**Caring for and Safeguarding our Children and Young People**

**at the Meetings of South East London Area Quaker Meeting**

**Our Policy**

**1. Context**

This document sets out our approach to caring for the children and young people in our Meeting. Appropriate procedures which will be used to ensure their wellbeing and safety, in line with this policy, will be prepared by individual Local Meetings.

Our Quaker Approach.

*"Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting, recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?* Advices and Queries 19

**2. Policy Statement**

Children and young people are central to the life of our Meetings and we aim to support the emotional and spiritual life of each child and young person in our care.

All children and young people will be given opportunities to speak out and for their ideas and feelings to be valued.

Children and young people need to be cared for in a safe environment and to feel confident about the adults around them. They are empowered when they are actively encouraged to participate in the life of the Meeting. This gives them the resources to recognise genuine loving relationships and the discernment to follow their instincts when other's behaviour makes them feel uncomfortable.

We will therefore:-

i) Cater for the needs of children and young people who attend Meeting by (E.G.)

* Actively supporting the development of children and young people's spiritual capacity.
* Involving children and young people in their Meeting, making time to listen to their thoughts, feelings and concerns and work alongside them.
* Enabling children and young people in the Meeting to learn from and respect each other.

ii) Ensure that each and every member of our Meeting has responsibility to and for the younger members of the Meeting by (E.G.)

* Having a committee, volunteers and a helper team which draws from all parts of the Meeting.
* Actively planning whole meeting events e.g. All Age Worship
* Keeping close liaison between the children and young people's committee and Elders and Overseers.
* Following current Quaker guidelines concerning caring for children and young people in respect of child protection, health and safety and safeguarding requirements.
* Defining procedures to be adopted when children and young people are cared for outside of normal Sunday morning Meeting e.g. trips, residential gatherings, social activities.
* Having clear procedures in place to deal with difficult situations including procedures for conflict between children, concern about children, accidents and serious child protection issues (referral and disclosure).

**3. Review**

This policy will normally be reviewed annually by Trustees and reported to Area Meeting.

The procedures put in place by Local Meetings to implement this policy will also be reviewed annually by the Children and Young People's Committee and Elders and Overseers in the Local Meetings and reported to Local Business Meetings.

**4. Responsibilities**

Key roles and personnel within the Area and Local Meetings will have responsibilities for the implementation of this policy, but it is ultimately the responsibility of everyone within the AM and the individual meetings to ensure that we look after the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people.

i) Children's Advocate - Area Meeting

The Children's Advocate is appointed by Area Meeting to provide support and assistance across the AM on matters relating to children and young people. They also provide a link with central Quaker work for children and young people.

ii) Safeguarding Coordinator - Area Meeting

The Safeguarding Coordinator is appointed by Area Meeting to take responsibility across the AM and to provide support and assistance in respect of Safeguarding across all Local Meetings.

iii) Children and Young People's Committees

Appointed in each Local Meeting where there is provision for C&YP; where there are no such established committees the responsibility lies with Elders and Overseers. Children and Young People's Committees include a Convenor of the Committee.

iv) Verifiers

Verifiers are appointed to verify the DBS applications of volunteers. All verifiers must be appointed by the Local Meeting and have a current DBS check.

v) Volunteers

Volunteers run C&YP's Meetings and other activities in Local Meetings each week. Volunteers running these Meetings must be DBS checked.

vi) Elders

Elders take care of the Spiritual life of the Meeting. Spiritual matters relating to C&YP are the responsibility of Elders together with C&YP C'ttee.

vii) Overseers

Overseers take care of the Pastoral life of the Meeting. Pastoral matters relating to C&YP are the responsibility of the Overseers together with C&YP C'ttees.

**Procedures**

To facilitate the effective implementation of this policy and support Meetings in carrying out this very important task Procedures and Guidelines are to be prepared by Local Meeting C&YP C'ttees, Elders and Overseers and reported to Local Business Meeting.

Trustees should be provided with copies of these procedures and any amendments for their information.

The implementation of the procedures and their annual reviewing are the responsibility of local meetings (C&YP C'ttees, Elders, Overseers).

The AM Safeguarding Coordinator and the AM Children's Advocate should be involved or informed of LM procedures and any amendments.

This policy was amended and reviewed by SELAM Trustees in March 2019 and sent to Area Meeting for acceptance and distribution to Local Meetings.