



Manchester & Warrington Quakers

Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting (MWAM)

Policy for managing behaviour and/or language which may cause harm

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1. Introduction

Quaker Meetings for Worship bring participants together in corporate worship, hoping to open ourselves to the transforming power of the Spirit. The Quaker way of worship is adventurous and brave. Self-discipline (discipleship) is required for the Spirit to truly move among us. All participants in any meeting held under the auspices of Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting (MWAM), whether in-person or online, hold collective responsibility for the right holding of the meeting. This also applies to posts on MWAM social media or websites.

2. Purpose of this Policy

This Policy does not seek to silence anyone. Its purpose is to ensure that all participants in meetings held under the auspices of MWAM, whether in person or online, are kept safe from harm and treated with respect. The Area Meeting Safeguarding Policy relating to children and adults at risk, dated December 2022, must be followed at all times.

All who wish to worship with, or join one of our meetings, are welcome. Whilst every one of us is a loved 'child of God', none of us is perfect, and unacceptable, inappropriate or harmful behaviour can happen. We assume that everyone joins our groups/meeting with positive intention. However, we recognise there may

be circumstances where an individual's behaviour can have a negative effect on other people's well-being. This policy puts a framework in place for supporting Friends to respond to such situations.

3. Responsibilities of MWAM and its appointed groups

Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting (MWAM) recognises a corporate responsibility to ensure that all participants in Meetings for Worship and all meetings held under its auspices feel safe and are treated with dignity and respect. We are committed to promoting a safe environment and a nurturing worship space where all can feel the power of the Spirit.

It is the responsibility of organising groups within MWAM to enact this policy. An organising group refers to whoever has convened the Meeting or Quaker space in question, for example:

In person Meeting

Online Meeting

Social media/website

Racial Justice Group meeting

4. Inappropriate behaviour/language

4.0. Examples of inappropriate behaviour/language

- Behaviour or language intended to humiliate, frighten, distress or denigrate - or conducive to these effects.
- Behaviour or language which is hostile or shows prejudice towards individuals or groups based on their disability, sex, age, race, religion, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristic.
- Verbal abuse or use of offensive language whether spoken or written.

4.1. Stage 1 Personal responsibility

If a participant in any meeting held under the auspices of MWAM encounters behaviour/language which they feel is inappropriate, the incident may be reported to a member of the organising group.

4.2. Stage 2 Organising Group responsibility

A person designated by the organising group will meet with the participant whose behaviour/language has been reported to discuss the issue. Exploration of the report, explanation about how behaviour and language can inadvertently cause hurt or distress, and reconciliation are the aims of the meeting. Elders may be included where appropriate. The organising group will not disclose the identity of the person who raised the incident to the participant. The matter will be considered resolved if the participant and organising group are content with the outcome of their conversation. The person who raised the concern will be kept informed of the outcome.

4.3. Stage 3 Making a contract

If inappropriate behaviour/language by the same person is reported for a second time, they will be asked to meet again with a person designated by the organising group, and to agree a written contract if they wish to continue to attend the meetings. (An example contract is added at the end of this Policy.) The person who reported the behaviour/language will be informed of the contract that has been made.

4.4. Stage 4 Denial of access to the meeting

If inappropriate behaviour/language is reported for a third time, it will be deemed to be unacceptable, and the person concerned will be denied access to the meeting. For virtual meetings and social media, the individual will be blocked from participating. For in person meetings the person will be asked not to attend further meetings. The responsibility for this lies with the Quaker Administrator in the case of social media and website, the host in the case of an online meeting, and the Elders for in-person meetings. A report of this occurrence will be sent to Trustees via the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding. If the person attempts to attend an in person meeting again, meeting will be suspended and if necessary, the police will be called.

5. Unacceptable behaviour/language:

This will not be tolerated and should be reported to a member of the organising group. If the incident is deemed sufficiently serious, this will be escalated immediately via our Safeguarding policy and to external agencies as appropriate.

5.0. Examples of unacceptable behaviour/language:

- Continually speaking over other participants.
- Physical or verbal abuse or threat of it.
- Insulting or belittling others.
- Sexual abuse - e.g. non-consensual touch.
- Breach of health and safety rules and guidance, including those related to acceptable computer use.

5.1. Stage 1 Denial of access to the meeting

The person whose behaviour/language has been reported will be denied access to the meeting immediately. The responsibility for this lies with the Quaker Administrator in the case of social media and website, the host in the case of an online meeting, and the Elders or members of the organising group for in-person meetings.

5.2. Stage 2 Making a contract

The person whose behaviour/language has been reported will be asked to meet with two people designated by the organising group. Depending on the nature of the incident and the outcome of this meeting, a written contract may be agreed to allow the person to return into the MWAM group in question. If this occurs, the person who reported the behaviour/language will be informed of the contract that has been made.

5.3. Stage 3 Denial of access to the meeting

If the unacceptable behaviour/language is reported for a second time, the person concerned will be denied access to the meeting immediately. For virtual meetings and social media, the individual will be blocked from participating. For in person meetings the person will be asked not to attend further meetings. The responsibility for this lies with the Quaker Administrator in the case of social media and website, the host in the case of an online meeting, and the Elders for in-person meetings. A report of this occurrence will be sent to Trustees via the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding. If the person attempts to attend an in person meeting again, meeting will be suspended and if necessary, the police will be called.

5.4. Stage 4 Future management

This will depend on the nature of the behaviour/language and the willingness/ability of the person concerned to change. It may be necessary to deny them access to the meeting for a permanent or prolonged period of time, or possibly to arrange for them to attend a separate meeting with limited attendance, where the unacceptable behaviour/language can be contained.

6. Safeguarding

If the reported behaviour/language is of a serious nature, it will be treated as a Safeguarding incident and be reported to the Safeguarding Coordinators and the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding. This will include escalation to the appropriate external agencies.

7. Area Meeting staff

Area Meeting has a particular duty of care towards employees of our charity and trading subsidiary. Staff members are bound by the codes of conduct, disciplinary and grievance procedures established and managed by the senior staff team with support from Area Meeting Trustees and Quaker Trading Directors. Any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour by staff members participating **in their job role** in any meeting held under the auspices of MWAM will be addressed through the appropriate employee procedures.

Any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour towards staff members in or relating to their job role will be addressed with respect for the principles of this policy. However, additional measures and faster action may be required to ensure that our employees are not subjected to behaviour that is inappropriate or unacceptable in the workplace.

Where a staff member participates in any meeting as an individual, with no reference to their job role, they will be subject this policy on the same terms as any other individual. If there is any uncertainty about these respective roles, the Executive Officer and the Area Meeting trustee with responsibility for staff management should be consulted as soon as possible.

APPENDIX: Example of a contract

Contract between (our Friend) ***
and the ***** Group of Manchester and Warrington Area Meeting.**

Date of contract:

To be reviewed on:

Inappropriate/Unacceptable behaviour on the part of ***** at ***** Group meetings has been reported to, and investigated, under the Area Meeting Policy for managing behaviour and/or language which may cause harm.

After following the steps outlined in the AM Policy it has been agreed that our Friend ***** may continue to attend meetings of the ***** group if abiding by the following conditions when attending any and all Meetings:

1. Speak for 1 minute only (if consistently speaking for too long and preventing others from speaking).
2. Use the Chat facility (if speaking for too long or is hard to understand when speaking).
3. Will respect the person, background and views of others at all times.
4. Will listen in silence to the contribution of others at all times.
5. Will use affirmative language in discussion.
6. Will send information to support a particular viewpoint only when asked.
7. Will observe Confidentiality outside the meetings and group discussions.
8.
9.

Signed:

Signed: