

# Quaker

# Homeless Action

# Homelessness Questionnaire

Survey of  
UK Preparative Meetings  
Autumn 2006

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# **SURVEY OF UK PREPARATIVE MEETINGS AUTUMN 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In order to aid discussions regarding the future direction of QHA, a survey was carried out in Autumn of 2006 to find out more about how QHA is viewed at meetings around the country. The aims were:

- To discover how people currently view the activities of QHA
- To identify any misconceptions that people may have about QHA
- To gain input from Friends around the country regarding what they feel the function(s) of QHA should be.

## **METHOD**

A questionnaire was circulated to 476 Preparative Meetings throughout the country, with a deadline of December 2006. This was subsequently extended when it became apparent that many Meetings would not be holding a Preparative Meeting before that time. The final cut off for receipt of questionnaires was subsequently 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007. At this point, 113 responses had been received. Some of these responses were in letter form, touching on some of the issues raised in the questionnaire. Some questionnaires were incomplete and, in some cases, answers were not given as requested on the form. In the interest of getting the fullest picture of how Friends around the country feel about QHA we have endeavoured to incorporate all responses, and have tried, while making some essentially subjective judgements, to elicit the spirit of what was meant in each case.

The questionnaire asked for a single response from a possibly large group of individuals and the problems associated with this were taken into account when analysing the responses. Some Meetings clearly attempted to answer it as a group, while in others a single person was designated to do so. Some Meetings stated that they had found some of the questions difficult to answer, and many Meetings took a different approach to answering several of the questions.

In the statistical analysis we have attempted to interpret the results in the broadest possible fashion, and in a way that provides positive guidance for future action.

In spite of the flaws in the system – largely due to inexperience in undertaking such a survey, it has been possible to identify patterns and trends of thought, and to recognise where action is necessary to promote an accurate picture of *who QHA is* and *what QHA does*.

## **RESULTS**

See Appendix A

### **Notes on Q1**

Out of a total of 113 responses:

- 82 Meetings stated they had held a collection for QHA in the past five years
- 26 Meetings stated they had not held a collection for QHA in the past five years
- 5 Meetings did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis).
- Some Meetings did state that they had held collections more than five years ago, but this information was not included in the analysis.

### **Notes on Q2**

Out of the 82 Meetings that claimed to have held a collection for QHA in the past five years:

- 71 Meetings had held more than one collection
- 43 said they had held 5 collections, suggesting that it is an annual event for them.

### **Notes on Q3**

Out of the 82 Meetings that claimed to have held collections for QHA in the past five years:

- 39 Meetings stated their collections had been QOC specific
- 43 Meetings stated that their collections had been for the General work of QHA or that they had held collections for both the General work of QHA and for QOC.

### **Notes on Q4**

Out of the 113 responses:

- The majority (101) were aware of QHA activities relating to Open Christmas
- About half (55) were aware of the Mobile Library and almost as many (51) were aware of the Tea Run
- About a third (34 and 33 respectively) were aware that QHA awards grants to other organizations and that QHA has been involved in Rent Guarantee Schemes.
- 2 Meetings expressly stated that they did not know about QHA Activities
- 8 Meetings did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis).

### **Notes on Q5**

See Appendix B

Of the 113 responses:

- 68 said that homeless initiatives had been undertaken either by their Meeting or by people within it.
- 44 Meetings had not undertaken any kind of initiative
- 1 Meeting did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis)

Of the various initiatives undertaken, the majority (88%) were involved in local concerns, with fewer than 10% citing involvement in non-local initiatives such as Shelter or QOC. Some Meetings were unspecific about their activities.

72% mentioned initiatives undertaken by the Meeting as a whole, while 38% mentioned activities by individual members.

The work of Meetings was primarily related to raising and donating funds (25%) but they were also involved in collecting and donating goods (19%), volunteering (17%), development work (13%), and to a lesser extent, rent guarantee schemes (10%) and befriending (6%).

A lot of the work undertaken was ecumenical by nature. About a third (38%) of Meetings mentioned involvement with other local churches and inter-faith groups.

## Notes on Q6

See Appendix C

Of the 113 responses:

- 31 Meetings said that they had concerns about particular homeless issues
- 78 Meetings said that they did not
- 1 Meeting said that they did not know
- 3 Meetings did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis)

Of the concerns expressed by Meetings, the largest proportion (26%) were concerned with homelessness generally. 16% of Meetings were concerned about affordable housing, and the same number mentioned worries regarding asylum seekers / refugees. 13% said they had an interest / concern relating to a specific project in their local area. 10% were concerned by some aspect of their local Council policy. 6% were concerned by lack of facilities for homeless people, and the same proportion were concerned with single homelessness and young homelessness. A very small percentage (3%) said they had concerns regarding poverty generally, rural housing and care issues. 3% of those Meetings that claimed to be concerned with specific issues did not specify what these were.

## Notes on Q7

Meetings were asked to state what they currently believe to be the main functions of QHA out of:

- working directly with the homeless
- giving financial support to others working in the homeless field
- lobbying for improvements in services and legislation relating to homelessness
- gathering and disseminating information on homeless issues

Out of the 113 responses

- The majority (96) cited “working directly with the homeless” as currently a main function of QHA, with only 2 disagreeing. 8 Meetings didn’t know, while 7 did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis).
- In the public perception, another key function of QHA is “lobbying for improvements in services and legislation relating to homelessness”. 69 Meetings think that this is currently a main function of QHA, with 29 disagreeing. 8 Meetings did not know, while 7 did not answer the question
- About half of Meetings (53 and 56 respectively) believe that QHA is involved in “giving financial support to others working in the homeless field” and “gathering and disseminating information on homeless issues”. A slightly smaller number (45 and 41 respectively) disagreed on both counts. 8 Meetings did not know about the former, while 9 did not know about the latter. 7 Meetings did not answer the question in each case.

## Notes on Q8

Meetings were asked to state what they believe should be the main functions of QHA out of:

- working directly with the homeless
- giving financial support to others working in the homeless field
- lobbying for improvements in services and legislation relating to homelessness
- gathering and disseminating information on homeless issues

They ranked the functions in order of importance, with 1 indicating most important, 4 least important and x indicating that it should not be a function. 17 Meetings did not answer this question (NA in the statistical analysis). Between 11 and 12 Meetings specifically stated that they did not know whether a particular issue should form part of the functions of QHA. On occasion, while Meetings did answer the question, they did not express an opinion on every issue. In this instance it is given as ‘no comment’ in the statistical analysis.

Having entered the data into a table we analysed the results in the following way.

- For each area we added up the number of Meetings that ranked it 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> in importance.
- We then added up the number of Meetings that ranked it 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> in importance.
- Finally we noted the number that actively objected to it being a function of QHA.

From this it can be seen that:

- The largest number of Meetings (78) think that “working directly with the homeless” should be a key function of QHA, with the smallest number (6) disagreeing. No Meetings actively objected to this.
- “Lobbying for improvements in services and legislation relating to homelessness” was second most popular as a key function of QHA. 68 Meetings ranked it as being of primary or secondary importance, with only 16 ranking it lower, and again, no Meetings actively objecting.

- The other two areas of work – “giving financial support to others working in the homeless field” and “gathering and disseminating information on homeless issues” came out roughly even with 39 and 36 Meetings respectively ranking them in the top two functions of QHA, while 31 and 40 respectively disagreed. It is worth noting that 3 Meetings actively objected to the latter being a function of QHA, while 11 Meetings actively objected to the former.

## Notes on Q9

Meetings were asked to state what they currently believe to be areas of work that QHA is involved in out of:

- Rough Sleepers
- Insecurely Housed
- Health
- Mental Health
- Advice Services
- Alcohol Abuse
- Substance Abuse
- Prostitution
- Crime

Out of the 113 responses:

- The majority (85 and 81 Meetings respectively) believe that QHA is currently involved with Rough Sleepers and Advice Services, with a slightly lesser number (68) believing we work with the Insecurely Housed.
- About half of Meetings (53 and 48 respectively) believe QHA is involved with issues relating to Health and Mental Health) with a slightly lesser number (44 and 39 respectively) believing QHA works with issues of Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Just under a third of Meetings (30 and 26 respectively) think that QHA currently works on issues relating to Prostitution and Crime
- Between 10 and 12 Meetings stated that they did not know about a particular issue, while 14 Meetings did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis).

## Notes on Q10

Meetings were asked to state what they believe should be areas of work that QHA is involved in out of:

- Rough Sleepers
- Insecurely Housed
- Health
- Mental Health
- Advice Services
- Alcohol Abuse
- Substance Abuse

- Prostitution
- Crime

They ranked the functions in order of importance, with 1 indicating most important, 9 least important and x indicating that it should not be a function. 18 Meetings did not answer this question (NA in the statistical analysis). Between 17 and 20 Meetings specifically stated that they did not know whether a particular area of work should be covered by QHA. On occasion, while Meetings did answer the question, they did not express an opinion on every issue. In this instance it is given as 'no comment' in the statistical analysis.

Having entered the data into a table we analysed the results in the following way:

- For each area we added up the number of Meetings that ranked it from 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> in importance.
- We then added up the number of Meetings that ranked it 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> in importance.
- Finally we added up the number of Meetings that ranked it 7<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> in importance. We then added the number of people who actively objected to this figure

In this way, the results were broken down into bands, each spanning four values. The aim was to get a broad picture of the most favoured areas of activity, the least favoured areas of activity and those areas about which people had less strong feeling.

- The largest number of Meetings (72) think working with Rough Sleepers is something that QHA should do with only 8 Meetings rating it lower than 4th or actively objecting.
- The next most popular work areas were the Insecurely housed (60 rating it high) and Advisory Services (58 rating it high.). 20 Meetings rated it lower than 4th or actively objected in each case.
- The middle ground was occupied by health issues, with 49 Meetings believing QHA should be involved in Mental Health issues, and 39 Meetings believing Health Issues should form a focus. A similar number (38 and 44 respectively) rated these issues lower than 4th or actively objected to them being a focus of QHA work. However, almost a third of Meetings (30) of these ranked these issues from 4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Just under a third of Meetings (29 and 26 respectively) thought that Alcohol and Substance Abuse should be areas in which QHA works, but nearly half (46 and 52 respectively) rated these areas low or actively objected to them . However, again almost a third of Meetings (31 and 28 respectively) ranked these issues from 4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Both Prostitution and Crime were ranked low in terms of desired QHA involvement. 15 and 14 Meetings respectively ranked them 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, however, it should be noted that they were only ever ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> on occasions when Meetings assigned these values to multiple or all issues. 57 and 47 Meetings respectively ranked them lower than 4<sup>th</sup> with the majority of these (40 and 47 respectively) rating them lower than 7<sup>th</sup> and half of these (20 and 19 respectively) actively objecting.

## Notes on Q11

Meetings were asked to state if any of their members have been involved in QHA work. Out of those that said yes:

- By far the highest number (48) had volunteered with QOC
- The Tea Run was the next most popular with 8
- The Mobile Library and Council Membership were almost even (4 and 3 respectively) while 2 Meetings said members had been involved in other ways such as donating goods.
- 14 Meetings did not answer the question (NA in the statistical analysis).

## Notes on Q12

Meetings were asked whether any of their members would like to sign up to the QHA mailing list. Any addresses provided have been added.

## Notes on Q13

Meetings were asked whether anyone within the Meeting would like to act as a general contact for QHA. The majority of these cited the Clerk, but where this was not the case, contact details have been added to the mailing list.

## Notes on Q14

See Appendix D

Meetings were asked to give any other comments or queries. These have served to highlight a number of areas of confusion regarding what QHA is and does. Examples are:

- People being under the impression that QHA employs paid staff.
- People being under the impression that QHA is run by homeless experts / professionals
- People being unable to distinguish between QHA, QSA and other Quaker organisations
- People feeling that QHA is remote and only concerned with London

A number of Meetings have specifically requested a response on particular issues which we have addressed in the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section of our website.

As regards QOC:

- There were a number of expressions of disappointment regarding the postponement of QOC this year.
- There were cases where funds collected for QOC were subsequently donated elsewhere
- There were cases where Meetings opted to give funds collected to QHA despite the non-operation of QOC

The general feeling is that people are willing to support QHA, though as a charity it is more relevant to some Meetings than others. Most people were glad to have received our information and receptive to receiving more. A number of Meetings recognized the complexity of the issues surrounding homelessness, and also the difficulties associated with working directly with the homeless. Many Meetings suggested that a measure of expertise is required to work within this field, and a number were clear that we should do our research and work with other bodies to develop appropriate services within our capabilities and avoid duplication.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

A number of Meetings have held collections for QHA, with just under half of these only holding QOC specific collections

Most Meetings are aware of QHA work with regard to QOC in London, but are confused about other areas of our remit both geographically and practically. This would account for the large numbers of collections being held specifically for QOC. However, the fact that a number of collections have been held for the general work of QHA, in spite of the fact that people are unclear what this is, suggests that Meetings are willing to provide financial support for working with the homeless in a number of capacities.

A number of Meetings are actively working in the homeless field, often in conjunction with other churches and organisations. Generally this involvement takes the form of supporting some local venture through funds, goods or volunteer time, although some have been active in the development of new initiatives.

The highest rated specific issues of concern to Meetings after general homelessness were affordable housing and asylum seekers / refugees

Meetings believe that in the main QHA should work directly with the homeless, and lobby for improvements to services and legislation relate to homelessness. They are less keen to see us acting as a conduit for information about homelessness. Meetings are least happy about the idea of QHA as a funding body.

In general Meetings would like us to focus our attention on rough sleepers and insecurely housed people, and have involvement in providing advisory services for homeless people. Health and substance misuse issues are seen to be of secondary importance (with mental health as the most important of these), while issues of crime and prostitution are not generally held to fall within our remit.

A number of Meetings have provided volunteers for QOC but few have been involved in other areas of QHA work. This may be because the practical work of QHA is London based. People from further afield can take part in QOC because it is short term and accommodation is available. It would be difficult for non-London residents to be involved in the Mobile Library for example.

Most Meetings are happy to be kept abreast of what we are doing as an organisation, and a number that have felt QHA to be remote and irrelevant to them are still willing to hear more.

A number of Meetings have expressed some confusion about QHA and are keen to obtain clarification on specific issues. A few Meetings have requested some advice on things that they might do. Many helpful suggestions and comments have been put forward that should be taken into account in discussions about the future of QHA.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1) In discussions about the future of QHA our attention should be focussed on the areas that Meetings support:

- Working directly with the homeless :
  - rough sleepers
  - insecurely housed
  - advisory services – perhaps relating to mental health issues
  
- Lobbying for improvement in services and legislation relating to:
  - general homelessness
  - affordable housing
  - asylum seekers / refugees