**QAADNET meeting at Westminster Meeting House (The Friend, 2015)**

The QAADNET meeting on 28th February 2015 at Westminster Meeting House grew out of last July’s QAAD Woodbrooke conference on the theme of ‘Hurt and Healing’ which looked at how people with alcohol and drug problems find their way to recovery. A small group of people who are ‘close others’ of addicts continued a dialogue after the conference to support each other by exchanging experiences of what was happening to them and their loved ones and how it felt to try and help them recover from their addictions. It was agreed that it would be valuable to extend this more widely in the form of an open QAADNET meeting to benefit more ‘close others’ who so often feel isolated, despairing and lacking in guidance and support.

The meeting was held in an un-programmed, exploratory format within the ethos of strict confidentiality.  A tentative exchange of experiences, hopes and fears in a Quakerly idiom filled out during the day into an increasingly open and honest dialogue that participants appeared to find helpful.

There was discussion about knowing when and how much to try to ‘rescue’ the loved one from the addiction with practical and financial support and whether or not rescuing is ever the best thing for the addict.  One person extolled the benefit to themselves of the practice of mindfulness and taking one day at a time.  There was also the question of fear, both in the ‘close other’ for the welfare and even the survival of their loved one and also the fear that is a major driver of addiction.  A book called ‘The Courage to Be’ by Paul Tillich was mentioned by a QAAD trustee in connection with this aspect.  Also, the aspect of control in a relationship may feed into an addiction even though the intention is to help and support a chaotic existence.

Tough love is often cited as being needed in these situations, but one participant had found the words ‘ non – attachment with love’ more helpful in enabling a moving towards letting go rather than rescuing, albeit still supporting with love.

What stood out from the gathering was the remarkable resilience and calmness of a group of Quakers who have been forced to cope with chaos in the lives of their loved ones, and who continue to search within themselves for that grace to be found in the ‘still centre’.

The day was an unfinished dialogue in the sense that it had to end at an appointed time when it could well have continued with great benefit. There was also a feeling that it should be continued at other times and in other places to offer this strongly perceived webbing of support to other Friends who are the parents, spouses, partners or friends of those in the grip of addictions.