

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AREA QUAKER MEETING

ROLE DESCRIPTION (v2 feb 2020)

Overseer

Overseers are appointed by AM. While their work is carried out locally, it is helpful if they meet as an AM group once or twice a year, to discuss and share issues and ideas.

LMs organise oversight according to local circumstances. In some meetings each overseer has a list of members and attenders for whom they have particular responsibility. In others, there is shared oversight, using a 'tree' or 'circle', with the overseer having the role of facilitator, ensuring that the arrangement works and giving additional support when needed.

While every Friend has some responsibility for a spirit of fellowship and care of others in the LM community, the overseer has a particular role in ensuring that that spirit is indeed alive and well.

Experience and qualities needed

Overseers are active members of the worshipping community. They need to have good understanding of and commitment to Quaker practice, be open to new learning, with

- capacity for thoughtful and reflective listening
- understanding of the need for appropriate confidentiality
- networking skills
- willingness to be a visible Quaker presence and
- sensitivity to different needs, situations and opportunities.

Responsibilities

A full list of these (a little daunting, perhaps!) is in QF&P 12.13. This is a summary:

- encourage attendance at meeting for worship,
- make sure that newcomers are welcomed and introduced to others;
- with other LM overseers, ensure that pastoral needs are being met
- give attention to the care of children and young people, including those no longer living at home
- work closely with those Friends responsible for safeguarding, marriages and funerals.
- provide advice and information on how to apply for membership

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