

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA QUAKER MEETING ROLE DESCRIPTION (v2 Feb 2020)**

### **Elder**

Elders are appointed by AM. Their work is carried out locally. It is helpful if elders can meet as an AM group once or twice a year, to discuss issues and share ideas. A key (shared) task is to be actively present at that LM's weekly meetings for worship, ensuring that these start, are held and finish appropriately.

### Experience and qualities

‘Appointment as an elder does not imply that the Friends concerned are elevated to a higher position but that the meeting recognises that they may have the capacity to serve it in a particular way’. (QF&P12.07)

In the Quaker testimony to equality, no Friend serves above others or as a full-time and permanent elder. The triennium system of appointment means that the role of elder is a temporary one, giving service as one of a team, open to learning and grounded in the loving disciplines of Quaker worship. Together, elders exercise their commitment to love and truth in sensing what is required of them.

Elders are usually experienced Friends who need to have a good understanding of and a commitment to Quaker practice, while being open to new learning.

### Responsibilities

For a full list of these see: QF&P 12.12

Elders are responsible for the spiritual care of meetings for worship: holding the stillness from the start to the close. They take responsibility for the right holding of weekly meetings for worship, meetings for worship for business and special occasions such as marriages and funerals, helping those who attend to feel informed and welcome.

In practical terms, this entails

- meeting regularly with other elders to uphold the meeting
- ensuring there are elders present at weekly LM meetings for worship
- being present as regularly as possible in AM meetings for worship for business (8 pa)
- supporting meetings for worship when appropriate in Friends' homes
- fostering vocal ministry
- promoting and supporting opportunities for learning and sharing

### Support and learning

- training: ‘Exploring eldership and oversight’ weekend or online courses at Woodbrooke: <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/course-category/training-for-quaker-roles/>
- growth: the annual Yearly Meetings in session (May, in London; residentially, August, as arranged) are invaluable experiences for wider understanding of and connection with the Society and its witness in the world
- reading: ‘With a tender hand: a resource book for eldership and oversight’, Zelig Gross (pub 2015) – regarded as a useful handbook
- mutual support: with overseers, children's meeting committee, safeguarding representatives and clerks