

# Quaker Life Network

## Conflict in Meetings Cluster



### What is the work of the Conflict in Meetings Cluster?

#### Background

The Conflict in Meetings Cluster has been developed by Quaker Life as a way for Friends to access advice and support when their meeting is going through challenging times. Local, area and regional meetings may have appointed groups of Friends available to help when conflict arises.

*Area meetings are recommended to appoint a group of experienced and knowledgeable Friends who would be available to give general assistance in the amicable settlement of disputes.*

*Quaker faith & practice [4.23](#)*

The cluster is there to help when meetings have explored all options that are available to them and there are still difficulties.

*Deep-seated problems are sometimes more easily resolved when an experienced facilitator from outside the situation is called on. Quaker Life or monthly and general meetings may be able to suggest Friends with an understanding of how groups and individuals interact with one another and who are able to spend time with a meeting that has got into seemingly insoluble difficulties.*

*Quaker faith & practice [10.21](#)*

Quaker Life staff work with members the Quaker Life Network to help meetings that make requests to the cluster. All requests begin with an initial conversation usually with Oliver Waterhouse or Michael Booth. Initial conversations could result in the following:

- Advice to explore that support that is already available to Friends in their local area or regional structures
- further advice and exploration of the issues with Quaker Life staff
- further advice and exploration with other members of BYM staff
- further advice and exploration with members of the Quaker Life Network
- a visit from members of the Conflict Cluster

It is also possible in the fullness of time more than one of these options takes place. It is also important to say that it is not always clear from the outset what route might be taken and much of what Quaker Life staff do is to encourage Friends dealing with issues and assure them that taking time to really understand the issues is key.

## What do visitors do?

There are two main reasons that meetings ask for a visit from members of the Conflict in Meetings Cluster

1. To ask for help with an issue that has been troubling the meeting
2. to request a workshop or facilitated session on conflict to explore conflict in meeting communities.

Below is a brief overview of what might be require of meeting visitors working in each of these ways.

### To ask for help with an issue that has been troubling the meeting

*Usually in this situation a request will have come via the local / area business meeting or from elders or overseers. Quaker Life will have held conversations with the meeting in advance and will brief visitors on this in advance of visiting. Usually meetings are encouraged to explore the options of support from within their local or area meeting structures before Quaker Life offers to engage visitors.*

Visitors are encouraged to work with meetings following '[The process we use](#)'. This is a process of work under the following headings.

- **Information Gathering:** to establish the facts or as close to the facts as possible
- **Contracting:** with the meeting's representatives to define expectations
- **Initial Preparatory Meetings:** with individuals involved in the conflict
- **Sharing Meeting:** inviting everyone involved to participate
- **Follow-up:** with the meeting as needed possibly involving other Friends
- **Reporting:** to Quaker Life confidentially for training and development

### To request a workshop or facilitated session on conflict to explore conflict in meeting communities

*This type of session is usually very open and explores the possibility of conflict in meeting communities instead of working on a particular issue.*

There is a [conflict cluster workbook](#) which has a variety of ideas and activities to develop a day-long session with a Quaker Meeting. It also has a suggested timetable for this kind of event. It is developed as a framework to work within but is also flexible and meeting visitors can adapt it to fit their own style and any particular activity that the meeting has asked to explore.

We ask for meetings to let us know about any situations that are unresolved and might have an impact on the way that a day like this runs. It is also helpful for meetings visitors to plan carefully with a small group in advance of any event to try to avoid a situation where a live conflict is opened up inadvertently.

## General

Advice and support with planning all events is given by members of Quaker Life staff and we offer every meeting visitor access to a support person or mentor.

All conflict cluster members work in pairs and visitors working for the first time will be paired with another Friend that is experienced in conflict cluster work and processes.