will receive a pre-written email from the BYM Safeguarding Officer, explaining that there is ‘content’ on your certificate and requesting you send it to them. The email will also explain that you can withdraw from the process if you wish.
- c) At this stage, you can choose to withdraw from the nomination and ask the BYM Safeguarding Officer not to take the process any further.
- d) If you wish to continue the process, the BYM Safeguarding Officer will refer your certificate on to the Quaker Life Approvals Panel; they will consider whether the information on the certificate is relevant to your suitability for the role. Strict confidentiality will be observed.
- e) The AM Safeguarding Lead will only be informed that there is “content” on your certificate if you do not respond to the email from the BYM Safeguarding Officer within 2 weeks, in which case they will send you a reminder email and copy it to the AM Safeguarding Lead.
- f) If you still wish to be nominated, you can choose to get in touch with the Area Meeting Safeguarding Lead, who will liaise with the Britain Yearly Meeting Safeguarding Officer.

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What is the Update Service?

Once you have received your DBS certificate, your Verifier will advise you on how to register with the DBS Update Service (a different service from DDC, with a different website) This saves you having to go through the whole process of applying for a new DBS certificate next time you need a check.

Any new criminal conviction occurring after your DBS certificate was issued will be recorded on the Update Service.

You must register within 19 days of receiving your DBS Certificate.

You will need to sign a form giving permission to Quakers to check your DBS status via the Update Service.

What is a DBS Status check?

If you are registered with the DBS Update Service, whenever you need a further DBS check your Verifier can check for any new convictions simply by accessing the Update Service website, entering your date of birth and DBS certificate number.

This is called a DBS Status check.

What are the levels of DBS check?

Basic

Enhanced

Enhanced with Adult barring list check

Enhanced with Child barring list check

What type of check is required for which roles?

All the roles listed require an Enhanced check. Technically, the barring lists are only checked if the role includes a Regulated Activity, but in practice, because it is not possible to predict exactly what activities will be required as part of the role, Verifiers are asked to tick the boxes asking for checks of both barring lists in most cases.

What is a Regulated Activity?

“Running a residential course for teenagers or running a children’s meeting could be considered regulated activity if at any point individuals have the responsibility for supervising children under 18, and they do so on more than 3 days in a 30-day period.

Pastoral Care team members could be in regulated activity for carrying out an adult’s shopping to assist with the running of their household, or for transporting adults to or from anywhere they will receive health care, personal care, or social work.”

Jordan Hayden | Regional Outreach Adviser (North West), Disclosure and Barring Service

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How long from one DBS check/DBS Status check to the next?

Maximum of 3 years in any role that requires it.

A new check is required when taking on a new role, even if it is within 3 years of your previous check, to ensure that no new criminal activity has been recorded. If you have registered with the Update Service, this will be a simple DBS Status check, which can be done either by a Verifier or by your Recruiter.

If there was “content” on a previous DBS certificate or DBS Status check, this may need to be considered again by the Quaker Life Approvals Panel, since their recommendations might be different for a different role.

Who should be shown the DBS certificate?

“DBS certificates should be shown to whoever is responsible for making the suitability decision about an individual to undertake a role, so the certificate information can be used to form part of the decision making.”

Jordan Hayden | Regional Outreach Adviser (North West), Disclosure and Barring Service

In our AM the Verifier sees the DBS certificate and signs a form confirming that there is no information (about any criminal activity) on it.

If I use a Verifier from a different Local Meeting from my own, which Local Meeting will show on my DBS Certificate?

The Local Meeting shown will be the Verifier’s Local meeting, but that’s OK because all our Local Meetings come under the umbrella of Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting:

“The name that appears on the applicant’s certificate will be the account that the record was attributed to. The parent/umbrella group that the account sits under does not appear on the certificate as it is used for grouping the accounts together and linking access.

For example, the account ‘Central Manchester Quaker Meeting’ sits under the ‘Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting (Quakers) (216)’ parent/umbrella group. The applicant’s certificate will show Central Manchester Quaker Meeting”

Laura Wyllie Countersignatory **Due Diligence Checking Limited / DDC Ltd**

Under what circumstances can a recruiter ask a potential nominee to have a DBS check?

When the recruiter has already spoken to the potential nominee about the role and they both want to go ahead with the nomination.

“You must submit a DBS check only at the appropriate time when an individual is due to start the role you are checking for, otherwise this is an ineligible application and can be withdrawn by the police.”

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Jordan Hayden | Regional Outreach Adviser (North West), Disclosure and Barring Service

This is similar to what happens with paid work, where you wouldn't be asked to do a DBS check until you had been offered and accepted the relevant job.

Do Treasurers, Verifiers, Elders and others in key roles need a DBS check?

The short answer is no. A DBS check should only be carried out when it is strictly necessary, and on the advice of Britain Yearly Meeting.

However, in some of the smaller Local Meetings the Elders are an integral part of the LM Pastoral Care Team, in which case it is advisable that they should have a DBS check.

Who will see my references?

Your referees will be asked to send the completed reference form to the Friend who is carrying out your Safer Recruitment. The information on the form may be shared in confidence with the committee responsible for nominating or appointing you.

"Friends are not able to see their [own] references as they were provided on the basis of strict confidentiality, as noted in the reference [request] letter contained in the Safeguarding Toolkit:

"Any information you are able to give will be kept in strictest confidence and used only in consideration of the suitability of the applicant for this position."

There is also a helpful passage under 'Storing and retaining records':

"Helper and role-holder personal details forms or application forms, references, DBS and any other relevant records will be retained confidentially by, or on behalf of, the AM Safeguarding Coordinator."

Mark Mitchell Safeguarding Officer Quakers in Britain

What happens if a referee suggests that I may be unsuitable for a role?

Depending on the nature of the issue, the Friend carrying out your Safer Recruitment will discuss it in confidence, either with the Area Meeting Safeguarding Coordinator or with the committee responsible for nominating or appointing you. If the issue relates to Safeguarding, it may be discussed in confidence with the BYM Safeguarding Officer and/or with a Thirtyone:eight advisor. You will be informed of any decisions made.

What is Thirtyone:eight?

An independent organisation that provides Safeguarding advice and training to church organisations. Manchester and Warrington Area meeting is a member, so everyone in our Area Meeting can access its services.

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Why do we need all the forms?

As part of Safer Recruitment, Friends are asked to complete a Personal Details form (giving details of addresses in the recent past, experience relevant to the role and naming 2 referees) and a Self-declaration form (giving details of any unspent convictions or causes for concern regarding their behaviour with children and young people or with adults) These forms are strictly confidential and only seen by the Friends responsible for Safer Recruitment for that role.

"I know these forms seem onerous to some, but it is standard safeguarding practice to require this information. ... this is not an area which I think we could reasonably dilute."

Mark Mitchell Safeguarding Officer Quakers in Britain

What happens to the forms when Safer Recruitment has been completed?

They are sent to Area Meeting Office for electronic safe, confidential storage (paper copies are scanned and then shredded). Everyone else who has seen them during Safer Recruitment is asked to delete them from their computers.

How long are the forms kept for?

The Meeting will keep records indefinitely (for at least 100 years) because the limitation period for proceedings brought by or on behalf of children does not normally start to run until they reach the age of 18.

This retention period is based on the lifetime of a person. It was recently changed to 100 years by the National Archives as people are living longer.

***MWAM Safer Recruitment Policy, Section 2.7**

Our commitment

Abuse is unacceptable. Everyone, including children and vulnerable adults, have a right to participate in Quaker communities without suffering harm. We are committed to keeping everyone safe.

Quakers recognise there is that of God in everyone. All children, young people and adults deserve respect, value and appropriate care. Our care extends to those who are potentially vulnerable to abuse, and to those who may be perpetrators.

We recognise that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and other forms of abuse.

We are aware that Quakers may be open to the risk of abusive behaviour because we foster a culture of welcome and trust for everyone. Very often an abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult. Abuse can be hidden and manipulative.

We have therefore adopted the policy and procedures in this document in accordance with statutory guidance. They are based on the ten Safe and Secure safeguarding standards published by Thirtyone:eight, adapted to the Quaker context.

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This Area Meeting is committed to:

- *Promoting a safer environment and culture*
- *Using good practice procedures and guidelines, following national legislation and regulations, and inter-agency procedures*
- *Safely recruiting, training and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and adults at risk*
- *Supporting our Safeguarding Co-ordinators in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children, young people, and adults at risk*
- *Practising effective risk-management in response to those that may pose a present risk to others*
- *Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation*
- *Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons*
- *Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and others affected.*