

Being ready for children in your Quaker meeting



A guide about being ready for children in Quaker meetings where, as yet, there is no children's meeting for worship, where children are not regular or even occasional visitors with their families.

The message of this guide is simple – it is important to be ready for children. It will answer four questions:

- Why be ready?
- What does a meeting need to do to be ready?
- What does a meeting need to have to be ready?
- What might you do to engage with families and children?

Why be ready?

As Quakers we have something special to offer children for their spiritual and faith journey. Our meetings, whatever size, can be welcoming, thriving, inclusive and positive places for all ages. If meetings are unprepared then children and families may feel unwelcome or uncomfortable and not come back. Love requires that we are ready.



What does a meeting need to do to be ready?

First steps:

- Agree at a business meeting that you want to be ready for children.
- Agree at a business meeting to make money available.
- Find volunteers who are willing to be ready for children.
- Agree which space is going to be used.

Next steps:

- Volunteers meet to plan the approach, get a couple of sessions ready and ensure that there are always two people present and ready. For help with this see the resources on the next two pages.
- All volunteers subscribe to the Quaker Life children's work resource '*Journeys in the Spirit*' children's edition.
- Contact your area meeting Children and Young People's Work Advocate to tell them what you are planning and ask for help and advice.
- Contact the area meeting's Safeguarding Co-ordinator in relation to the simple things to be done about safeguarding and child protection. For more information go to the BYM web page: www.quaker.org.uk/safeguarding-and-disclosure. Volunteers apply for a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure.
- Business meeting agrees on a positive and welcoming phrase to go into the *Book of Meetings* describing what is offered for children and families.
- Make sure doorkeepers know what to say if families arrive – to both children and adults.

What does a meeting need to have to be ready?

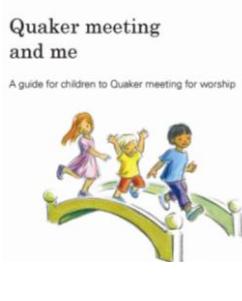
- A folder of the chosen *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition 'Easy to use plans'.
- Simple kits of resources to go with each plan – keep these in a nice box.
- Copies of *Quaker meeting and me*.
- A selection of storybooks for a range of ages – include at least one illustrated Bible.
- Simple things to make a room or space comfortable, useable and welcoming, such as a rug, appropriate tables and chairs, or floor cushions.
- Good quality creative, arts and play material – basics include: coloured and drawing pencils, wax crayons for different ages, scissors, glue sticks, PVA glue with brushes and containers, paper for drawing and painting, ready mix paints, brushes, a variety of materials for collage. See the link below to *Journeys in the Spirit with children aged 0 to 4* for more ideas about resources. For storage use a plastic or wooden crate and smaller lidded boxes.

Some free resources to obtain

Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5- to 12-year-olds in a Quaker setting. The children's work edition comes out monthly. It is free by subscription. It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit. Each issue includes an easy to use plan for children's meeting and a simple plan for an all age worship. There is an online archive of issues and resources. To subscribe go to www.quaker.org.uk/subscribing-journeys-spirit-children



Quaker meeting and me

A booklet that is intended to help children find a way into Quaker meeting for worship. As we can't see what goes on in other people's minds during worship, this uses images from a garden to illustrate the different aspects of worship. Available from the Quaker Bookshop – 020 7663 1030 or www.quaker.org.uk/shop

Journeys in the Spirit with children aged 0 to 4

A simple guide to being with children aged 0 to 4 years in a Quaker setting. This might be in children's meeting for worship, a Quaker all age residential event or a one day Quaker gathering. This offers ideas, resources and frameworks to encourage and equip volunteers being with this age group in Quaker meeting. It can be obtained from the Quaker Life Children and Young People's Staff Team – see contact details over the page. It can also be viewed or downloaded at: www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/special-issues-children



What might you do to engage with families and children?

- Put a notice in local papers, websites or in newsagents stating that Quaker meeting welcomes families and outlining what you are offering. Here is a link to an example of what one meeting has done – it includes simple instructions and templates: www.bit.ly/CYPads
- Place an ‘A-board’, banner or sign outside the meeting house welcoming families and children, maybe tie balloons to it.
- Hold a special ‘family Sunday’ when people in your meeting invite friends and family to come.
- Start up an afterschool club or carer and toddler provision weekly or fortnightly in the meeting house.
- Run a programme for children during holiday time – finish the programme on a Sunday morning and invite the parents to meeting for worship.



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More resources, information and contacts

What about the children in our meeting? *Exploring the purposes of Quaker children's work.*

A pack to help explore and identify the purposes and intentions for children's work in your meeting. Available at:

www.quaker.org.uk/working-children-0-12-years-0

Building our children's meeting for worship. How do we do it? Ideas and resources to develop children's meeting. Available at www.quaker.org.uk/working-children-0-12-years-0

‘Schools Journeys’. A *Journeys in the Spirit* special edition Guidance on planning ideas for making links with local schools. Available at

www.quaker.org.uk/journeys/special-issues-children

The Ideas Store.

An online collection of tried and tested ideas and activities. Go to: www.quaker.org.uk/ideas-store

Training

To find out about the range of training workshops and one-off conferences to help you in your children's work go to:

www.quaker.org.uk/training

Area Meeting Children and Young People’s Work Advocates

Most area meetings have a CYP Work Advocate. If you don't know who this person is contact your area meeting clerk to find out. An Advocate could be a big help with ideas, guidance and support.