

New proposals for Pastoral care for Quakers in Scotland following consultation on the original proposal

From the Pastoral Care and Eldership subgroup, 25 August 2025.

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This document offers a **revised and provisional model for pastoral care across Quaker meetings in Scotland**, developed after feedback from Elders and Pastoral care Friends from across the country. It reflects the original plan (now separated out into two documents) following two consultation sessions held in June 2025, and incorporates the feedback, concerns, and hopes shared during those sessions.

Overall Response to the Proposal

Friends who attended the consultation were broadly in favour of the proposed changes to pastoral care. More detail was requested, and this is our attempt to meet that request.

Pastoral care for Quakers in Scotland

What is pastoral care?

Friends need to be clear what we are offering in relation to pastoral care. There are many types of care that are not within our remit and not appropriate for us to offer. We are only responsible for that care which relates to a Friend's life as a Quaker, that which relates to meeting. There is a difference between what might be offered by a personal friend and that which is appropriate from a pastoral carer. In many situations, confidentiality is important.

How will Pastoral care work across Scotland?

Each meeting will decide how pastoral care will be carried out in their community. Pastoral care Friends (or similar roles) will be appointed by the local meeting as discerned. These roles can be combined with Friends who are appointed as elders (see New proposals for Eldership document). Local meetings will review this care yearly and provide an update to Quakers in Scotland QiS Pastoral Care Support Group.

Pastoral care Group support.

There will be a QiS Pastoral Care Support Group appointed by Quakers in Scotland. This will be made up of six experienced Friends who are or have been Pastoral care Friends.

The QiS Pastoral Care Support Group would:

- provide support to meetings who have questions or are struggling with their pastoral care.
- Bring in external support where appropriate.
- receive yearly updates from meetings on how the meetings undertake pastoral care.

The QiS Pastoral Care Support Group will meet up to six times a year. The QiS Pastoral Care Group Friends and clerk will be nominated by Quakers in Scotland Nominations, and appointed by Quakers in Scotland.

Here are some examples of how the QiS Pastoral Care Group might work:

Hypothetical situation 1:

A Friend from a local meeting has recently gone into a care home and the meeting they had been attending is approached by the care home to say that they would like to continue attending, but could the meeting provide care for that Friend while they were at meeting.

When a representative of the local meeting spoke to the care home, they got the impression that the care home was asking if the meeting could provide personal care for the Friend, including toileting support. There is a member of the meeting who used to be a support worker who could do the work, but Friends in the meeting feel that this is not support it should be offering.

The meeting checks with the QiS Pastoral Care Group to be sure. They are told that they are right, it is not suitable. The QiS Pastoral Care Group reminds them that meetings can be held at care homes as well, if the Friend's needs are not able to be met at their normal worshipping space.

The Pastoral Care Friends work with the elders to set up a small meeting in the care home. More residents from other faiths attend the meeting.

Hypothetical situation 2:

Friends in the QiS Pastoral Care Group realise that they have not had an update on pastoral care for a very small local meeting in two years. When they eventually manage to contact the meeting they discover that there are only 5 Friends who ever attend, and often only 1-2 Friends turn up. The meeting tells them that the idea of creating a long report for 5 Friends seemed a bit much and they rarely had a business meeting to organise such a thing.

A Friend from the QiS Pastoral Care Group travelled to the meeting and explained that they did not need to write an in-depth report, they only needed to consider as a group how they looked after one another and write that up in a few sentences that could be sent to the QiS Pastoral Care Group.

The Friends took some time to consider how they were as a group. They realised that while they all loved and cared for one another, and found their worship deeply enriching, they all found the Sunday morning 10am meetings clashed with other responsibilities they had.

They agreed to trial meeting at 4pm on a Sunday evening instead. They sent a short email to the QiS Pastoral Care Group informing them of this.

Hypothetical situation 3:

A meeting has a Friend who has started attending and has been causing

some problems. The Friend keeps interrupting, disagreeing with others' ministry and bringing prepared ministry.

The elders in this meeting are also the appointed pastoral care Friends. They have tried to address this and feel that they've been unsuccessful. They reach out for advice across both the elders and pastoral care networks of Quakers in Scotland.

The QiS Pastoral Care Support Group knows that a different local meeting has had this challenge recently and organises a meeting between the Friends in both meetings to share learning and start to develop a plan of action to address the concern.

When a decision is made on what to do, a Friend from the QiS Eldership Group travels to provide the meeting with their support and a pastoral care Friend from the other meeting offers to come as well.

Pastoral care Friends and Intermediate meetings

Intermediate meetings will often be small and/or one off. However they can also be quite formal and could look quite similar to a current area meeting.

Every Quaker community should consider how we look after one another. A regular, formal intermediate meeting might discern that they should appoint their own pastoral care Friends, either on an ad hoc basis or for a term of service.

There is no expectation that if you are a pastoral care Friend for a local meeting, you would act as a pastoral care Friend for another Quaker meeting.

Opportunities for review and change of this structure

This is an experimental model and would be subject to a yearly review by the QiS Pastoral Care Group themselves. Changes to this model can be made at any time, however any significant changes will need to be reported to Quakers in Scotland (just so a record can be kept)

External facilitators could be approached or appointed to support this review process if the QiS Pastoral Care Group felt that this would be helpful.

We suggest that a more in depth review should be undertaken 3-5 years after this model is put into practice to consolidate learning and consider any changes that should be made. This review should consider feedback from pastoral care Friends across Scotland, and would be best done by an external group.

Other questions:

How would pastoral care Friends be nominated and appointed?

Where the local meeting or worshipping group discerns Pastoral care as best done by appointed Friends, these names would be nominated and appointed by the local meeting.

The names and contact details of these appointed Pastoral care Friends would be shared with Quakers in Scotland.

What about pastoral care Friends who wanted to meet in person?

If pastoral care Friends wanted to meet in person regionally, this is something that could be coordinated through the QiS Pastoral Care Group, who could pass out invitations directly to the Pastoral care Friends.

How would pastoral care Friends stay in touch with one another?

In the feedback for these plans it was made clear that pastoral care friends value the opportunity to speak to one another and learn from one another. This would continue with the pastoral care network, facilitated by the local development worker. Elders would still be invited to this network, but it is likely that fewer would attend, as they will also be attending the regular Quakers in Scotland eldership group meetings.

Plans for larger and more specific meetings could be facilitated through the QiS Pastoral Care Group.