If a Meeting is asked about permitting a sex-offender to attend, then the Meeting should consider all aspects of this carefully.

You also need to remember that it is the Area Meeting Trustees that have responsibility for Safeguarding within your meeting. They will also need to know. Normally you should just inform the Area Meeting Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the Clerk of AM Trustees.

Consider carefully how the circle of confidentiality might need to be enlarged. The BYM Safeguarding Office, Michael Booth, can be approached for advice and would normally need to be within the circle

You will need to carefully consider which members of the Meeting should know that this may be a possibility. Unlike churches with a paid and separate clergy, we do not have a clearly defined leadership team. It is likely that the clerk and some (or all) of the Elders and Overseers will need to know and be involved in making the decision.

You also need to be aware of the needs of the offender. Making their presence widely known may cause difficulties for them.

Take your time, do not be pressurised by an outside agency to make a quick decision – a month is quick for Friends, and very quick to reach unity on this particular question. If you are pushed for a swifter decision then you might choose to regretfully say that the offender would not be able to attend that meeting.

You will need to explore carefully the implications of having a released offender as part of the Meeting community. It may awake unwelcome memories for some Friends: whatever the decision, overseers may find their work-load increases.

It may make some parents feel uncomfortable about bringing their children to Meeting.

If you have a mid-week or evening meeting where children are not expected to attend, then that might be the most appropriate one to allow the offender to attend.

Follow *Safe and Secure* (CCPAS website, members area) carefully. Standard 9: Managing those who Pose a Risk is most relevant. It contains a link to a leaflet *Help, a sex offender has joined my church* and also a link to a document called *Clauses to consider in a Contract for a Sex Offender*.

My advice is that such a contract should not be weakened in anyway, I also recommend that it is strengthened to exclude attendance at Quaker events beyond the Meeting, eg weekends away, Area Meeting, General Meeting or Yearly Meeting. Careful thought will have to be given to what service such a Friend can be appointed to, being a representative at an event where there will be children present may be unwise, as would involvement in setting safeguarding policies and procedures.

As ever, there will be exceptions to the advice outlined in the paragraph above, but any variation needs to be carefully and prayerfully considered: both for the sake of the Meeting and of the individual.

If such a person is permitted to attend meeting, then the Meeting should be prepared for the eventuality of media interest – be in touch with Anne van Staveren (the Media Relations Officer for BYM) for advice.

Contacts: Michael Booth 020 7663 1023 safe@quaker.org.uk

 Anne van Staveren 020 7663 1048 annev@quaker.org.uk

or 07958 009 703