



## From the Trustees of Teesdale and Cleveland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

Registered Charity Number: 1134519

### A policy on hiring rooms in premises in our Area Meeting

Teesdale and Cleveland Area Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends view our premises as a valuable asset to our work, and assets which can also be used for the benefit of our local communities.

Quakers have long had a tradition of being willing to hire rooms to groups or individuals to whom some other faith or secular organisations have refused accommodation. These have included Muslim groups; Gay, Lesbian and Transgender groups; and groups campaigning for contentious causes in relation to Palestine for example.

Our hirings policy is a reflection of our testimonies to truth, equality, peace, simplicity, and sustainability. It is a means of spreading understanding and appreciation of our Quaker values and Quaker work, and of generating income for Quaker work.

As part of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, our policy and practice with hirings is guided by our book of Quaker Faith and Practice, revised in 2010.

*“The use of Quaker premises by political parties, and by other religious or secular organisations with whose principles or practices Friends might not be in sympathy, will always require careful consideration and full consultation with Friends in the meeting most closely concerned. Particular care must be taken to avoid bookings by “front” organisations with undesirable aims; the bona fides of new users should be checked. In all cases it is important to ensure that any publicity given to meetings held on Quaker premises makes a clear distinction between those for which other groups are responsible, in order to avoid confusion in the public mind.”* Quaker Faith and Practice 14.27 (2010 edition)

The policy of Teesdale and Cleveland Area Meeting is that bookings will normally be accepted from non-quaker groups seeking to rent a room or rooms, subject to Friends being assured that the hiring group or individual are not in serious conflict with Quaker beliefs. In situations where Friends are uncertain, the group or individual may be asked to give a written statement, which may be made public if necessary, of their aims and activities.

Quakers have from their foundation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century made a witness against addictive or harmful substances and activities, in our wish to emphasise wholesome and health-giving activities. It is for this reason that no alcohol or other addictive drugs, may be brought on to our premises, that smoking is not permitted within our grounds, and any form of gambling (including raffles and tombola) is not permitted.

A booking may be refused if:

- The aims and policies of the organisation or individual are in serious conflict with Quaker beliefs. (*Where Friends or others have expressed concerns about the aims or policies of new groups wishing to hold meetings in Friends’ Meeting Houses in this Area Meeting, the Local Meeting will normally request a printed copy of their constitution, or a statement of their aims and policies.*)
- Violence or the encouragement of violence at a meeting may be reasonably anticipated.
- Contravention of fire or health and safety regulations may be reasonably anticipated.
- Misbehaviour has occurred at a previous meeting organised by the organisation or individual in question.
- A hirer persistently breaches the terms and conditions of the Meeting House they wish to hire.

Where a Local Meeting is uncertain about accepting a booking from a group or organisation, that Meeting can either:

- a) Consult the Trustees who are the responsible body for all property owned by the Area Meeting.

*There can be an advantage to the Local Meeting in passing the responsibility for any refusal to Trustees (for instance - if the Meeting is concerned about negative reactions in their local community of a refusal). Equally, if a difficult decision is to be made, and a potentially controversial hiring is accepted, the Local Meeting has the advantage of the issue having been considered with Trustees, who will then share with the Local Meeting the responsibility for the decision.*

- b) Bring the matter to Area Meeting for a decision.
- c) In really difficult cases, the Area Meeting can ask the Clerk of Area Meeting or the Clerk of Trustees to seek guidance from the Recording Clerk's Office at Friends House.

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