

QAADRANT

Winter 2017

Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs



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Reflections on QAAD's weekend at Charney Manor

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Greetings from QAAD's new Director

I've been struck by the warmth of the welcome I have received by QAAD's trustees, our now-retired Director Helena Chambers, and our guests at Charney in October. Stepping into Helena's shoes, mindful of the long and fruitful years she has dedicated to QAAD, I feel excited and not a little apprehensive. It has not taken long to feel that I have joined a unique, impressive organisation where Quaker values are applied to every aspect of its work.

I had the privilege of working in tandem with Helena throughout October, as she handed over the wealth of knowledge, experience and vast range of resources she had accumulated over the years. Together, we attended a meeting of the Ecumenical Group on gambling; a Quaker Youth Work Network meeting and a Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) meeting, where I met and listened to the views of industry stakeholders. I felt particularly fortunate that QAAD's biennial weekend retreat at Charney coincided with my induction, serving as it did as an ideal opportunity to discuss QAAD's work and next year's Woodbrooke conference with trustees and guests.

I arrive at QAAD having spent the past 20 years as a researcher, trainer, evaluator and consultant, working in the voluntary and public sectors. I joined the national crime reduction charity Crime Concern in the late 1990s, working across the country with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, local government and strategic bodies to research local issues and develop recommendations for

change. The focus was often on violence and personal safety – in the home, the community, the workplace – with substance misuse a serious, damaging factor. During this time, I produced two Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategies which highlighted the presence of competing perspectives and priorities when considering the responses and resources required.

Since leaving Crime Concern, I have continued this work independently, alongside colleagues, delivering community-focused contracts. One example was an evaluation of an initiative in the West Midlands which aimed to simplify access to local support services by people with multiple or complex needs, including substance misuse and mental health. I also worked with a Bristol charity which supported close others, evaluating and facilitating its service users' forum. On a personal level, I have attended many open 12-step Fellowship meetings and have found them invaluable in deepening my understanding of the impact of addiction on those in recovery, their family members, and communities.

This is the beginning of what I hope will be a long and productive time with QAAD. Helena and the trustees have established a solid foundation which underpins QAAD's strong reputation for the quality of its research and integrity. QAAD is a listening organisation, and I hope that Friends will continue to contribute articles and letters to QAADRANT, and to contact me directly with views, ideas and concerns. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Alison Mather

Letters and articles for QAADRANT are always very welcome and should be sent to Alison Mather, alison@qaad.org t: 0117 924 6981



Minimum alcohol unit pricing in Scotland – Supreme Court issues its judgement

In a unanimous judgement on November 15th, the Supreme Court ruled that the Scottish Government can set a minimum unit price for alcohol, rejecting the Scotch Whisky Association's appeal in July. Ministers are expected to make Scotland the first country in the world to establish a minimum price, expected to be 50p per unit,

possibly early next year. The judgement stressed that minimum pricing targeted *'the health hazards of cheap alcohol and the groups most affected in a way that an increase in excise or VAT does not'*. The Welsh Assembly's call for evidence on minimum pricing closes on December 15th, and Ministers hope that it will become law by summer 2018. Implementation in the Republic of Ireland will be delayed until the Northern Ireland executive and assembly are back in operation.

Signposts for the Soul – Giving and Receiving

Over the weekend of 20th - 22nd October, QAAD held its biennial weekend retreat at Charney. For the first time, we welcomed guests to join QAAD's trustees, four of whom reflect on their experience of the weekend below.

'Signposts for the Soul' was an appropriate title for a refreshing weekend for me at Charney Manor as QAAD trustees opened up their regular biennial gathering to include Friends who share QAAD's concern with alcohol, drugs, and gambling addiction.

While gusts of wind up to 90 mph swirled around outside, the solid thick-walled 800 year old manor house provided a calm, safe harbour for us to witness two significant


QAAD handovers – from retiring Clerk Sandra Hobbs to new Clerk Jon Lyon, and from retiring Director Helena Chambers to new Director Alison Mather – as well as to reflect upon QAAD's pathways for the future.

As the only participant from abroad, I felt privileged to be present for such an occasion and benefited from the spiritual sustenance of ministry from all.

Daniel Clarke Flynn

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

Here is a short account of my impressions after attending the QAAD weekend held at Charney Manor in October. I found it an eye-opener and heart warmer – and this is why.



About half of those attending were old timer QAAD trustees. As a ‘newbie’, I found it was an amazing experience to feel welcomed into this open fellowship of professionals, close others and recovering addicts. The initial session of personal sharing was both reflective and supportive. There was an extraordinary honesty and courage as attendees spoke their Truths, and this established the sharing and learning for everyone over the whole weekend.

I found out that the QAAD trustees cover a wide range of backgrounds – though like many Quaker committees they initially appeared settled, sorted and above the storms and stresses of ‘real life’. But their engagement with the grief and pain of alcohol and substance misuse became clear very quickly. Amazingly, these direct and raw experiences then informed the group planning for QAAD’s conference next year.

My reason for coming to the weekend was that I had seen a great change for an attender of my local Meeting after they went to the QAAD conference at Woodbrooke several years ago. This attender had found the support, advice and challenge of the conference had greatly helped them as a ‘close other’ of an addict to cope with life so much better. At this weekend, I also found one of my own difficult experiences was kindly supported and I was helped to cope better with this (just a bit).

I found that I learnt and felt so much during this weekend, so do have a look

around your own meeting and have a good think about what is happening for all the Quakers and their families whom you know. Then consider whether addiction in its many forms is an issue. Also bear in mind that ‘moderation in all things’ really doesn’t cover the pain, damage, love and growth for addicts and their families. Do spread QAAD information more widely and consider ways to reach out to anyone struggling with addiction – you will be taking a leaf out of the book of these amazing QAAD trustees!

Rose John

Harlow Local Meeting; North East Thames
Area Quaker Meeting

As an Area Meeting Rep for QAAD, I decided to attend a special meeting held in Charney Manor at the end of October. The weekend combined deep sharing from those who have been directly affected by alcohol and drugs, including those now in recovery, parents of addicted adult children, and professionals. Although I am somewhat on the edge of this spectrum, my interest being in addiction as it relates to the criminal justice system, I always feel very welcome and valued.

One action I think that we must take forward is making Area Meetings more aware of the ‘epidemic’ of alcoholism, drugs and gambling that is causing much unseen misery in society. Quakers are not exempt from its grip. Unfortunately, several people who shared their experience of suffering or supporting a close other



felt that some Meetings do not appear accepting and supportive. This means that they cannot share their struggles with their local Meeting. Encouraging Area Meetings to appoint more QAAD Reps should help to get this message out.

Melanie Jameson
Worcestershire and Shropshire
Area Meeting

There are a lot of twists and turns on the country roads leading to Charney Manor, but they are well worth the ride. The weekend gathering was a new initiative for QAAD. Usually, trustees meet around this time of year to plan the next biennial Woodbrooke conference. This time, it had been decided to open it to Friends with an interest in the subject of addictions. The goal was to get out-of-the-box new suggestions.

We were an eclectic mix of addicts in recovery, ‘close others’ (relatives and friends of addicts) and professionals – some of us being all three. A recovering alcoholic mentioned that this gathering offered a unique opportunity, one he had never had in AA, of meeting people from other fellowships. He saw it as a very enriching experience.

During a listening meeting, we could hear the wind howling outside (storm Brian was on). Someone talked about the leaves of a tree that moved in different directions, though pushed by the same wind, relating it to our group: ‘Rejoice in that variety and in that depth of experience.’

Another Friend quoted the Serenity Prayer and I pondered on what it is that I ‘cannot

change’. How the world is going, the statistics, the murders and abductions, the sicknesses, and bad news in the media came to my mind, as did the question ‘what can I change?’ I can change myself, as the 12-Step programmes say. And, as a few examples from Scriptures suggest, I can change God’s mind by praying for those I have compassion for: ‘He was moved with compassion upon them, because they were as sheep having no shepherd.’ (Matthew 9:36, KJV). Compassion is a signpost to pray, as well as to act.

We were invited to share any suggestions we had for next year’s Woodbrooke conference. Attendance has fallen over recent years, from about 60 to 40 people, and as the distance to travel and cost may be an issue for some Friends, the alternative of having one-day conferences in different areas of the UK was suggested. We discussed the practical organisation of the conference, for example getting to know each other by working in small groups. Someone talked about the need to concentrate on families of addicts; another suggested a workshop exploring non-verbal communication which had been a success in the past. It was also agreed that more work is needed on prevention and education.

We discussed different forms of addiction. Someone who visits detention centres mentioned that the terrible drug Spice was spreading fast, a deadly epidemic. We heard the comment, nearly shouted from the heart: ‘*No one takes Spice for pleasure... but to be able to switch off*



that brain for a while! However, as the world gets darker, the light shines brighter. Alcoholics have been found to have deficient neuro-receptors, but they are ‘experts by experience’ and the efficacy of the AA program has been shown to help reduce public cost. Gambling addiction is more hidden even than substance addictions, and financially often the costliest to the user. QAAD has a strategic role to play, being one of the most effective voices working in this field.

Someone remarked, *‘it’s all very well to be professional, but that doesn’t take the place of love’*. Working on laws, minimum pricing, etc. is good, but the most important thing is people. A counsellor Friend said that she has noticed that spirituality is

slowly being introduced in therapy. It would be good for QAAD to have a representative in each Area Meeting to make its work more widely known.

In conclusion, one theme became more and more important: the necessity for individuals affected by addictions to feel free to open up in local Meetings. At present, many addicts and close others are too afraid of being judged by their Quaker friends to come ‘out of their closet’. No one should feel they have to hide. They need to be made to feel they would be accepted. As someone said, *‘it is not our will to heal them, but God’s.’*

Yveline Arnaud
Finchley Local Meeting

DCMS announcement: changes to gaming machines and social responsibility requirements across the gambling industry

On Tuesday 31st October, the DCMS made a long-awaited announcement on its review of gaming machines and social responsibility measures. Its 12-week public consultation, closing on 23rd January, covers maximum stakes and prizes for all categories of gaming machines permitted under the Gambling Act 2005, and social responsibility measures for the industry as a whole to minimise the risk of gambling-related harm. These include gambling advertising, online

gambling, gaming machines and research, education and treatment.

In a written statement, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DCMS, Tracey Crouch said:

‘We believe that the current regulation of B2 gaming machines is inappropriate to achieve our stated objective of protecting consumers and wider communities. We are therefore consulting on regulatory changes to the maximum stake, looking at options between £50 and £2, in order to reduce



the potential for large session losses and therefore to the potentially harmful impact on the player and their wider communities.'

QAAD joined colleagues in the Ecumenical Group on gambling to issue an immediate press statement, the full text of which can be found on the QAAD website. This confirmed that the majority of the group support a maximum stake of £2, and called for gambling addiction to be recognised as a public health issue:

'Fixed odds betting terminals present serious problems in society and for local communities, families and individuals. Evidence links them to patterns of addictive behaviour, large financial losses and anti-social and criminal behaviour. While we welcome the Government's consultation, anything approaching an upper limit of £50 would not go far enough to reduce the negative impact these machines can have on individuals, families and the wider society.'

'We urge the Government to view gambling addiction as a public health issue. The Department of Health must engage with gambling addiction strategically, at the levels of both prevention as well as treatment for individuals.'

It is crucial that there is as high a response to this consultation as possible. Friends who are interested in responding can do so in two ways:

an online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3XGGFP7>

This is a simple tick-box questionnaire comprising 14 questions with links to further information if required. DCMS estimates it will take 20 minutes to complete. Respondents can choose how many of the questions they answer; Question 1 specifically relates to FOBTs (B2s) and/or **emailing supporting evidence**, which can include case-studies, or personal accounts of experiencing or supporting a close other with a gambling addiction, to:

gamblingreviewconsultation2017@culture.gov.uk

QAAD responds to the RGSB's Interim Review of its Strategy

During October, Helena Chambers produced a substantial report which distilled her experience and understanding on gambling addiction and its impact. The full report includes a number of recommendations for future action and can be found on the QAAD website. It has been sent to the DCMS, the Gambling Commission, the RGSB, and GambleAware, and will be a valuable resource for QAAD and others to inform future consultations and meetings.



Have you looked at the QAAD website recently?

www.qaad.org

Please visit it for information about QAAD, news of events for Friends, and details of our public issues work.

*Advanced Notice:
a date for your diaries*

QAAD Woodbrooke Conference

Theme: 'Signposts for the Soul' - Pathways through Addiction

Friday 13th – Sunday 15th July 2018

QAAD continues to make contributions in the policy field as regards gambling, along with other faith-based groups: Mutual Support, Advocacy, Networking, Speaking for Friends, Working with other faiths.

Addiction is a massive problem, but QAAD makes a difference.

Financial support from individuals, Meetings, and Trusts enables us to continue with our work.

Please make cheques/charity vouchers payable to QAAD, and send to:

Ron Barden, Treasurer

33 Booth Lane North, Northampton, NN3 6JQ

A Donation by cash or cheque can be enhanced by 25p for each £ if you can Gift Aid it. Please complete the form below and return it with your donation.

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