

MANCHESTER & WARRINGTON AREA MEETING
STANDING ADVISORY GROUP TO ADDRESS CONFLICT SITUATIONS
(CONFLICT ADVISORY GROUP)

PREAMBLE

Conflict is part of life: conflict within our Area Meeting is inevitable. However, conflict well handled can lead to personal and corporate growth.

PURPOSE OF THE STANDING ADVISORY GROUP

The purpose of the Standing Advisory Group is to 'give general assistance in the amicable settlement of disputes' (Quaker Faith and Practice 4:21). In the first instance Elders and Overseers, or other Friends as appropriate, should attempt to resolve local problems, but can have access to Conflict Advisory Group if needed.

ADVANTAGES OF MAINTAINING THE STANDING ADVISORY GROUP

1. All Friends, either individuals or groups will have easy recourse to a group of appropriately skilled and experienced Friends to be called on when difficulties arise.
2. Local Elders and Overseers will have easy access to appropriate support when difficulties occur in Local Meetings.
3. Area Meeting will have access to a group able to offer advice on the handling of conflict.
4. Should an occasion arise when the Standing Advisory Group felt unable to address a situation, help is always available from Quaker Life Office.

ROLE OF THE STANDING ADVISORY GROUP

1. to offer support and counsel as *Friends* to help in situations of conflict
2. to help build a climate where conflict is regarded as an inevitable part of adventurous living, of holding strong opinions and minding about things.
3. to proactively encourage all Friends to gain or improve their skills in addressing conflict
4. to promote confidence in our ability to address conflict constructively

CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE STANDING ADVISORY GROUP

1. to offer advice and intervention for Meetings, informal groups and individuals experiencing difficulties. This will include using Quaker processes such as Meetings for Threshing, Meetings for Clearness, or Meetings for Learning: supporting and mentoring individuals or groups; maintaining a simple and confidential record of interventions and outcomes. (see Quaker Life leaflet on confidentiality)
2. to stimulate readiness to engage with a proactive response to conflict in Meetings, groups and individuals, possibly by the use of a '*Conflict Audit or Review*' (See Questions and Answers in the booklet '*Conflict in Meetings*').
3. to raise awareness of the group's remit within Area Meeting
4. to maintain contact with similar groups within Britain early Meeting
5. to support each other in developing a shared understanding and implementation of the work of the Group, while accepting that support can also be sought from Elders/Overseers if needed

CONSTITUTION OF THE STANDING ADVISORY GROUP

1. The Group should have a minimum of 3 members (preferably 4 or 5), to be nominated by a Search Group composed of 2/3 Elders and 2/3 Overseers. *Each local meeting must be represented in this Search Group.*
2. Members of the Standing Advisory Group will be appointed by Elders. Elders then send a minute of information to Area Meeting
3. Members will serve for two terms of 3 years each (with one or two serving for 3 terms in order to establish continuity).
4. The Standing Advisory Group should meet as and when necessary.
5. Monitoring will be by report to Area Meeting Elders once a year. The report should record the number of occasions when the Group has been called on, the number of meetings held and hours spent on each situation. (Thus confidentiality is fully maintained except in the most exceptional circumstances)
6. Experience in counselling/mediation is useful but not essential for members of the Group.
7. Training will be given as necessary – Woodbrooke Conflict Handling courses and other opportunities arising in BYM.

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