

QAADRANT

Summer 2016

Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs



A safe place to share

Join us at the QAAD Woodbrooke conference *pages 4-5*

Support for a vulnerable group *pages 2-3*



Working with vulnerable women with ‘dual diagnosis’

We were alerted to ‘Street Talk’ by a Friend who works in the project. Here the Director Pippa Hockton explains something of the issues they encounter

I spent this morning trying to find out which prison one of our women, Grace, has been sent to. I want to find out where Grace is being held so that I can speak to the prison mental health team. She has never been in prison before and is chronically mentally ill and has substance problems too; my fear is that she might self harm. It is her mental illness which has got her into prison but like most of our women she wasn’t getting treatment, she wasn’t even registered with a GP, so the prison will have no information about her health .

I am from Street Talk, a small charity which takes therapy to vulnerable women, with a particular focus on women in street based prostitution and women who have been the victims of trafficking. We are an outreach service, taking therapy into hostels and day centres . Most of the women we come across who are caught up in street based prostitution could be categorised as having ‘dual diagnosis’ – that is, both mental health and substance problems. Like Grace, they have suffered neglect and abuses in childhood, and by the time they are teenagers have learned to self- medicate for trauma with whatever they can find. Over the years they become

enmeshed in addiction and deteriorating mental health, running from pain by using substances or alcohol, supporting the addiction through street prostitution, making themselves vulnerable to every kind of abuse you can think of.

And so Grace is an alcoholic and psychotic, hallucinating, talking with the crows in the garden of the hostel, regularly getting beaten and raped on the street. We did everything we could to get her a mental health assessment, diagnosis and treatment. She was consistently batted away from mental health services on the grounds that her psychosis was alcohol induced, and signposted towards addiction services. She was never going to engage with addiction services even though they were compassionate and willing to work with her, because she doesn’t have the capacity. Our work was to sit with her and listen gently, on those days when she was well enough, to provide some kind of compassionate human contact. The hope with women like Grace is that they might encounter their own humanity in the relationship with the therapist and make the first step towards recovery which is to feel that they are worth it.

Grace liked to sit in the shed in the garden of the hostel. It is a dump, long neglected, surrounded by weeds and brambles but that was where she felt safe and she found it funny to watch me clamber over the nettles and sit down on an upturned crate. I got glimpses of a brilliant, creative woman who

loved her children more than anything, who wrote songs, who thought about things and cared. Her dream was the one most of our women hold, a place of her own, her children back, an ordinary life.

One day last year passers-by found Grace unconscious in the street and called an ambulance. When she came round she struggled to get away and it seems she bent the thumb of one of the crew, which resulted in an assault charge. She didn’t turn up to court; she doesn’t have the capacity; she doesn’t know what day it is - there are days when she wouldn’t be able to tell you her own name. And so now because she failed to attend court and there was no record of how ill she is because she has never had a diagnosis, she is in prison. My worry is that her illness will get her into more trouble there, that she will be beaten up by other prisoners, or that she will be punished for her behaviour by the prison authorities. It is not unusual for the women Street Talk works with to find themselves in solitary confinement shortly after they go to prison, punished for behaviours which are driven by mental illness. One of our other women with a diagnosis of bi-polar mental illness, as well as an addiction problem, has a bent nose where she was beaten up by prison inmates after being arrested for her actions whilst she was in the thick of a manic episode She spent weeks in solitary confinement with no treatment for her bi-polar condition, hallucinating, terrified and where she tried to take her own life to end her suffering.

When vulnerable women are refused mental health care on the grounds of their addiction they end up with no care at all because they are not well enough to engage with addiction

services. The vicious circle of mental illness and addiction turns ever faster, as women self-medicate for trauma and psychosis with whatever they can find, sometimes into oblivion. Like Grace, women end up evicted from their accommodation and have nowhere to go but the street or a crack house, dangerous for anyone but so much more so for someone with a mental illness. Sometimes, as in Grace’s case, they end up in prison. What I have learned since I founded Street Talk, is that women who are abused in childhood and who do not get timely help are punished over and over again throughout their life for the abuse which they suffered as children. What happened to Grace this week is not unusual. Grace and all the other vulnerable people with dual diagnosis need accessible, compassionate treatment for both aspects of their condition. That is a human right.

If anybody would like to know more about the work of Street Talk we have a website www.streettalkuk.org or you may contact me at pippa@streettalkuk.org

QAADNET Meeting

On Saturday 23rd April, we were glad to welcome seventeen Friends to a QAADNET meeting with the theme of ‘close others,’ where those gathered shared experiences and insights in a supportive atmosphere. We are grateful to Bristol Central Quaker Meeting for making us welcome there.

A safe space to share

A Friend who will be leading one of the workshops at the 2016 QAAD Woodbrooke Conference, shares her journey.

The 'Hurt and Healing' Conference run by QAAD at Woodbrooke in 2014 was something I went to because I had attended Al-Anon for a year and it felt refreshing to see that Quakers were offering something with such a poignant title. I was hurting and in pain and was looking for ways to find some peace of mind.

I am the granddaughter, daughter, wife and mother (close other) of some who have suffered and are still suffering from dependency on alcohol and cannabis. Writing this article is part of my recovery in being open, honest and vulnerable.

That QAAD conference was a challenging place for me to be. Being around male recovering alcoholics is scary for me because of my father and my alcoholic ex-husband. Additionally, my life at the time was unmanageable because I was focusing on my son's increasing use of drugs and alcohol to self-medicate his pain.

I did attend a very helpful Al-Anon meeting during the conference and I received support from five Quaker mothers of those suffering from dependency/addiction who met together during the weekend. We spoke openly, shared stories and offered one another help.

Al-Anon had taught me to put the focus on myself. It was tough going. I had to let

go of my attachment/addiction to pleasing my son and other people as this is how I believed I got the love I needed. I have to work at this awareness every day and when I can accept it I find some serenity in my life.

I had been walking on eggshells around my son and my father - the truth is, I was too fearful to really say how I felt. Did I even really know what I felt? I understood their feelings but I gave mine no importance. My patterns of behaviour - or as Al-Anon calls them - "defects of character" are those of co-dependency. Often in dysfunctional families like mine, behaviour is handed down from one generation to another.

My boundaries have been non-existent around protecting myself. I thought saying "no" was selfish. Much of what I am saying here means that my self-esteem has been very low but I covered it up so well. I am educated and have been falsely confident; if you were to meet me you would have no idea what has been, or is, going on inside of me. How many of us are carrying these secrets which are shameful and guilt ridden? How few of us have the opportunity to talk safely about our "shadow selves"- the hidden parts of ourselves that we don't dare to show ourselves and others.

I realised Al-Anon was not really the place for me any more. I read an excellent book- "Many Roads One Journey - Moving Beyond the 12 steps" by Charlotte Davis Kasl who is an American Quaker. This

book influenced my spiritual journey. I then chose one-to-one counselling for co-dependency, with a Quaker Counsellor specialising in addiction.

As a Quaker I have had to grapple with the idea of God. I continue to contemplate what "Let go and Let God" means. Taking one's protective, motherly hands off the addict is hard - it can be 'tough love' that is needed. I remind myself of the 4 "M's" learnt in Al-Anon: managing, mothering, martyrdom and manipulation - who, me? manipulative? I am having to learn other behaviour from my usual repetitive, rescuing/enabling and controlling ways. It requires change. Step 1 and step 3 in the version of the 12 steps which I have been using have some key answers for me.

"We admitted we were powerless over ourselves and that our lives had become unmanageable" (1)

This may sound simple, but admitting I am powerless is a process and is not as simple as it sounds. I have also had to re-learn what this step 3 says "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God." (2)

My own spiritual journey in all of this has asked for me to be open and honest in sharing my vulnerabilities with others who I feel safe with. By first knowing myself I can understand and have empathy for those in pain and who are protecting/enabling the loved one in their addiction.

I am taking a leap of faith when I try to learn to hand the control of people, places and things over to God. Acceptance of 'what is' has become an important daily reminder to myself. I am learning to

forgive and to have love and compassion for myself and others.

There have been times on this journey when I have felt I was in nursery school needing to re-learn some very basic things and it has been a humbling experience. However, I see myself as softer and more compassionate to my son in his suffering because I have been able to recognise my own. I am no longer in denial. I am facing up to my own fears and can now bear the pain when he is suffering which before was so difficult to do.

Since my visit two years ago to the conference, I have attended two QAADNET meetings: one in London last February and one in Bristol in April 2016. These meetings have enabled me to meet other parents/partners who share similar pain in seeing their loved ones go down the road of using drugs or alcohol to a point of negatively affecting their lives. This has given me opportunities to share in a Quakerly way; to listen deeply to others' stories and to hear experiences from those who work in the field of addiction.

I hope to see you at the QAAD Conference in July called 'Making a difference.' I will be there offering a support group for 'close others' wanting a safe space in which to share their journeys.

[References \(1\) and \(2\) from 'Breaking Free' by Pia Melody and Andrea Wells Miller \(1990\) pages 28 and 101. Harper San Francisco](#)

For more information about the conference, see the final page of QAADRANT

Decriminalisation – Sandra Hobbs of Bedminster Quaker Meeting and Clerk of QAAD writes...

As Area Meetings have been asked to consider the concern of Cornwall AM on decriminalisation and the paper from the Quaker Decriminalisation Network, we thought it would be timely to remind Friends of the position taken by QAAD when we last addressed this. Friends will perhaps know of the briefing paper written by Helena Chambers which looked at the various trials in different countries on decriminalisation of drugs. The paper also addressed the study evidence available at that time (2012) and the nuanced arguments for different approaches. In view of the complexities trustees did not feel led to a fixed position on decriminalisation, but did discuss ways in which progress to a health-based system could be made.

QAAD trustees minute from a meeting on 12 January 2013

One trustee began our reflections by expressing her strong belief that a health and education approach would be vastly more helpful than a punitive approach, mainly for the sake of individuals and their families but also for the good of society in general. She reminded us that in some cases a criminal record blights any future work opportunities, regardless of the individual recovery. There was also some discussion of the effect of drugs, particularly cannabis, on driving, but again this is a complex issue that has no easy answers.

Trustees agreed that we need a major shift from stigmatising attitudes within society, and that there are huge blocks from some politicians, from much of the media and from parts of the general public. There are some signs that public attitudes are shifting slowly, and Trustees see a role for Quakers

Helena's paper outlined ways of building on the 'diversion schemes' that already exist to offer health advice rather than punishment. It noted that while many people in prison have a drug problem, most are not in there for drug offences - so changes other than to the drug laws themselves would be necessary to help them. Drug treatment being offered as an alternative to a criminal conviction was one suggestion, and we are glad to note consideration of this nature also appears in the recent QPSW Sub-Committee paper on Criminal Justice. Another recent proposal is for prisoners with drug problems to have the second half of their sentence entirely devoted to rehabilitation (see QAADRANT winter 2015 edition).

Below is Minute 13/02 which QAAD trustees came to after reading the paper and considering it in quiet reflection.

in encouraging this shift in understanding, however long that may take.

The evidence on decriminalisation of cannabis is quite widely available from other countries, particularly Portugal and Australia, and attitudes within society here may be less stigmatising towards cannabis problems than other drugs.

It is clear that it would be impossible to create a legal position on all individual drugs, as 'legal highs,' widely available and widely used by some young people, are appearing in new forms every day. (NB this minute was written before the Psychoactive Substances Act of 2016).

Trustees recognise the importance of the difference between civil offence and criminal offence in the future life of individuals. There are great misunderstandings between decriminalising, de-penalising, and legalising and the present situation in this country

is that there is already a pragmatic way of dealing with individual offenders that further blurs the boundaries. We recognise the importance of timeliness in offering prompt health-based interventions to those who are caught up in the legal system. There are major questions of resource, both financial and in the availability of good treatment facilities.

This brings us back to our main focus on the care of the individual, the family and the well-being of our society as a whole. Trustees believe that a health-based approach is needed in future. People need care when their life circumstances lead them to seek

chemical succour. The inequalities in society are part of this whole problem and we have to acknowledge that moving forward needs careful consideration, gathering evidence as changes are made, and that there are indeed no easy answers. We do, however, intend to continue to focus on influencing drug policy towards more health-based provision as regards drug use and misuse. We support the recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee and hope that the refusal of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary to consider establishing a Royal Commission may be reconsidered.

LETTERS TO QAADRANT - LETTERS TO QAADRANT

Dear QAADRANT,

I'm writing on behalf of the small group who run the 'Reading Qf&p' project.

Reading Quaker faith & practice is a national programme of reading and conversation about our Book of Discipline. There are (many) passages throughout the book which might help to shape our approach to alcohol and drugs.

How do these sections of Quaker faith & practice speak to you? Why not share your responses with others by writing an article for QAADRANT or for your local meeting newsletter?

This would also be a perfect opportunity to engage members of your meeting by organising a study group on these chapters. There is a choice of free study resources for groups and individuals to download and print at: together. woodbrooke.org.uk

For more information and the full reading calendar see: qfp.quaker.org.uk/reading

Rhiannon Grant ('Reading Qf&p' project)

QAADRANT editors hope Friends will take up these suggestions, including with letters to QAADRANT. Helena Chambers begins:

I have reflected a lot on this passage:

Trouble of soul can teach us things that raptures never could – not only patience and perseverance, but humility and sympathy with others. Edward Grubb, 1933 QfP 21.12

It makes me think of the many people I have known who are 'in recovery' from a drink or drug problem, and their 'close others.' I am so often humbled by the spiritual depth of people who have had to deal with this immensely deep pain. I don't mean to imply that this makes the suffering in any way 'worth it' or to deny that many don't get that far, or that there aren't far less agonising and risky routes to spiritual growth. It's simply that these words recognise something I have seen, and find inspiring.



The QAAD/Woodbrooke conference 2016

Friday 29th –
Sunday 31st July

Theme: Making A Difference

Faced as we all are with alcohol, gambling and drugs issues, dare we believe we can make a difference - as close others, volunteers, professionals, and above all, as Friends in our Meetings? At this conference we will share news and insights on the various ways in which this can be done.

We asked Professor Chris Cook to be our keynote speaker because he has 'made a difference' in several ways. He is a psychiatrist who has worked for many years in the field of addiction; he is also an Anglican priest who has brought his particular interest in spirituality to bear on the treatment of addiction, and has done so in ways that have also been influential with others.

There will also be a choice of workshops: Marc Mordey of Alcohol Concern Wales will share his experiences of how community development can be an effective way of helping people think about alcohol issues; Tim James, a retired GP and a trustee of QAAD will invite participants to consider how and why spiritual connections are resisted. It is his experience that healing for those addicted and close others can be delayed by the difficulties of upholding and sustaining this aspect of their being within the stresses of the addictive process; Patsy Staddon of the Women's Independent Alcohol Support

will address the benefits of work in women only groups; and a Friend who is a close other will be offering a sharing space for others in similar positions.

Making a Difference doesn't have to be a major act: we hope the weekend will provide opportunities for sharing how seemingly small acts of listening, recognition and spiritual support can reach out and comfort.

Apart from structured time in large and small groups there will be many opportunities for informal sharing among those attending in the beautiful surroundings of Woodbrooke.

We hope to welcome Friends old and new who have personal experience of addiction and substance issues, but the weekend is also intended for those with no particular background who are simply interested to learn more.

We are very grateful that the event has been accepted by Quaker Life as a nominating event, so we hope that Area Meetings will consider nominating a representative.

If you would like any more details of the conference, please contact Helena Chambers of QAAD on 01684 299247 or at helenaqaad@hotmail.com

Have you visited the
QAAD website lately?

www.qaad.org

It gives news of our events, action, and briefing papers