

Youth Participation Policy

Quaker Life



Equality is one of our corporate testimonies, and as Friends we affirm a belief in the “priesthood of all believers”. This necessarily includes children and young people. In practice, this means trying to include everyone as fully as possible in the life of our Meetings. We are called to answer “that of God” in everyone, requiring us to respect all those who are part of our religious community as fellow pilgrims with unique insights and gifts. If we take these underlying principles seriously, then as a result we must ensure that our structures and processes properly enable children and young people to be heard and to take part as fully as possible, as well as allowing them to contribute to the life of Meetings in tangible and meaningful ways.

Children and young people’s right to participate in decision making concerning matters which affect them is enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the UK is a signatory. The benefits of enabling and empowering children and young people to have a voice and take on responsible roles are being increasingly recognised. The advantages of an inclusive community are: for young people, increased motivation and ownership and enhanced knowledge and skills; for organisations, better services and policies leading to better intergenerational relationships and a healthier community. *Quaker Life Children and Young People Inclusion Group Final Report (September 2008)*.

We are committed to enabling and ensuring the following opportunities:

Experience: Young Friends will receive the support and preparation necessary for them to participate in Quaker practices (e.g. Quaker Business Method).

Consult: There will be formal and informal opportunities for young people to have sufficient time to contribute to the decisions that affect them and the organisation that they are a part of.

Inform: Young Friends will be kept up to date with what is happening in the Society and will be informed of changes that have a direct impact on them (through the network and mailings).

Engage: All young Friends will have the opportunity to engage in contributing to the Religious Society of Friends, either formally (e.g. nominated for roles) or informally (via the young people’s Network through facebook).

Opportunity: All young Friends will have the chance to attend the relevant event for their age at least once. Consideration will be paid to the accessibility and the timing of these opportunities.

Connect: Young Friends will have the opportunity to connect with the wider Quaker community. This means that events for young Friends will run as a part of wider gatherings (e.g. Yearly Meeting). Proactive links will be made to ensure valuable connections are enabled and transitions are effective (e.g. young Friends serving on Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee).

Methods: Appropriate methods will be used to enable social, spiritual and emotional development (e.g. catering for a range of learning styles, developmental stage).

Involve: Young people will be involved in the planning and facilitation of events for their peers.

Risk: We will be prepared to live adventurously to ensure an integrated, inclusive and accessible all age community.

Review: Young Friends will have the opportunity to feedback their opinions and experience of the activities they are involved in (as participants and as team members). The young people involved in planning these events will be consulted about the content of this feedback, as well as being a part of the review process

Young Friends involved in the planning and facilitation of events:

Serve: Young Friends will have opportunities to contribute to the Society, as team members, peer facilitators and on relevant committees and working groups.

Develop: Young Friends will be supported in their roles as team members, so that they can develop the skills they have in planning, facilitation and team work.

Recognise: Young Friends involved in the planning and facilitation of events will have their contribution recognised. Each team member will receive a certificate outlining their contribution and development as a part of the event team.

Approved by Quaker Life Central Committee in February 2012 (*Minute 12/02/06/9bii refers*)