

Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs



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Can I help you?

Helena Chambers of QAAD reports on the advice agency 'Aquarius'.

'Can I help you?'

'Does someone know you're waiting?'

'Would you like a cup of tea?'

I'm in the corridor at the headquarters of the charity Aquarius, which offers support to people with alcohol, drugs and gambling problems. During the five minutes or so that I sat there, various members of staff took the initiative to check that all was well with me as they walked by. Even before I reached an office, the ethos felt positive.

Annette Fleming, the Chief Executive whom I was waiting to see, stressed the importance of responsiveness. The organisation has grown, but it is still small enough for people to know each other and the communities they serve. 'We pride ourselves on being an accessible management, and a local service,' she said.

Aquarius started operating in the 1970s, and now has eight branches throughout the Birmingham/Midlands conurbation, extending as far as Northampton. They offer advice and support to people with alcohol, drugs, or gambling problems – and, importantly, to the families or close others, regardless of whether the individual at the centre wishes to change their behaviour.

The emphasis on respecting people's social and emotional networks is also central to a new service that Aquarius is developing. It involves 'early interventions' for problem gamblers, and will be based in Solihull,

one of the areas that has been granted a licence for a new casino. A total of sixteen such licences were granted under the 2005 Gambling Act, and several have now reached a stage of bidding and planning. The Aquarius scheme is a pilot, and resourced by the Responsibility in Gambling Fund.

'We have a higher percentage of people who gamble in Birmingham than the national average,' explained Stephanie Williams, one of the members of the new team. 'So this is an important initiative.' The team has not yet started full operation, but they already have referrals from the area they will serve. Apart from giving advice to individuals and families, they will train primary care professionals in spotting the early signs of problem gambling.

At the time of the Gambling Act, QAAD and many other faith-based groups expressed concern about the new casinos - even the small ones will be bigger than those that existed before, and a rise in problem gambling is an obvious risk. Services like that provided by Aquarius could provide an indication of whether this is happening, as well as providing a response to it.

The team members I met were committed and enthusiastic. 'If we can see people early, we might be able to help people stop their risky gambling from escalating,' said Rosemary Simpson, one of the Practitioners in the team. The team were alert to potential risks of a casino gambling environment that aims to be 'family friendly.' (Children are not allowed to enter areas where you need to



be over 18 to gamble, but the complex may house areas where children can go.)

‘There is evidence that the children of problem gamblers are more likely to develop a problem themselves’ said Rosemary. ‘That sets off some alarm bells. But we are there to do what we can to stop problems arising.’

This effectively sums up the dilemmas of harm reduction and the ‘responsible gambling’ approach that has been dominant since the 2005 Gambling Act. It was based on the premise that gambling opportunities could be increased without a corresponding increase in harm. Decreased restrictions on advertising which encourage gambling are part of the picture. Recently the publication of the 2010 Gambling Prevalence study showed there has been a national rise in problem gambling since 2007, when the Act took effect. The question is whether more education and prevention services like Aquarius’s can help prevent an escalation.

QAAD does not believe this is likely, and continues to argue against expansions. However, whatever the regulatory regime, the need for services of this nature is not in doubt. The enthusiasm and commitment of the team bodes well for the quality of intervention people will receive - and they will be referred to counselling such as that provided by Gamcare if they need more intensive or longer-term help. Debt advice will also be available through a partnership with Birmingham Law Centre.

Aquarius continues to provide its core service of support to people with alcohol and drugs issues at its six centres. They also have a useful self-help ‘alcohol action plan’ on their website for anyone who wishes to cut down or stop their drinking (available on www.aquarius.org.uk).

Despite the long track-record of Aquarius within the Midlands, funding for agencies such as this is not assured. Nationally the Health Service reforms in England may make for more variation within local areas as regards what services are funded, and decreased budgets may make substances services vulnerable.

Annette Fleming is appreciative of the fact that Birmingham and the surrounding areas have given a high priority to alcohol and drugs work, and have continued to fund them. However, competitive tendering is a requirement on Local Authorities and health bodies, and putting in bids is time-consuming for small charities.

‘It has been calculated it costs about £3,000 -£5,000 to put in a bid,’ she said, pointing to a pile of papers about four inches thick on her desk. ‘We’re doing one at the moment. Some of the larger agencies have departments to do this work, but we do it by borrowing time from here and there.’

The whole process raises questions about the cost of ‘procurement,’ as it is known. ‘Is it cost-effective?’ asks Annette. ‘Would an inspection system like OFSTED be a better model?’ Nevertheless, Aquarius as a medium-sized agency continues to prosper, and she is optimistic about the future.

‘Our aim is quite simply to keep going,’ she said. ‘We have a system for consulting people who have used our services, and we involve them in training staff and planning future work. When someone says ‘if it wasn’t for Aquarius I’d be dead now,’ you know how important this is, and that we’re making a difference. What could be more fulfilling than that?’



‘Stepping out of the shadow’

Rupert Booth of Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting reviews “The War of the Gods in Addiction” by David E. Schoen.

The title of this book is cryptic, but the subtitle, “C.G. Jung, Alcoholics Anonymous and Archetypal Evil”^[i] is a concise summary of its contents. Schoen is a Jungian analyst who is familiar with treatments of addictions in general and Alcoholics Anonymous (‘AA’) in particular. He wishes to link the two fields, seeing workers in each apparently unfamiliar with the work of the other, and the book aims to build a bridge between ‘what works’ and ‘why it works.’

Schoen’s bridge is a well-designed structure. Its foundation is the exchange of correspondence between one of the founders of AA, Bill Wilson, and Jung.

Schoen examines the distinctive features of Jung’s psychodynamic theories. The first is a belief in the collective unconscious. This is a term given to those aspects of human psychology that appear to recur across different cultures, despite variations in environment. Within the collective unconscious, are ‘archetypes’ which he has defined as “identical psychic structures common to all” and which are “the common heritage of humanity” (Jung 1952). These can be glimpsed in latent patterns of behaviour and thinking, which await activation. Although this idea has proved controversial in the

past, to the modern eye it hardly seems so - given the large potential for storage of genetic information in areas of the genome that is common to members of a species, and whose purpose is not yet understood.

There is one very special archetype within the subconscious: namely the Self. In Jungian psychology this is similar to the Quaker concept of the Light within, or the Kingdom of God in the New Testament. The Self is supraordinate and a higher authority to the ‘Ego’, which refers only to the conscious part of the psyche; indeed Jung uses Consciousness and Ego interchangeably. A further element of the psyche is the Persona, the mask one adopts for social interaction. Additionally - and crucially for the understanding of addiction - there is also the ‘Shadow complex’, which is the accumulation of feelings and behaviour that are hidden and repressed as being unsuitable for display in the Persona.

Schoen provides an account of the development of an addiction on Jungian terms. Addiction begins with a weak sense of Self and the development of a strong Persona to meet social expectations. The Ego complex then identifies with the Persona, and not the Self, in effect creating a ‘False Self’. In the absence of a link between Ego and the actual Self, unacceptable thoughts and feelings are confined to the Shadow complex rather than being resolved. The Shadow gradually



becomes increasingly significant, which gives rise to visible behaviour. There is an inevitable tension between the Ego and Shadow that begins to express itself as anxiety, and there may be a resort to compulsive behaviour to relieve those tensions. In many cases this will involve alcohol consumption, which then exacerbates the situation. Instead of the Ego controlling the psyche, the eventual outcome is that the Shadow complex seizes control of the whole psyche, usurping the Ego complex and compelling the individual to self-destructive behaviour.

Schoen explains how the addiction can be neutralised; this is done by reversing the process of acquisition, by using the '12 Step' process. In Jungian terms it is essential to first collapse the Ego complex by admitting it is powerless over the addiction. The Ego is then realigned with the Self as opposed to the Persona and the reliance on the 'False Self' eliminated. There is then a matter of dealing with the Shadow, which is done by exposing it to outside scrutiny, by the use of a sponsor and group sharing, and undertaking a process of making amends to those who have been harmed by the addictive behaviour. Finally there is the nourishment of the Ego/Self link to preserve the new behaviour.

The last stage is part of the 'individuation' process, a Jungian term for the process by which the Self is fully integrated. This normally occurs in late middle age, and is a priority for addict and non-addict alike. Individuation is not viewed as inevitable, but a desirable process for those for whom religious

traditions have not provided the basis for a healthy Ego/Self relationship.

This is perhaps the point to consider whether there is a similarity between Quakerism and either Jungian analysis or the '12 step' programme. An authority on the former is the late John Yungblut^[ii] and the answer is that there seem to be many similarities. As regards the comparison with Quakerism and the '12 Step' programme, there are both differences and similarities. The major difference is the Quaker focus on silence, whereas AA meetings involve a series of narratives. However, both stress the humbling of the individual in deference to a Higher Power. The prime Quaker theological tract was produced by Barclay (1676)^[iii]; Proposition 9 described the need to work at salvation so that "an increase and stability in the Truth may, in this life, be attained, from which there can not be a total apostasy."

Finally the Quaker principle of discernment, namely prayerful determination of the appropriate decision, is fully consistent with the Serenity Prayer, repeated at each AA meeting: "God, grant me the serenity, To accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; And wisdom to know the difference".

[i] Schoen D., 2009, *War of the Gods in Addiction: C. G. Jung, Alcoholics Anonymous and Archetypal Evil*

[ii] <http://fcrp.quaker.org/yungblut.html>

[iii] Barclay J., (1676), *Apology for the True Christian Divinity; As Professed by the People Called Quakers, published in 1676 as Theologiae Vere Christianae Apologia*



The cost of alcohol; the new QAAD briefing

The news that alcohol-related hospital admissions topped 1 million in 2010 – almost a doubling since 2002 – attracted a fair amount of media coverage. It raised some discussion about the price of alcohol, but as tends to be the case with stories of this nature, the comment seemed to die down fairly quickly. However, the underlying issues remain.

These continue to present in different guises. Only a couple of months ago, at the beginning of April, a study was published in the British Medical Journal that showed 10% of male cancers and 3% of female cancers are alcohol-related.

Another report published in May by the Office of National Statistics shows that the death rate from alcohol-related conditions is 5.7% greater for women in routine jobs than for professionals such as doctors and lawyers. The pattern is the same for men, though the disparity is less startling. People from the more advantaged classes tend to drink more in total than those from less wealthy backgrounds, but tend to die older, and in smaller numbers from alcohol-related conditions. This statistic may not come as a surprise to readers of ‘The Spirit Level.’

The picture on hospital admissions is nuanced, in that types of risk can modulate with age. Younger people are more likely to be admitted to hospital for acute reasons, while a greater proportion of older people suffer from chronic conditions, which long-term consumption of alcohol has exacerbated.

That said, liver disease is appearing in more younger people than used to be the case, and frequent usage is an element in this. One of the researchers in this field, Dr Nick Sheron, has commented that;

“the importance of three alcohol-free days each week should receive more prominence.”

Cultural factors certainly play a part in regular long-term use, especially over recommended limits. The Director of Alcohol Concern, Don Shenker, has commented on the normalisation of alcohol and the role that marketing plays in influencing attitudes:

“It’s now common practice to sell wine next to ready-meals, pushing the idea that a relaxing meal should be accompanied by an alcoholic drink.”

Alcohol Concern is arguing for alcohol to be sold in dedicated places in supermarkets rather than spread throughout the store. They have also consistently pushed for a minimum price per unit of alcohol as the best policy to reduce harms.

After the splash from the latest headline has subsided, the waters tend to settle again, and it can be difficult to maintain the momentum for change.

It is particularly disappointing that within this context, the Department of Health grant to Alcohol Concern has been reduced. An independent voice is needed more now than ever.

QAAD is part of a faith-based group that is discussing the price of alcohol and ways of adding to the voices calling for change. We have prepared a briefing on the arguments and how they can be put to M.P.s and other policy-makers, which can be found on our website. The idea is to demonstrate that



for many groups in society, a rise in the price of cheap alcohol would not only be tolerated, but welcomed. We will report on progress as faith group plans develop, but

in the meanwhile, the briefing is available at www.qaad.org. Friends and Meetings who would like a paper copy can contact Helena Chambers on 01684 299247.

• **NEWS UPDATE** • **NEWS UPDATE** • **NEWS UPDATE** • **NEWS UPDATE** •

Review of the operation of the 2005 Gambling Act announced

In the wake of the recent Gambling Prevalence Study, which showed an increase in problem gambling, the Culture Media and Sport Committee in Parliament has announced a review of the operation and implementation of the Gambling Act.

The questions they will address are how effective the Act has been in meeting its objectives – which include the protection of children and the vulnerable from being harmed or exploited by gambling. It will also look at what impact the Act has had on levels of problem gambling – as well as the financial impact of the Act on the gambling industry. QAAD will be responding to the consultation, which closes on 30th June.

Decriminalisation debate

Public figures in the UK have signed a letter to David Cameron calling for an end to ‘the

war on drugs.’ Signatories include Dame Judi Dench and three former Chief Constables.

A Global Commission on Drugs has also concluded that the ‘War on Drugs’ has failed, and made a series of recommendations including that models of decriminalisation and regulation be considered, especially as regards cannabis. QAAD is working on a briefing paper on this subject. Letters or articles for QAADRANT are welcome.

High risk government decision

Despite the recent increase in problem gambling, we have just learned that the government has agreed to allow more higher value slot machines in gambling arcades and bingo halls. The stakes will also be doubled from £1 to £2. It is the latest in a series of concessions to the gambling industry; slot machines are particularly lucrative. The faith-based group of which QAAD is a part is making strenuous representations.

Cover picture

The picture on the cover is Dorchester Meeting House, and was provided by David Horsefall, who is now warden there. He writes ‘originally it was a local public house - the Union Arms - until it was bought by Friends. Jim Skipp took the lead in a

group who bought the property in 1978. Recently the interior has been updated and extended and the “pub” features are vestigial rather than self-evident. Now we are a regular “home” to both an Alanon group and an AA group.’



Charity begins at...

To meet the cost of QAAD's activities we have to find around £53,000 a year. Half of this is met from donations and investment income, the rest by using up our dwindling reserves.

QAAD speaks for Friends on such important social issues as dealing with drugs misuse, gambling, and alcoholism.

Additionally, we give a lot of support to Friends working in the treatment of addiction, to individual Friends who have problems with addiction or are the victims of drug and alcohol abuse, and to local meetings which are supporting a Friend with an addiction.

So we are speaking out, and seeking to meet the needs of Friends who are not immune to the problems of addiction.

Please send your donation to: Ron Barden, Treasurer, 33 Booth Lane North, Northampton NN3 6JQ. Please make cheques and charity vouchers payable to QAAD. Individual Friends and Attenders can enhance their donation if it is by cash or cheque, by completing the Gift Aid Declaration below.

Gift Aid Declaration

Name _____

Address _____

I wish Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs to reclaim tax on all donations I have made since 6 April 2000 and hereafter.

I understand that I must pay an amount of income tax at least equal to the tax the charity reclaims on my donations in the relevant tax year.

Signed _____

Date _____

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AS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Send £5 or whatever you can afford (cheque/postal order payable to **QAAD**) to Helena Chambers, 21 Church Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 5PD to receive a 1 year postal subscription to **QAADRANT** and advanced notice of **QAAD** events

Have you visited the QAAD website recently?

It's at www.qaad.org

Britain Yearly Meeting at Canterbury 2011

How do drugs – legal and illegal - affect our sustainability?

QAAD will be contributing sessions to the Children's Programme and to Junior Yearly Meeting on this theme.

We will look at how drugs affect our communities environmentally and spiritually. What does the drug production chain involve? What are its impacts on the land, and those who live on it? We hope young Friends will find the session informative, and give them the chance to share their own responses.

QAAD will also have a stand at the Listed Informal Group's Fair, and we look forward to seeing the faces of Friends old and new.

Letters and articles for QAADRANT are very welcome, and should be sent to Helena Chambers, 21 Church Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 5PD. t: 01684 299247 e: helenaqaad@hotmail.com