

Quaker Action on Alcohol & Drugs



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Being a QAAD Trustee



We are currently seeking to appoint some new trustees and hope that our series of articles written by current trustees will encourage

Friends who may be considering trusteeship. Here, David Barry (Sussex East AM) reflects on his early experience of QAAD events and how it eventually led him to joining the board

To use that phrase used by many convinced Quakers, I came home to Quakers at the start of this century. As an alcoholic in recovery, I was drawn to QAAD out of curiosity and attended a number of its one-day events in and around London. I found the meetings challenging sometimes, but always worthwhile, and was impressed by what QAAD was doing in the area of addiction.

I still vividly remember attending my first QAAD Woodbrooke conference. Initially, I had mixed views. I soon realised that focussing on the worst aspects of my adult life throughout the entire weekend was extremely intense. I did, however, find that sharing my experiences with others was mutually advantageous. The support of the director and others in attendance dissuaded me from my initial plan to cut short my weekend and head home. On reflection, I am so pleased I stayed. Sharing my concerns and experiences in a warm and loving environment is something I recall with gratitude to this day.

From this point onwards, I attended every QAAD event within travelling distance, including QAAD's biennial conference. My feelings of trepidation at my first weekend helped me to understand the plight of newcomers, reassuring them that it was

beneficial to stay and immerse oneself in the proceedings. I was also intrigued to find that we were a mixed group of addicts in recovery, 'close others', and those with a more general interest in addiction.

Other than attending and offering support, I had given no thought to offering any further service to QAAD. With one exception, all trustees had a professional interest in addiction, or as I saw it were the experts in this field, and I felt it better left to them. However, about five years ago, I was asked to consider becoming a trustee. My first reaction was to reject the invitation feeling I had little to offer. Fortunately, I procrastinated for a while and, after much prayerful consideration, accepted – although not without considerable apprehension.

Since becoming a trustee, I have found my lived experience has allowed me to share a perspective that can differ from other trustees. It has enabled me to draw something positive from the decades when my life was dominated by my alcohol addiction. Our different backgrounds enable us to consider matters from many angles. The support from trustees and our director has been overwhelming. I look forward to continuing to offer my services for the foreseeable future, and hope that my work helps to shape the way forward for future generations in QAAD.



High Stakes

After multiple delays and ministerial changes, the White Paper ‘*High Stakes – Gambling Reform for the Digital Age*’ was published in April. The 2020 call for evidence attracted 16,000 responses, followed by ‘hundreds of meetings’ with a ‘huge range of stakeholders’, according to Liz Frazer (Secretary of State for Media, Culture and Sport). In her ministerial statement², she concluded that ‘*it had become clear*’ that children, young



adults and people at risk of harm need to be protected. Of course, this has been clear for years, during which time many people, and those close

to them, have been damaged.

There are certainly positive elements in the White Paper, particularly the introduction of a statutory levy, an independent ombudsman, affordability checks on customers whose spending patterns indicate a problem, and stake limits for online slot machines. In particular, the levy will provide essential, independent funding for research, education and treatment. This will help to increase researchers’ and NHS engagement with gambling harm (most have been unwilling to do so whilst industry funding was involved), building evidence to inform future policy.

But the majority of measures will be subject to further consultation, creating frustration and deep disappointment amongst campaigners, including QAAD. It will be a year, possibly more, before many are implemented, leading to fears that the industry will exert its powerful influence in Westminster to water down the final legislation. Top companies’ share values have risen, despite the anticipated fall in profits, perhaps demonstrating relief that parliamentary lobbying has proved so effective in limiting the reforms.

In the Minister’s own words, ‘*prevention is better than cure*’, yet there is no mention of a ban (or even curbs) on advertising, a key preventative measure. This attracted the strongest criticism from campaigners and commentators:

‘Many European countries have imposed significant curbs on advertising, and this represents a big failure of the government to reduce harm.’³ (Dr Matt Gaskell, lead consultant psychologist and clinical lead director, NHS Northern Gambling Service)

Instead, the paper stresses the importance of striking ‘*the right balance*’ between consumer freedoms and protection from harm. The right balance, some believe, would be weighted in favour of improving protection for *all* customers, not just those defined as already having a problem. Anyone can lose a life-changing sum in a matter of hours.

The protection of children and young people is an explicit priority, yet too few proposals support this. The paper acknowledges 18-24 year olds are a ‘*particularly vulnerable cohort*’, recommending that lower online stake limits are set for them. It ‘*strongly encourages*’ (not requires) the industry to improve age verification, and confirms the government will work with the Advertising Standards Authority to address content designed to appeal to children. There is praise for the Premiership’s voluntary commitment to ban logos on the *front* of shirts (not until 2025 and not elsewhere), but no ban or limitation of sports sponsorship, despite concerns about children’s exposure to gambling advertising. Rather, it says that ‘*sports governing bodies are best placed to decide what approach and measures are appropriate to protect their fans.*’

The libertarian view is that people should be free to choose how to spend their money and the level of risk they are willing to accept. If someone does suffer serious consequences whilst exercising personal freedom, who is to



blame? The industry spends £1.5bn a year on sophisticated advertising, and customers are told ‘*When the Fun Stops, Stop*’, in the absence of clear, direct public health campaigns spelling out the risks. We are all exposed to relentless TV and radio advertisements, celebrity endorsements, targeted promotions and incentives, and the ‘gamblification’ of football. In this light, how acceptable is it to suggest that someone is lying on a bed of their own making? How might we respond if that customer is someone we love?

And who pays the price? The industry’s annual profits are around £14bn. Earlier this year, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities reported that gambling costs the government and society between £1.05 - £1.77bn annually, although gaps in gambling-related suicide data mean that this is almost certainly an underestimate¹. The charity Gambling with Lives suggests 400 - 600 gamblers take their own lives each year, mostly young men. Family, friends and communities are all affected, and the harm some experience can be permanent, even when the ‘fun’ has stopped.

The industry has succeeded in diverting attention away from their products’ addictive qualities, blaming instead what it calls ‘problem gamblers’²: most people gamble safely and enjoyably; a tiny minority with personal/social problems are inherently ‘vulnerable’. Of course, some people *are* more vulnerable, but this narrative minimises the harm caused by even moderate levels of gambling, especially for those on lower incomes. The ‘othering’ of people who become addicted also creates a false sense of security amongst the general population, whilst increasing the shame and stigma which so often prevents those affected, including close others, from seeking help. As Will Prochaska (Strategy Director, Gambling With Lives) points out:

‘People who suffer harm from gambling are not weak. They are not unwell because of any so-called vulnerability. They have been sold highly

addictive products, designed and promoted to keep them gambling, no matter what.’³

The paper asserts that ‘*What we will not permit is for operators to place commercial objectives ahead of customer wellbeing so that vulnerable people are exploited.*’ In the light of long experience, this appears rather optimistic. The Gambling Commission has imposed £76m fines since 2022, including a record £19.2m for William Hill in March. Its social responsibility and anti-money laundering failures were ‘*so widespread and alarming [that] serious consideration was given to licence suspension*’, according to the Commission’s Chief Executive.

Reform is long overdue. The stakes are high. Perhaps the White Paper can deliver essential and substantial improvements to public protection, and strengthen the regulation of an industry which has profited from so much harm with relative impunity for over a decade. We must hope so.

QAAD will monitor the progress of the consultations announced in the White Paper, and contribute wherever possible. Future issues of QAADRANT will cover the outcomes and implications of these over the coming year. If you have views or concerns about the reforms, we would be interested to hear from you.

1 www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-stakes-gambling-reform-for-the-digital-age

2 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-04-27/debates/3AD440A0-366B-4F33-9BBC-63F62F5CB608/GamblingActReviewWhitePaper>

3 <https://www.the-guardian.com/societ/2023/apr/27/i-run-nhs-gambling-clinics-the-white-paper-doesn't-go-nearly-far-enough>

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review-summary--2>

5 www.gamblingwithlives.org/news/gambling-white-paper-not-perfect-but-still-a-tipping-point-will-prochaska/



Teens and Substance use – what can parents do?

In May, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) held a webinar offering practical, evidence-based advice for parents concerned about protecting their children from substance-related harm.

It featured a semi-formal conversation between three researchers, based around three questions: *Do we matter? What can we do and say? and Does it matter if we use substances ourselves?* The wide ranging discussion examined effective approaches which can help parents before, if, and/or once their children start drinking or taking drugs.

The researchers' key message was clear: parents can and do matter, and continue to have a significant influence throughout their children's adolescence (despite the 'myth' that it is only peers who do). Many parents doubt their abilities, however, not helped by criticism from other parents if their child is struggling. Rather than wait until they feel confident, the panel suggested, it is better to 'just try' – and to keep trying different approaches if something does not work. Apparent failure does not signify incompetence; children respond to different input, changing over time, and this may differ between siblings. Some are more motivated to take risks and seek stimulation, and will still develop problems even in open and trusting families.

Drinking at a young age is linked to increased risks of future dependence and experimentation with other drugs. Consequently, previous advice about introducing children to 'responsible drinking' at home has now been widely replaced by the need to delay onset

for as long as possible. Parents can find prevention very difficult, given that most young people have yet to experience alcohol-related problems, and longer-term effects seem irrelevant to them.

One of the key messages is to try not to worry too much, and that expressing concerns too frequently can be counter-productive. Gregor Burkhart (EMCDDA) described a study of the 'Pygmalion effect': when parents believed that their teenager was not using cannabis, this conveyed positive expectations and the child either did not start using, or reduced their consumption. This is not to turn a blind eye, however, and parents were still advised to keep monitoring their behaviour.

Setting clear, firm, and consistent rules is crucial, given the evidence that children of permissive parents drink at an earlier age and that their consumption escalates more quickly. Having established rules, parents then need to communicate them effectively and only relax them slowly over time. An additional suggestion was agreeing shared rules with peers' parents, which saves the child of 'the strict parent' feeling isolated or stigmatised, and makes it more likely that the group will adhere to what is expected of them all.

Time was also spent exploring what is meant by 'qualitative communication'. Listening without judgement (rather than telling or nagging), asking questions, and being open to whatever a child is willing to share were all highlighted. These demonstrate that the parent is interested to learn about the child's experiences rather than 'snooping'.



Making time to talk, whilst avoiding too frequent discussions about the issue was also recommended. Spending time together, and staying involved in the child's life, creates opportunities to discuss anything, and substance use may arise naturally if trust has been built and sustained.

The panel suggested that if parents wish to drink and smoke, it is better not to do so in front of children, and to limit how much. Being honest, and discussing why they started drinking (and how they feel about it now) helps to explain apparent contradictions between a parent's own behaviour and expectations of the child's.

In closing, Alexis Goosdeel (EMCDDA's Director) said: *'There is no magic solution... if it was so easy, if there was a perfect way, we would know it... it doesn't exist.'*

A recording of the webinar (90 minutes) is available via: <https://youtu.be/pbxDXj19MQo>

* www.emcdda.europa.eu

QAAD CONFERENCE 2025

We are very pleased to announce that we will be running our conference again next summer, after a break of five years. Following the sad closure of Woodbrooke as a conference venue, we are exploring alternatives and will provide further information in QAADRANT and on our website.

Mid Essex Quakers raise £25,000 to help local charities



In 2022, QAAD was approached by Jim Grigg, Clerk of trustees for Mid Essex, regarding the sale of the former Meeting

House in Chelmsford, and the lifting of the covenant governing the sale and production of alcohol on the premises. Here, Jim recounts the negotiations, resulting in donations made to two charities.

The Anne Knight Building in Chelmsford is a Grade II listed former Quaker meeting house, built in 1824. It was sold to the local council in 1957, with proceeds used to build the current meeting houses in Chelmsford, Billericay, and Brentwood. The sale included a Quaker covenant prohibiting the sale or manufacture of alcohol or gambling and military use. It was later used by Anglia Ruskin University before its sale to Notting Hill Genesis (NHG), a housing and property investor.

In 2015, NHG asked Mid Essex AM to vary the covenant to allow sales of alcohol. We reluctantly agreed, but only for this to be with food, and this change was approved by Chelmsford City Council. NHG then leased the building to a company which ran it as a bar and grill.

During the pandemic, this company failed, the building was closed, and NHG put the freehold up for sale. Brewhouse and Kitchen (B&K), a craft brewing and dining chain, expressed an interest, and the Area Meeting was approached to lift the alcohol restrictions entirely. We met



B&K and NHG in 2022, when the company explained the nature of their business and said that they also worked with charities at other venues. Asked if they had worked with any alcohol recovery charities, they said no but agreed that they could.

As Quakers, we reflected on how we could release the covenant while still achieving a positive outcome. Our Trustees considered a donation to a Quaker charity concerned with alcohol recovery, and asked QAAD whether they could accept such a donation. After some consideration, QAAD suggested that a local charity, Open Road (which operates alcohol recovery services in Essex and Medway) might be a more suitable beneficiary. We also identified CHESS (a small Chelmsford homeless charity) and the Area Meeting approved our plan.

We approached the two charities and arranged a meeting with B&K. Following a period of silent worship, we explained that Quakers are not a temperance society, but are concerned with the harms that some people experience due to alcohol. Open Road described their services, including a night bus equipped with medical facilities, and helping people in difficulty on a Friday and Saturday nights. They confirmed that they needed to raise £100,000 to replace the current bus. CHESS were unable to attend, but we explained that they operate night shelters helping the homeless to get off the street.

We made it plain to B&K that the minimum we would accept for lifting the covenant would be a donation of £25,000 split between these charities, and asked that they also cover our legal fees. We closed the meeting with a short period of silent worship and gave B&K a copy of Advices & Queries. B&K replied a few weeks later, agreeing to donate £20,000 to

Open Road and £5,000 to CHESS, and to cover our legal fees up to £5,000. We also enquired if they would continue to work with the charities and they asked us to take it on trust that they would.

The work on effecting the necessary changes to the covenant and making the donations was set out in a Deed of Variation, tied into the sale of the building, and the Area Meeting signed the Deed in March.

As Quakers, we believe that this practical solution will mitigate some of the harm that alcohol use can cause by linking B&K to charities that are dealing with the consequences.

Contacting QAAD

If you would like to contact QAAD for any reason, please write to our Director, Alison Mather, by post: PO Box 34, Bristol BS6 5AS or email: alison@qaad.org You are also welcome to call her: 0117 9246981. All contact is held in strict confidence.

QAAD events in 2023: We are planning to hold some more online meetings over the next few months. If you would like to be added to the events mailing list, please contact our Director, Alison. Details will also be posted on our website and in future issues of QAADRANT.

Thank you for your support

We have felt cheered and supported by the generous donations we have continued to receive from individuals, Meetings and Trusts during this difficult time. Donations are significant in two ways - they make us feel that our work is valued, and they give QAAD a longer-term future.

In order to continue our work, we need to continue to draw down from our reserves which, of course, are not unlimited. Please send your donation to: **Ron Barden, Treasurer, 33 Booth Lane North, Northampton, NN3 6JQ.** Alternatively, if you would prefer to donate using a BACS transfer, our banks details are:

Account Name: Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs

A/C No: 31452673 Sort code: 400327.

If you can Gift Aid your donation, it will be enhanced by 25p for each £. Please complete the form below and return it with your donation.

I am a UK Taxpayer and want QAAD to treat all donations I have made for the past four years, and all future donations I make from the date of this declaration, as Gift Aid Donations until I notify you otherwise.

.....
I understand that I must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax reclaimed on my donations in the appropriate tax year. I understand that if I pay less Income and/or Capital Gains Tax to cover the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay back any difference.

Name Signature Date

Address

..... Postcode