



Quaker charity governing documents in the post-Meeting for Sufferings era

We have already received enquiries from Friends about amending their AM / charity governing documents to remove references to Meeting for Sufferings. Generally it is a good idea to keep things up to date and to make changes as they arise.

However, if your charity has followed one of the model documents provided by Britain Yearly Meeting then you must be cautious about making changes.

Although the BYM model documents for unincorporated charities and charitable incorporated organisations follow a slightly different format, they both contain three references to Meeting for Sufferings. Two of these will be in the section dealing with winding up or dissolving the AM / charity and the other will be in the definition section.

The dissolution clause in a charity governing document cannot be changed without seeking permission from the Charity Commission. Therefore, these clauses should not just be amended without permission.

The definition of Meeting for Sufferings appears in the governing document in order to explain the dissolution clause and it is therefore also unwise to amend that definition without permission.

Will leaving the document unchanged cause a problem?

There should be no difficulty in leaving the three references to Meeting for Sufferings in the document.

In the dissolution clause:

- (i) Meeting for Sufferings needs to agree to the proposal to dissolve the AM / charity or amalgamate with another AM / charity
- (ii) Meeting for Sufferings has a role in determining what should happen to the assets of a dissolved AM / charity

On point (i), the term 'Meeting for Sufferings' can now be read as if it said Yearly Meeting. That is because minute 25 of Yearly Meeting May 2026 stated that all the functions of Meeting for Sufferings "are hereby transferred to Yearly Meeting ... unless otherwise delegated or recorded in Quaker faith & practice". That means that from now on, requests to dissolve or amalgamate AMs should be directed to Yearly Meeting.

On point (ii), there is a sequential approach. Although the clause asks for Meeting for Sufferings agreement to a transfer of assets, it ends with the text: "and failing that for such other charitable purpose as Britain Yearly Meeting shall direct". That again gives the power back to Yearly Meeting to deal with this issue.

What should a charity do now?

There is no need to take any action in relation to this change.

If an AM / charity needs to seek Charity Commission permission for any other amendments to their governing document then it may be sensible to seek permission to amend the clauses above. If you do want to make these amendments then 'Yearly Meeting' can be substituted for 'Meeting for Sufferings' in the dissolution clause. You will need to define Yearly Meeting so that it is clear that it is the final constitutional authority for Quakers in Britain.

If a new charity is being formed, either because a) an AM is registering or incorporating for the first time, or b) a group of AMs are forming a new charity, it should not include any references to Meeting for Sufferings in the governing document.

If an AM / charity wishes to dissolve or amalgamate then it should be in touch with the Agenda Planning Committee of Yearly Meeting to discuss getting the request onto the YM agenda (YMAgenda@quaker.org.uk).