

Written evidence submitted by Quakers in Britain

Quakers in Britain submission

About us

1. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain is a registered charity. We work on behalf of the 21,575 people who attend 475 Quaker meetings across England, Scotland and Wales. Quakers are led by their faith to work for positive change in areas including climate justice, peace and migration.
2. We have a trading subsidiary called the Quiet Company, which runs hospitality services at Friends House in London and Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria.

Government support

3. Like many faith groups, we did not benefit from any of the funding made available to support charities during the pandemic. This was due to a range of reasons such as:
 - a. Some of the funding only applied to organisations that pay business rates, which charities do not.
 - b. Some of the funding only applied to village halls, so church halls and Quaker meeting houses did not receive support.
 - c. Some of the support was sector-specific, for example it was for heritage charities or charities that support frontline workers. Our work as a faith-based charity did not fit into any of these categories.
4. We were able to access the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). As of 31 January we have received £1.48m in CJRS grants. However, it was difficult for us to furlough charity staff because there has been no reduction in the level of need for our work. The furlough scheme incentivised charities to cut services when they were needed, rather than giving financial support for charities to continue providing services. We had to reduce our services due to the need to reduce costs by putting people on furlough. Reduced services included:
 - a. Providing support to children and young people in Quaker communities.
 - b. Working with the government and opposition parties to improve provisions for marginalised groups such as people on low incomes, people from migrant backgrounds, and people in prison.
5. Despite having to reduce the number of staff who were working, we were still able to continue providing support in some areas, including:

- a. Engaging with government officials to disseminate coronavirus advice and guidance to Quakers and Quaker meetings.
- b. Advocating for the rights of people who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, such as [people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds](#).

Impact of pandemic

6. During the pandemic, our national charity' income from investments and our reserves have fallen. The Quiet Company's trading income decreased by £3.5m in 2020. The national charity therefore received zero income from the company, whereas it would normally benefit from £1m of trading profits. This problem continues into 2021 as we do not know exactly when trading can resume and we have had to reduce staffing considerably, making it more difficult for the Quiet Company to build its business back up.
7. Many local Quaker meetings have suffered financially because they are no longer making money from letting out their premises. They have therefore not been able to donate as much to the national charity. Individual Quakers have been incredibly generous during the pandemic and we did not see a decrease in donations from them in 2020, but this may change as the effects of the recession begin to take hold.
8. We have accepted 35 voluntary redundancies in order to reduce costs in the charity and its trading subsidiary. We continue to do everything we can to protect jobs and Quaker work.

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