

Understanding Quaker work alongside refugees and people seeking sanctuary in Britain:

Report on a survey of Local Quaker Meetings

March 2026



**Quaker
Asylum and
Refugee
Network**



Cover image: Whisper of Hope, Shervin Mohebi.



1. Summary

In our Quaker faith and in our experience, we find that the Spirit is alive in everyone and so we believe that all people should have a place to live in safety, protected from destitution and free to make their contribution and use their gifts.

As the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN), we wondered “**What is this leading Friends in Britain to do today, alongside refugees and people seeking sanctuary?**” As a result, this survey was carried out at the end of 2025 to get a clearer picture of what Local Meetings and individual Friends are doing, with a view to giving better mutual support and raising a stronger voice in policymaking at this critical time.

The survey was designed to capture high-level information about activities, both short-term, small initiatives and longer-term ambitious projects. The questions also provided space for Friends to describe their activities, including how they work with other local bodies. With support for outreach from Quakers in Britain, QARN received responses from 138 Local Meetings (out of approximately 440), with a good geographic spread, enabling us to see trends and patterns in Quaker activities and the types of support that might be helpful.

Key findings include:

Level of activity:

Over a quarter of respondent Meetings are undertaking five or more different types of activities on asylum, migration and refugee issues. Only one-quarter had not been taking an action as a Meeting (though individuals from most of these Meetings were taking action). More than three-quarters of respondent Meetings said that there was someone in their Local Meeting who is very involved. In describing their activities, respondents typically emphasised collaboration with other local bodies with shared concerns.

Sanctuary Meetings:

On average, Meetings that had signed up as “Sanctuary Meetings” in 2017 (30 Meetings out of the respondents) were undertaking a higher number of activities than those who had not signed up. Asked whether it made a difference in their activities, 70% of these Sanctuary Meetings gave specific examples of what they had been doing as a result.

Speaking for Truth:

Almost half of the respondent Meetings had done at least one of the types of awareness raising activities in the past two years, including holding an internal learning discussion or joining in an event for Refugee Week, or helping to organise an event on the issues with another organisation. Most of these had done more than one type of awareness raising activity.

Expressing practical solidarity:

The questionnaire had questions about seven different types of direct or financial support to refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum:

- 55% of the respondent Meetings have a close supportive relationship with a local charity, with nearly all of those Meetings providing financial support.
- 70% of Meetings have individuals who volunteer with organisations providing services.

- Meeting House premises are well-used both for providing spaces for refugee organisations at low cost or free (29% of respondent Meetings) or, for more rural Meetings, hosting day trips (often in beautiful surroundings) for people staying in urban areas.
- Meetings are also providing meals or cooking facilities (22 Meetings), providing English as a Second Language or other learning/therapeutic activities (15) or housing refugees as a Meeting (11).
- 48 Meetings said that individual Friends are providing accommodation or lodgings.

Witnessing for justice:

With regard to influencing policies, 30 Meetings identified pressure-building or protest activities that they are involved in. These Meetings were mostly writing to their MP or other politicians, and nine had joined in counter-protests in support of people staying in hotels who are threatened by far-right groups.

What support would be helpful?

Out of 31 Meetings that mentioned ideas for support, 19 requested help with holding a discussion or speaker meeting. A few Meetings expressed the challenge of working in a context of hostility towards people seeking asylum.

Conclusion

It is evident that across Quakers in Britain, there is a live, widespread and sustained concern about the desperate conditions and violation of human rights facing people seeking sanctuary. Friends are directly involved in steady week by week practical efforts, usually alongside other groups. For many Meetings, this personal connection leads to initiatives to raise public awareness and to call for policies that offer welcome and integration rather than rejection and exclusion.

Recommendations

Based on the wide-ranging examples given by Local Meetings and individuals, there is a lot we can learn from each other about what is possible – as well as what is life-giving for our Meeting communities.

- The Sanctuary Meetings approach clearly added value and was found to nurture Meetings' commitments, so it would be important to consider once again bringing that into visibility, perhaps giving some focused central resources for mutual support.
- QARN should continue working with staff of Quakers in Britain to provide briefings to Friends as we seek better policies.
- As requested by respondents, QARN and/or Quakers in Britain should provide suggestions for discussion meetings within Local Meetings that want to consider refugee issues. This might help them discern what could be an appropriate response or next step for their Meeting, including giving well-informed and loving support to Meeting members who feel individually called to take action.
- Efforts to enhance our collective witness on refugee, migrant and asylum rights should build on the discernment of Continuing Yearly Meeting and be carried out in collaboration with Quakers in Britain, especially its Local Development Workers and Public Affairs and Media staff.



2. Background and purpose of the survey

Quaker work with refugees

Quakers believe that the life of the Spirit is in everyone. This belief leads Quakers to a commitment that all people should have a place to live in safety and dignity, protected from destitution, and free to make their contribution and use their gifts. We see the violence, harm and injustice when these fundamental human needs are denied. Because of this, we are involved in community actions to provide sanctuary and welcome, and we seek national policies and a global approach that would

help refugees and people seeking asylum to rebuild their lives.

Our involvement today links with what Quakers have done before: Friends set up relief committees for refugees from the Franco-Prussian war in the 1870s, and the South African war 1899-1902. Friends in the 1930s rescued and supported children caught up in the Spanish Civil War or threatened by the Nazi concentration camps. British and American Quakers ran refugee camps in Europe after the Second

World War and the American Friends Service Committee has assisted displaced Palestinians in the occupied territories since the 1940s.

Today, we see that countries like our own are deeply connected to the reasons why millions of people cannot have safety and livelihoods in their home countries. For example, we are conscious of wealthy countries selling arms to violent regimes, unjustly extracting vital resources, and creating chaos in global weather systems.

Our sense that the UK is deeply connected with these drivers of misery, war and poverty is part of the background to Quaker efforts. We also know that most displaced people and refugees seek refuge and work in places nearby: The UK's engagement in offering refuge is rather small compared to other countries.

Although this awareness feeds into our desire for justice, we are fuelled equally by the human connections, the sense of unity and peace, and the opportunities for healing that are sometimes possible alongside refugees and migrants, despite the onslaught of frustrations, losses and refusals that people are experiencing today. For example:

“My wife and I have welcomed refugees and asylum seekers into our home without hesitation. It is a way of showing what we believe about equality and offering sanctuary. Having asylum seekers live with us has been lovely, mostly. Some of them have been suffering the after-effects of physical stress and fear. Almost all of them have been lovely, and many of them have become enduring friends.”

Member of Kingston Meeting

Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network

In 2006, concerned Friends in the UK set up the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN) so that we could work together to advocate for radical change to the asylum system. QARN aims to change the way that refugees and people seeking asylum are treated, to ensure that justice and compassion are the guiding principles. The network provides a space for support and encouragement among Friends who are active on these issues. Arising from the experiences of network members, we support British Quakers' corporate witness on asylum policies. QARN is a Britain Yearly Meeting recognised Quaker body. Members meet quarterly as well as having an in-person annual meeting, and we exchange news and mutual support through the QARN email list. QARN's website (www.qarn.org.uk) and Facebook page provide updates and information resources.

Quakers in Britain's corporate testimony

In recent years, the injustices affecting refugees and people seeking asylum have also been taken up as a corporate concern by Quakers in Britain (Britain Yearly Meeting). In 2017, Britain Yearly Meeting launched the Sanctuary Everywhere initiative and Manifesto¹ which led to over a hundred local Quaker Meetings committing to offer a welcome and to take steps to assist refugees in their area as well as through advocacy. BYM helped with coordination and sharing of experiences. BYM staff continue to offer expert advice to Friends on how to respond on relevant government policies and they connect issues of migration, asylum and rights of refugees with other centrally supported work such as climate and economic justice.

Purpose of the survey

QARN is aware of many Local and Area Meetings, as well as individual Friends, that are involved in initiatives to support people seeking asylum, migrants and refugees. This survey was launched to get a clearer picture of these activities, so we could help Friends to draw on each other's expertise. Also, it was felt that evidence of the extent of this practical commitment and involvement can strengthen our collective testimony and advocacy – showing that Friends speak out because we are actively present with people who are most affected. In addition, we hope the survey will guide us on how QARN as a network, and possibly BYM, can better support such work.



Quakers in Britain poster on migrant rights

1. More information on this initiative is available on this BYM webpage:
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/justice/migrant-justice>



3. Survey methodology

The survey was designed to capture high-level information on whether Local Meetings or individuals within the Meetings were currently undertaking different activities.

The questionnaire, using GoogleForms, enabled respondents to tick boxes to indicate whether the Meeting as a whole

or individuals were involved in different ways in 2024 or 2025. The questionnaire asked about types of activities including small initiatives (for example, holding a discussion within the Meeting on these issues) and more ambitious or long-term projects (such as providing accommodation). The questions also explored Quaker connections with other like-minded groups on these initiatives.

Following a discussion with the Local Development Workers about the survey, the Witness and Collaboration Team at Quakers in Britain helped by sending out

the information and a link to the survey to all Quaker Clerks in Britain at the end of November 2025. The link to the survey was also sent through the Faith in Action and Quake mailings. In January, Local Development Workers were requested to follow up with Meetings that had not yet responded. The survey was mentioned in an article in *The Friend*, and QARN sent the survey link to its own email list.

After the survey deadline in late January, responses were downloaded for analysis in Excel. The responses were sorted by Meeting name, so that duplications could

be resolved. In 37 cases, more than one individual had responded on behalf of a Meeting, and the information provided in those cases was combined to give a single response for the Meeting. Once these duplicates were resolved, there were **138 responses out of the 440 Local Meetings² in Britain**. The sample of 138 Local Meetings cannot be treated as “representative” because it is not randomised, but it provides a good indication of the types of activities that Friends are undertaking and of the level of active concern. It can be assumed that the Meetings that responded were more likely to be those that are engaged in efforts with refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum, whereas Meetings that are not current involved might have felt they didn’t have much to share.

The responses were then grouped by Area Meeting, showing responses from 62 different AMs across Britain. 16 Local Meetings from Scotland and 9 from Wales responded, and there was a good spread of Meetings based in rural areas, towns and urban areas. See listing of the Meetings that responded, in Annex.

2. 2025 Tabular Statement notes that there are 440 Local Quaker Meetings in Britain

Limitations

There were several limitations affecting the research sample and findings:

- The survey was sent to the Clerks of Local Meetings and, if they were the ones completing the survey, then it relied on their level of knowledge regarding whether individuals are involved in various ways. This may have led to an under-reporting of actual levels of involvement. Reviewing the duplicate responses, it was clear that Friends’ knowledge of each other’s activities within a Local Meeting is sometimes patchy.
- The response rate to the survey would have been affected by whether Clerks had the time to deal with the request, given all the other matters that come to Clerks. A longer period for response could have led to a higher response rate: The survey was distributed at a time when Meetings were very much concerned and active with other global issues, especially the situation in Palestine.
- The survey findings are also limited by the decision to keep it short and easy to complete. The respondents were asked mainly to tick the relevant boxes, with only 3 open-ended questions. This meant that some useful information could not be collected (for example, if individuals in a Meeting were undertaking an activity, then how many individuals were doing it). However, Friends made good use of the open-ended question on “other relevant activities”, providing a rich insight to the wide range of ways that Meetings and individuals are taking action.



4. Findings

The level of Meetings' involvement

Among the 138 Local Meetings responding to the survey, there is considerable variation in the level of involvement, in terms of how many types of activities they are undertaking "as a Meeting": 25% were not undertaking any activities as a Meeting (but individuals in Meeting might be taking action). At the other end of the spectrum, 26% of Meetings were undertaking five or more types of activities. (See graph overleaf).

Many Local Meetings are small and do not feel able to organise activities collectively at this time. This could also be affected by

the age of members of the Meeting. Still, some of these Meetings explained that this is a live issue for them, for example: **"Although we have not done much as a Meeting to support asylum seekers, this remains a hot issue for us"**. Others expressed the desire to do more and would welcome support: **"Now is an ideal time to inform ourselves and prepare for future work."**

Some of these Meetings that are not responding collectively are in remote rural areas or islands where there is little

or no contact with refugee communities. Meetings in areas where many asylum seekers have been accommodated are likely to be more involved. However, several Meetings in rural areas are making connections with urban based groups helping them hold "away days" to the countryside, to spend time in relaxing surroundings.

109 Local Meetings responded to the question of whether there is anyone in their Meeting who is very involved in this issue.

Out of these responses, more than three-quarters said that there was someone very involved. Importantly, this suggests that most of these respondent Meetings have someone who is able to share their experiences and bring a level of knowledge on these issues within the Meeting community and among Quakers more widely.

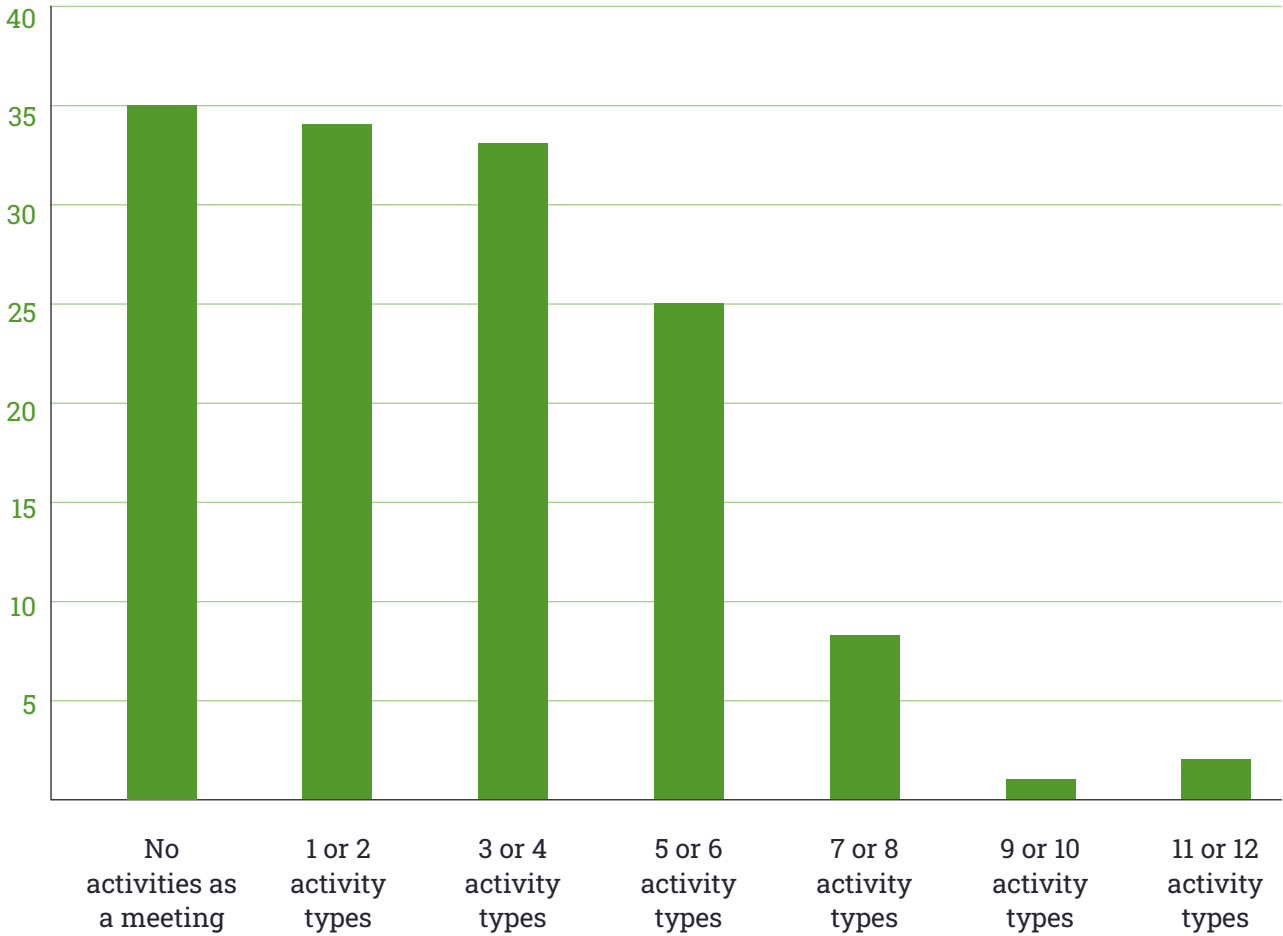
Participation in the Sanctuary Meetings initiative

As noted above, in 2017, Britain Yearly Meeting launched the Sanctuary Everywhere initiative, bringing together Meetings that wanted to offer a welcome and be actively involved in issues affecting people seeking asylum and refugees. 98 Meetings responded to the question of whether they had signed up as a Sanctuary Meeting at that time. It is likely that the other Meetings were not sure whether they had. Out of these 98, 30% had signed up as Sanctuary Meetings.

Among the Sanctuary Meetings, the average number of types of activities undertaken was 4.5, whereas in the Meetings saying that they had not signed up, the average was 2.7. This suggests that signing up as a Sanctuary Meeting was a meaningful marker of the importance of the issue and of the capacity to undertake activities.

70% of the Sanctuary Meetings that explained whether being a Sanctuary Meeting made a difference in their

Number of types of activities carried out as a local meeting



activities gave positive examples of what they had been doing as a result. For example:

“We held more events for people in the asylum process and local people. We have become a City of Sanctuary Meeting House of Sanctuary. We also hold welcome days and are seen as a local safe space for refugees.”

For several Meetings, being a Sanctuary Meeting just confirmed their existing level of commitment, and four Meetings indicated that it hadn't made a difference for them.

What are Quakers doing on asylum and migration issues?

Quaker responses to refugee, migration and asylum issues can be clustered under three headings:

Speaking for truth

Meaning activities that build awareness and understanding and equip people to challenge misinformation and hostile narratives.

Expressing solidarity

Activities that provide practical or financial support directly with and for people affected by the issues.

Witnessing for justice

Activities that call for public policies based on compassion and fairness.

The survey findings on Quaker activities have been reported under these three themes, below.

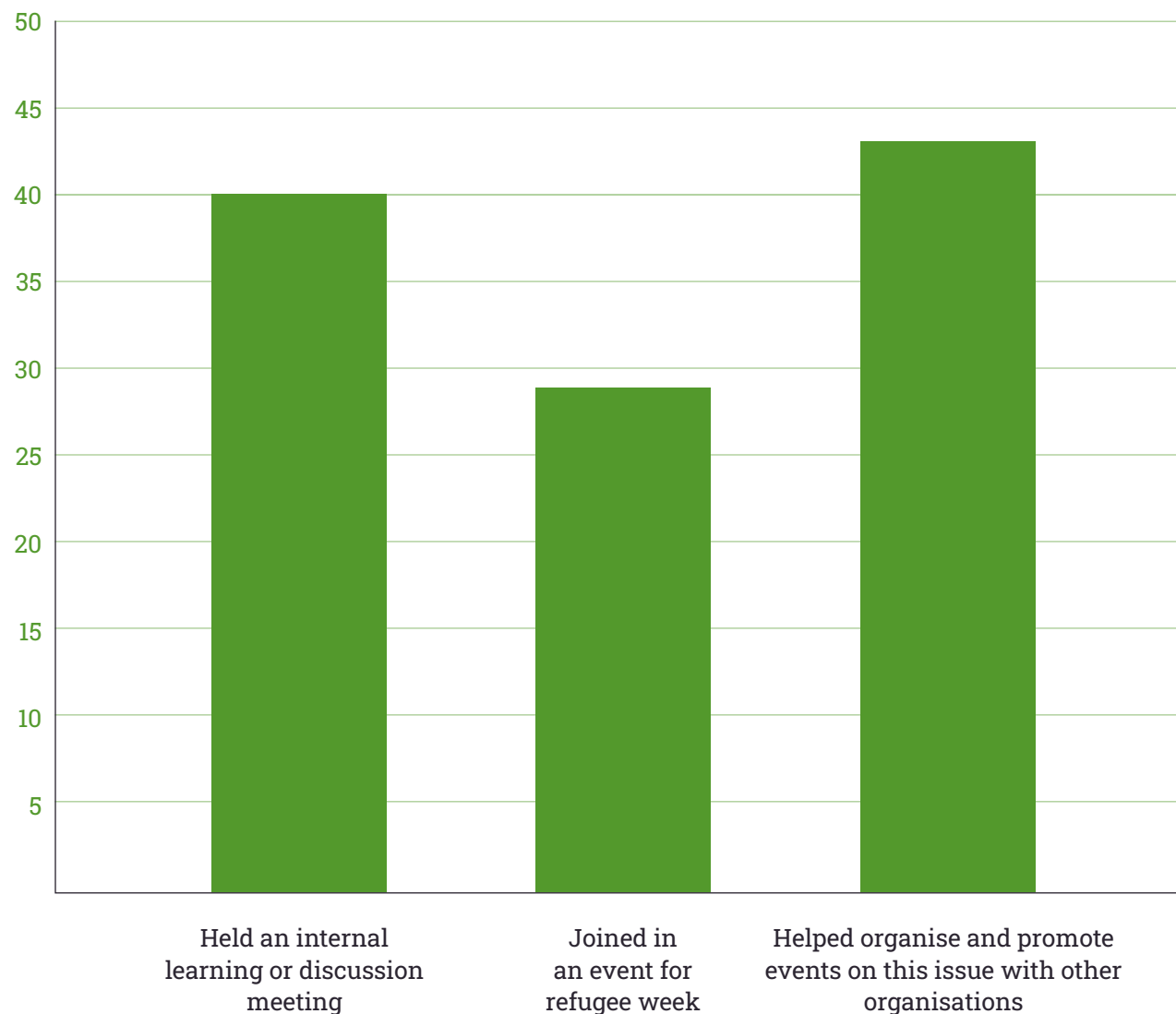
Speaking for Truth

The survey had three questions that particularly related to raising awareness, promoting community cohesion, and building knowledge about asylum and refugee issues within the Quaker Meeting and in the wider community. The questions asked:

- Whether Meetings had held an internal learning and discussion meeting.
- Whether they had joined in an event for Refugee Week as a Meeting.
- Whether they had helped organise and promote an event on the issues with another organisation.

67 out of the 138 respondent Meetings (49%) had done at least one of these awareness raising activities in the past two years. Most of these 67 did more than one type of awareness raising activity.

Speaking for truth: Number of meetings holding awareness raising and knowledge building events



In addition to these Meetings holding or helping with events, 76 respondents noted that individuals in their Meeting helped organise and promote events with other organisations (doing this as individuals, rather than as a Meeting).

The following quotes give a flavour of the kind of activities undertaken:

“The Meeting hosted a Stand Up to Racism Unity Day with our local MP et al, and an interfaith event themed on migration last year, in association with a mosque and with local Yiewsley charity REAP (Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership), and we invited witness from a Hammersmith-based Friend on their refugee work. One friend has been involved in REAP’s English language teaching work since.”

Uxbridge Meeting

“Refugee and asylum issues are often discussed at our Racial Justice Group which meets monthly. We organise an annual music/dance/poetry/food event to bring different communities together: on 27 Nov 2025, this was called ‘Island of Friendship’ (not island of strangers) and was very well attended -100+. The One World Choir sang which is a refugee-based choir in Sheffield.”

Sheffield Central Meeting

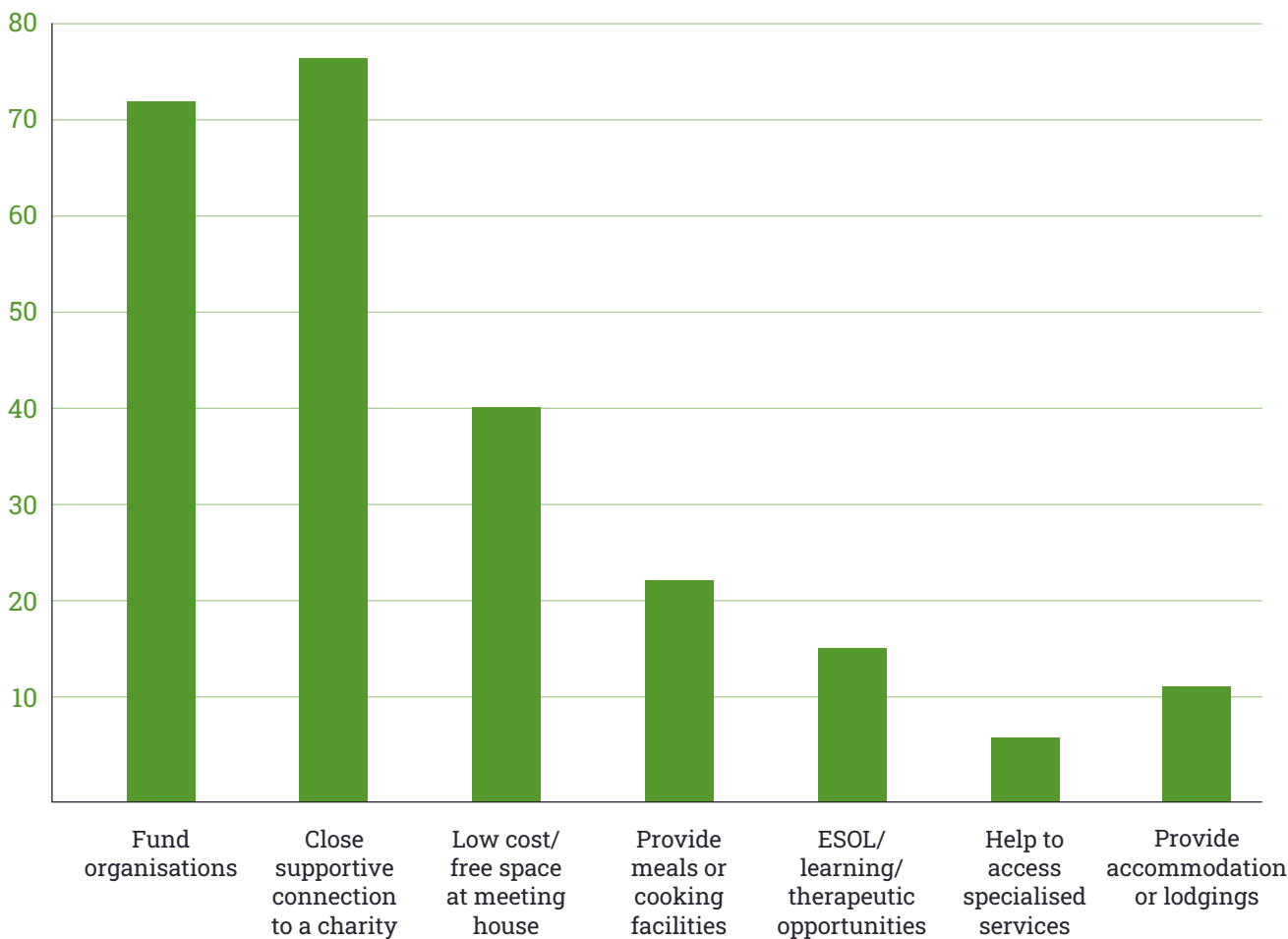


Walking together – As part of Refugee Week, volunteers and refugees took part in a circular woodland walk for Dens in Dacorum. Credit: Herts Welcomes Refugees

Expressing solidarity

The questionnaire had 7 questions relating to providing practical and/or financial support for direct work with or by refugees and people seeking asylum.

Expressing solidarity: number of meetings providing practical or financial support directly



The survey asked whether the Meeting raised funds for organisations providing services or advocacy. 52% of the responding Meetings provide funding to such organisations. In addition, 59 Meetings were aware of individuals belonging to the Meeting who raise or provide funding. Some examples of Meetings' support included:

“Our Area Meeting has donated money to the Othona Community West Dorset to finance a weekend for asylum seekers.”

Dorchester Meeting

“We have sponsored and underwritten the Refugee Aid choir fundraising concert. Three-quarters of the proceeds went to local and international refugee organisations. £6,000 in total.”

Nailsworth Meeting

“We raised money for winter trainers for hotel residents who only had sandals/flip-flops.”

Peterborough Meeting

Support for local charities is not limited to providing funds. 55% of the responding Meetings said they had a close supportive connection to a charity working with refugees and people seeking asylum.

“We provided furnishings and equipment to rehouse a family of refugees; we routinely support Shared Goods, a charity of first resort in Huddersfield for asylum seekers and refugees offering goods, money and time.”

Wooldale Meeting



Roger from Stratford upon Avon Meeting with bags of clothes and toys collected by the Meeting in August 2021 when over 100 refugees from Afghanistan arrived at short notice at a nearby hotel, following the sudden UK/US withdrawal from the country

The survey revealed a huge amount of individual volunteer work by Friends and in future it would be helpful to understand how these Friends feel supported by their local Meetings. 96 Meetings (70%) mentioned that individuals in their Meeting are volunteering for local organisations providing services (for example being a trustee, visiting detainees, helping at a refugee support centre).

"I volunteer with Herts Welcomes Refugees, supporting refugees in the community by visiting, signposting etc and working with others at our local asylum seekers' hotel, providing friendship and English tuition."

Member of Welwyn Garden City Meeting

"I have a long-standing friendship with three families from Syria. I pay for an allotment for one family. I help all families with forms and accessing education including getting children registered and funded nursery places through to university applications and work experience. I have helped all three families receive indefinite leave to remain and some citizenship."

Member of Stansted Meeting



Education session at Meeting House – Credit: Herts Welcomes Refugees

Quaker Meeting Houses can also sometimes be ideal spaces for regular activities with refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum. 29% of the responding Meetings provide low cost or free space at the Meeting House. For example:

“The Meeting has provided, with AM’s permission, low-cost Meeting House rental for Blackburn Harmony Group, who provide a cafe once a week for refugees/asylum seekers.”

Blackburn Meeting

“Stratford-upon-Avon LM has provided free accommodation during 2024 and 2025 for ESOL classes for refugees, social activities for refugee groups, management meetings for the main local voluntary organisation working with refugees and asylum seekers locally, and training sessions for volunteers with this organisation. Individual members of the Meeting volunteer with this group.”

Stratford-upon-Avon Meeting

Sometimes, rural Meetings wonder what they can do to help, as they are not close to the places where people seeking asylum are being accommodated. However, like Rookhow and Glenthorne Quaker Centres, several have seen that their location, often in beautiful surroundings, is a great opportunity to offer respite, community and enjoyment to refugees:

“We organised a day out with lunch and games at Disley Meeting House through a connection with a refugee support group in Stockport called Culture Bridge. We have done this for 3 years now. Last summer there were 70 of us and 2 dogs and it was wonderful!”

Disley Meeting



Disley Meeting hosting refugees who are linked with an organisation, Culture Bridge, in Stockport. The game being played shows that we are all connected to each other.



Bainbridge meeting say:

"For over 5 years, local Quakers have organised, with support from the local community, a Day Out in the Dales. We work with Darlington Assistance for Refugees to give up to 50 asylum seekers/refugees based in Darlington, a day in the countryside to enjoy. We pay for a coach for transport, hire a local sports centre and a village hall. Visitors can play football,

basketball, pickle ball: there is a children's playground on site, lots of space to run around. We offer various crafts to try, and face painting, welcome drinks and chat.

A local farmer offers farm visits. After lunch and more play, chat etc, we all head off for Aysgarth Falls, everyone gets a local ice cream and off they go. Local people provide traybakes and bring children/

grandchildren to play as we usually have a number of families and children."

"Apart from providing a little break for the refugees, it gives a chance for local people in a very white rural area a chance to see and meet refugees as people, not statistics."

22 Meetings provide meals or cooking facilities for local refugee and migrant groups. In addition, 30 Meetings said that individuals from their Meeting are involved in doing that. 15 Meetings provide English as a Second Language or other learning, skills or therapeutic opportunities. In addition, 65 Meetings said that individuals from their Meeting are doing that. Six Meetings provided help for people to access specialised support, and in addition, 61 Meetings said that individuals are involved in this.



Christmas party with Ukrainian refugees, Bangor Meeting and Croeso Menai

Hammersmith meeting say:

“These events are in chronological order as one thing has led to another; from welcoming people, to actively helping them, to making them feel part of the community they live in. We have a core of 2 - 3 people who are actively involved in all of these things and have been since day one. What we do has also benefited our Quaker community.

- Ukrainian Open House...has happened every month for three years.
- Asylum Seekers Welcome – a quarterly event over the last two years.
- Refugee Week - an annual series of joint initiatives where we work with the Hammersmith and Fulham Council celebrating displaced people and what they add to our community.
- The English Conversation Club: A weekly sit down with first language English speakers living in west London where people who lack confidence in their spoken English can practise in a very safe and caring environment. There is also a free breakfast.

- Multiple trips to the zoo, the theatre, football matches, events in Hammersmith and Fulham.
- Visits to doctors, letters of recommendation and support to hospitals, councillors, the Home Office.
- Board games events: We have had two. We think they will become a part of our meeting and what we offer outside our community. Loneliness is very real in London.”

Doncaster meeting say:

“The Doncaster Conversation Club is run from the Meeting House, largely but not exclusively by Quakers. We have been going for 15 years but as age is catching up with the volunteers, the Refugee Council will soon take over our work and the DCC will close. We run a weekly drop-in offering asylum support by our volunteers, ‘moving on’ support by the council, access to a solicitor, and we try to resolve any other problem such as train or litter fines, support issues, explaining Home Office letters etc. We offer free refreshments and a social focus. A mobile GP surgery comes

twice a month. One of our volunteers is a retired GP who offers links to other health services. There is a weekly ESOL lesson for all abilities. We have links with the Doncaster Rovers and there are two football sessions a week. We provide bicycles, clothes and shoes when they are donated. We are generously supported by Doncaster Council and donations from individuals.”

Bangor (North Wales) meeting say:

“When the Ukrainian Refugees arrived 4 years ago, the Bangor Quakers offered the use of our Meeting House free of charge, working in partnership with another local charity, Croeso Menai, already sponsoring Refugees. Approx 120 Ukrainian Refugees were sent to Bangor. After a year, the Ukrainians’ needs were less acute, and we found that the Home Office had just started dispersing asylum seekers (without prior warning to the Unitary Authority, the NHS Health Trust, or the College). So, for 5 months until these bodies had got themselves staffed, trained and ready, it was just the Quakers and two small local charities that held 3-hour sessions twice a week in the Meeting House and

one session a week in another chapel to support an increasing number of people being housed in HMOs around Bangor. The County, the college and the NHS have been really excellent.

We continue to offer friendship, support the asylum seekers with fares to interviews when the Home Office forgets to, arrange activities and outings during college holidays, procure clothes, bikes, even a desk and lamp for study, SIM cards, and language practice in an informal setting, singing, playing board games, talking about British traditions and hearing about theirs.

In the summer we hold the Thursday session in a Health Garden run by the Bangor Students Union, where the men grow vegetables. So far, we have supported upwards of 70 men, 4 women, and a couple of families.”



Excursion in Eryri/Snowdonia – Bangor Meeting and Pob I Bobl

Case study:

Helping with the hard labour of getting visa fee waivers

David, from Birmingham, has for many years been assisting people to complete their applications for fee waivers, as they go through the long ordeal of getting 'settled status' in the UK. He describes why the work is needed:

"Over the last ten years 'immigration fee culture' has become all-pervasive in this country, and we at Lifeline Options are part of the hard labour which goes into obtaining fee waivers, since a majority of applicants cannot afford to pay.

About half of the people who apply for asylum are refused, but the majority of this cohort qualify for Leave to Remain, either directly or following appeals. They are then on a ten-year pathway to settlement, conditional on paying fees every two-and-half years. Nowadays, the typical fee demand (that has to be paid four times) is an eyewatering £3,908 per person, with no reductions or instalments, two-thirds of this being the 'immigration health surcharge'.

To get a waiver of the fee, the applicant must prove that they cannot pay it. The online means test for this is exacting and often requires a two-hours or more phone interview, followed by a process of gathering and transmitting evidence

digitally to the Home Office. Upon success, there follows another application using the fee waiver token, and requiring yet more evidence.

The process is terrifying for many people because 'non-compliance' (for example, making a mistake in the evidence) at any stage entails a return to the starting line of the ten-year route. Getting assistance from someone with experience of the process reduces the risks."

11 Meetings provide accommodation for refugees, and in addition, 48 Meetings said that individuals in the Meeting were providing accommodation or lodgings:

“Exmouth Meeting discerned to provide a house for refugees rather than pursue a Meeting House for ourselves. We informally call it a ‘Meeting House for others’. This has been supported by Devon Area Meeting. It was successful for 5 years, but the government has closed this programme, and we are looking to find out if we can house refugees through different routes.”

Exmouth Meeting

“Chilterns Area Meeting provides Wycombe Refugee Partnership with a halfway house at a peppercorn rent. This is used for short-term accommodation.”

High Wycombe Meeting

“In our meeting, an individual is providing support to a family from Gaza. As an Area Meeting, we own three properties for refugees. One is rented to a charity housing refugees, but most recently we purchased two listed properties thanks to a large donation for refugee families. Thornbury Meeting has taken on the responsibility for refurbishing it and has fully furnished and equipped it with everything including food and toys for an Afghan family of 9 who moved in on Friday; and we are now preparing the second house. It is directly rented to refugee families coming from Home Office

accommodation (with the Local Authority acting as letting agent for us). The Local Meeting is providing financial support to the family, as the grade 2 listed buildings we were given have high energy costs.”

Thornbury Meeting

“A group of Lancaster members and attenders had a concern about Refugee Housing. This was adopted as a Local Meeting concern. After a lot of discernment, Area Meeting gave City of Sanctuary £10,000 to start a loan scheme for refugees to help them with a deposit and their first month’s rent for accommodation. Lancaster City of Sanctuary Trustees are almost all members or attenders of our Local Meeting.”

Lancaster Meeting

Witnessing for justice

The survey had three questions that related to building pressure for improved policies and witnessing publicly alongside people affected. Altogether, 30 Meetings identified pressure and protest activities that they are involved in.

For one of the Meetings, their advocacy with the MP was led by their Sanctuary group:

“Meeting’s Sanctuary group organised an audience with the local MP to raise awareness about refugees and government policy on behalf of the meeting and have written 2 letters to the MP. We reported back to meeting on the outcomes of these activities and encouraged others to write and to lobby their MP.”

Nailsworth Meeting

One Meeting described their advocacy for the rights and protection of people staying in hotels:

“Joined with others in counter-protesting the Cladhan Hotel protests twice a week. Our meeting wrote messages of welcome to add to the care packages given to folk arriving at the ex-hotel. These were on postcards of the local area.”

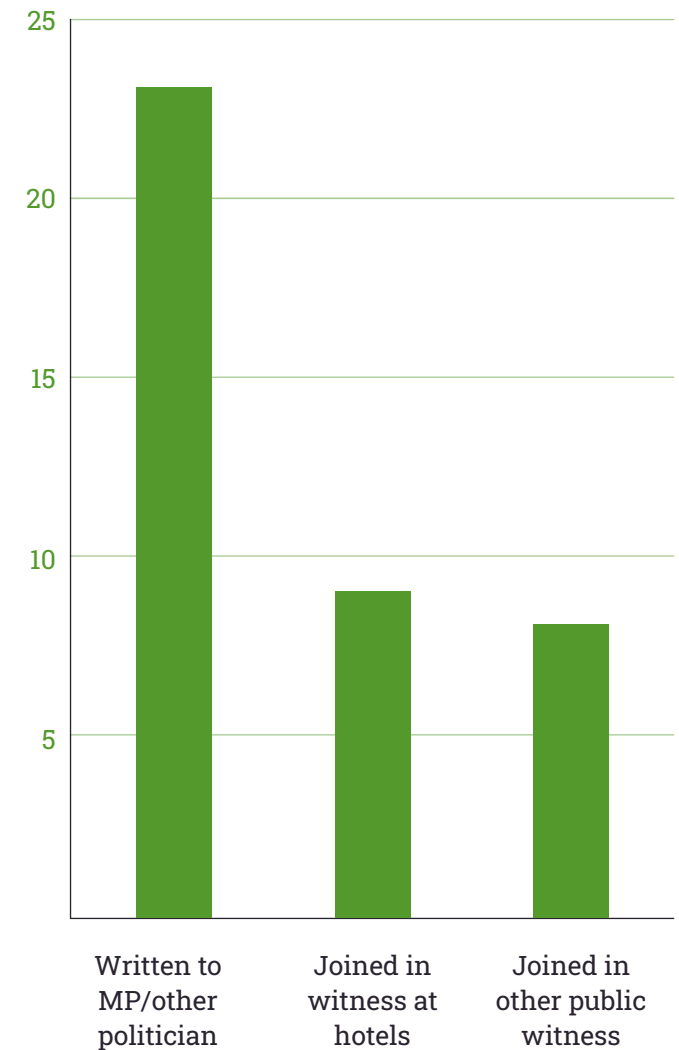
Falkirk and Polmont Meeting

To support efforts to influence policies, Quakers typically join with others in a local network or City of Sanctuary group:

“For the last 15 years, the town of Bakewell has had a Refugee and Asylum Seeker network which has brought together all those living locally with an interest in supporting refugees. Quakers played a significant role in offering hospitality days to refugees in contact with organisations in Sheffield and Derby. Members of the network also formed an Advocacy group to raise awareness of issues faced by refugees and lobby for change.”

Bakewell Meeting

Witnessing for justice: Building pressure for improved policies and witnessing publicly alongside people affected



Case study:

Campaigning for the closure of a local immigration detention centre

Bridget lives in Oxford and campaigned for 20 years for the closure of Campsfield House, the local immigration detention centre.

This involved a monthly protest outside the wire, holding up a phone number for residents to ring to request a visit; public meetings with speakers talking about their detention experience; writing and meeting with the MPs; shareholder actions at the AGM of the business (Mitie) that runs the detention centre – leading to campaigners being invited to stakeholder meetings; and much more. None of this activity was Quaker-led, but Quakers were involved, visiting Campsfield residents, from the start.

The harms of detention are recorded and well known, and the closure of the centre in 2018 was welcomed. However, in December 2025, the government reopened Campsfield House, overruling opposition

from the district, city and county councils and the local MP. Bridget now campaigns with a broad-based local coalition to close Campsfield again.



Protesting outside Campsfield detention centre

What kinds of support might be helpful for Friends' activities?

27 Meetings (20%) noted that individuals from their Meeting participate in QARN Meetings and events.

31 Meetings mentioned types of support that might be useful for them as they develop responses on refugee and asylum issues:

- 19 of these requested help with holding a discussion or speaker meeting.
- A few Meetings expressed the need for guidance and support as they are working in a context of hostility towards people seeking asylum. One Meeting that provides accommodation mentioned that they faced hostile local social media.
- A couple of Meetings expressed their need for more volunteers to sustain their work with refugees.



4. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the responses provided, we can see that across Quakers in Britain, there is a live, widespread and sustained concern about the desperate conditions and violation of human rights facing people seeking sanctuary.

More than half of the respondent Meetings have a close connection with a local organisation responding on these issues and in three-quarters of the Meetings there is at least one person who is highly active – potentially serving as a resource for learning about what is happening locally. We can see that Friends in many places are directly involved in steady week-by-week practical efforts, usually alongside other groups with similar concerns.

In many of the respondents' descriptions, there were signs that this was not simply efforts being made to benefit people in need, but that we ourselves are benefiting

from the connections we make. Along with anger and pain about the unbelievable cruelty that our neighbours are suffering, we also cherish the human connections that emerge. It means that our frustration with groups and leaders that promote division is not just because we want an abstract peace but because we have joined in communities that give us a better and truer vision, a tangible sense, of what we can be and what we want. All of this leads us to initiatives to raise public awareness and call for policies that offer welcome and integration rather than rejection and exclusion.

Recommendations:

1. Opportunities for learning from each other:

The survey has generated a wide range of examples of how Meetings and clusters of individual members built their efforts, often starting from an immediate need, or the visibility of a certain group of refugees in their area, or a request for a space with a kitchen, and finding that one thing led to another. It means there is a lot we can learn from each other about what is possible – as well as how our Meeting communities have benefited.

2. Reviving the Sanctuary Meetings Initiative:

The Sanctuary Meetings approach clearly added value and was found to nurture Meetings' commitments, so it would be important to consider once again bringing that into visibility, perhaps finding some focused central resources for mutual support. The City of Sanctuary movement is now much stronger than it was in 2017 and could be an additional source of local connections for many Meetings.

3. Supporting Friends' communication with policy makers:

QARN should continue working with staff of Quakers in Britain to provide briefings to Friends, as we seek better policies and make public statements in support of migration policies guided by compassion and justice. When speaking publicly, we have evidence that Friends are deeply involved in practical ways alongside people affected.

4. Helping local Friends' shared learning and discernment:

As requested by respondents, QARN and/or Quakers in Britain should provide suggestions for discussion meetings within Local Meetings on refugee issues, helping them consider what could be an appropriate response or next step for their Meeting, including giving well-informed and loving support to Meeting members who feel individually called to take action.

5. Collective Yearly Meeting discernment:

Efforts to enhance our collective witness on refugee, migrant and asylum rights should build on the discernment of Continuing Yearly Meeting and can be carried out in collaboration with Quakers in Britain, especially its Local Development Workers and Public Affairs and Media staff. Renewing our expression of collective resolve on this issue can also support our representatives who work within other coalitions, campaigns, inter-church and faith networks to promote opportunities for joint work. It can help us speak with a clearer voice on the connection of migrant rights with other key concerns among Friends.



Appendix: List of Local Meetings that responded to the survey

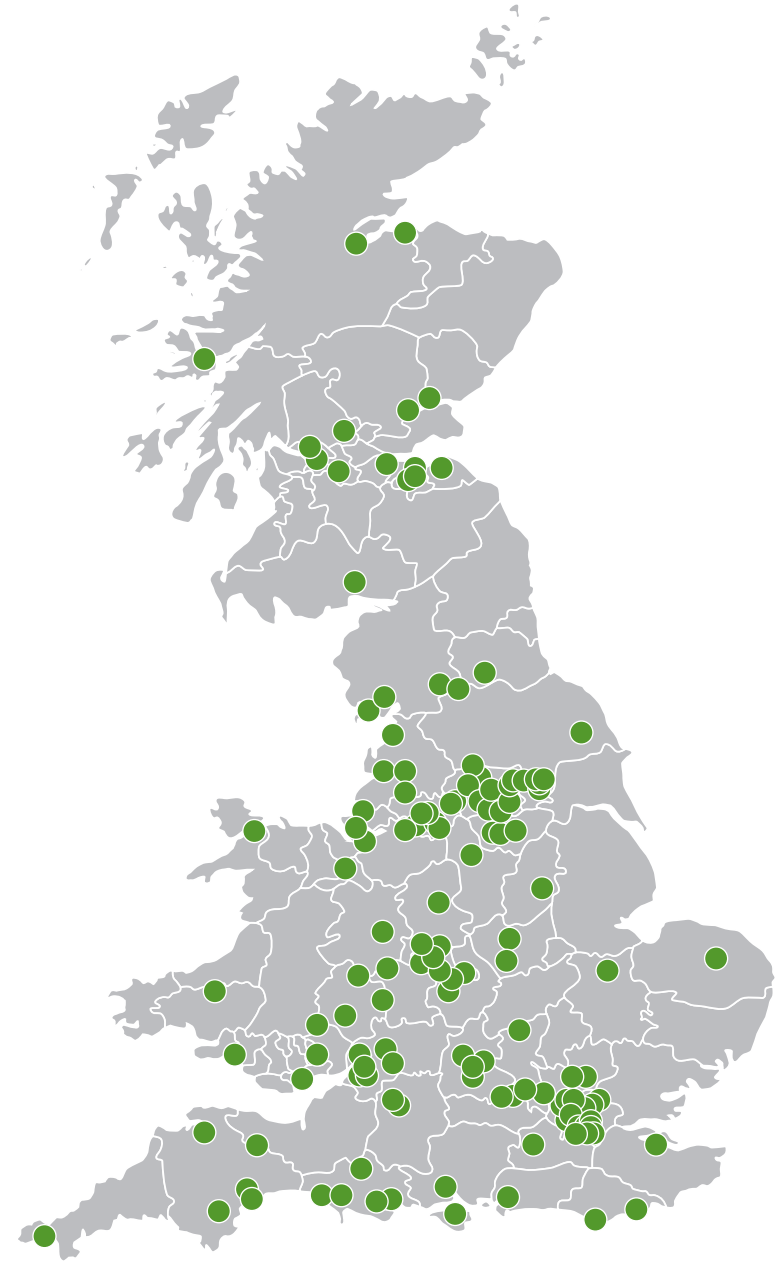
Area meeting	Local Quaker meetings
Banbury and Evesham	Stratford-upon-Avon
Bournemouth Coastal	Bournemouth, Poole
Brighouse West Yorkshire	Huddersfield, Bradford, Hebdon Bridge
Bristol	Thornbury
Cambridgeshire	Peterborough & Wisbech
Central England	Cotteridge, Stourbridge, Coventry, Solihull, Warwick, Bull Street Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield
Central Yorkshire	Barnsley, Wakefield, High Flatts, Wooldale
Cheshire East	Frandley
Chilterns	Jordans, High Wycombe

Area meeting	Local Quaker meetings
Cornwall	Marazion
Craven and Keighley	Keighley, Skipton
Cumberland	Mosedale with Penrith
Devon	Exeter, Totnes, Exmouth, Barnstaple
Dorset and South Wiltshire	Bridport, Dorchester
East Cheshire	Stockport, Disley
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham, Cirencester, Forest of Dean, Nailsworth, Stroud
Hampshire and Islands	Southampton, Isle of Wight
Hardshaw and Mann	Liverpool
Hertford and Hitchin	Hertford, Welwyn Garden City
Ipswich & Diss	Woodbridge
Kingston & Wandsworth	Wimbledon, Kingston, Wandsworth
Lancashire Central & North	Preston, Lancaster
Leeds	Roundhay
Leicester	Loughborough, Rugby
Lincolnshire	Newark
London West	Uxbridge, Harrow, Staines & Egham, Hammersmith
Luton & Leighton	Milton Keynes
Manchester & Warrington	South Manchester, Central Manchester
Mid Thames	Maidenhead, Henley
Mid-Somerset	Sherborne & Yeovil

Area meeting	Local Quaker meetings
Norfolk and Waveney	Norwich, Kings Lynn
Northeast Thames	Epping
North London	Muswell Hill, Stoke Newington
North Wales	Wrexham, Bangor
Notts and Derby	Bakewell
Oxford and Swindon	Abingdon, Charlbury, Oxford, Headington
Pendle Hill	Blackburn, Chorley, Marsden
Pickering and Hull	Pickering
Quakers in Scotland	Perth, Lanark, Dundee, Mull and Iona, Forres, Inverness, Glasgow, Dunblane, Shetland, Dumfries, Milngavie
Sheffield & Balby	Sheffield Central, Balby Doncaster, Nether Edge Sheffield
Southeast London	Bromley, Forest Hill
Southeast Scotland	Central Edinburgh, Penicuik, South Edinburgh, East Lothian, Falkirk & Polmont
South London	Croydon, Sutton, Streatham & Brixton
South Wales	Lampeter, Cardiff, Swansea Bay
Southern Marches	Ludlow, Abergavenny, Clun Valley, Hereford
Staffordshire	Wolverhampton, Uttoxeter & Burton
Surrey and Hampshire Borders	Farnborough
Sussex East	Hastings
Sussex West	Brighton, Chichester
Swarthmoor	Swarthmoor, Rookhow

Area meeting	Local Quaker meetings
Teesdale and Cleveland	Cotherstone
Thaxted	Stansted
Warrington and South Manchester	Sale
Wensleydale and Swaledale	Bainbridge, Leyburn
West Kent	Sittingbourne
West Somerset	Taunton, Trowbridge
West Wilts and East Somerset	Bradford on Avon
Wirral & Chester	Chester, Birkenhead
Worcester and Shropshire	Telford, Malvern, Bewdley
York	Harrogate, New Earswick, Friargate, York Central

Appendix: Distribution of Local Quaker Meetings responding to the survey



View the report online:

Use this link or the QR code below to access the survey report online:

<https://bit.ly/4sFbfyG>



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