

GRASP Nominations workshop – 21 November 2020
Held by Zoom. 25 Friends present (at least 3 from each AM)

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Background

The aim of the workshop was to bring Friends involved in nominations together to make connections, and for sharing challenges and possible solutions. Those participating had lots of experience of AM nominations committees, but also at local meetings, Quakers in Yorkshire and nationally.

After worship and an introduction, we divided into 4 break-out rooms to start to build relationships, and to discuss our main challenges and solutions. This sharing helped to get ideas flowing in preparation for the ensuing main discussion together, which was recorded. The following were the main themes and contributions made by participants, with some additional ideas from conversations or sent in by participants after the session. The workshop ended with a brief period of worship sharing.

Spiritual discernment

'It's very necessary for us to be in touch with the leadings of the spirit and to give time to the processes' (Workshop participant)

- The nominations process can be Quakerism in Action.
- Many roles are about witnessing to our faith and action. What exactly are we witnessing to? This will help work out what roles are needed.
- Some had had most profound experiences in nominations committees.
- Joy is available.
- There can be 'Job Delight'

Roles

- Too few people OR too many roles?
- How to reduce the number of roles?
- Job descriptions need to be reviewed every time a new Friend is sought for appointment
- Difference between Roles and Functions.
- Consider streamlining roles or sharing roles.
- Team solutions are possible.
- Team approach can be exciting, especially for young people; a way of coming to know each other.
- Better hand-over between role-holders often needed.
- Does the task of nominations committees finish when appointments are made?
- Use of IT is changing some roles (e.g. Meeting for Sufferings representatives). Can be positive but for some Friends it is very negative. Conversations needed.
- More than anything else, the need is for every meeting now to create one *new* role: 'Friend to be contacted for advice and help with IT'

- A role is not an end in itself.

Members and Attenders

- What roles must be done only by Members?
- We need more conversations as people come into membership.
- How to get young people involved? Experiencing some roles when young can be valuable. 'Internments' (e.g. clerking) for young people can result in a later 'yes'.
- The meaning and practicalities of Membership are often different for young people, who may no longer be living and working near their own meetings and often belong to a Quaker community of younger people with which our current nominations processes do not connect
- New members are often discouraged from active role-holding. We do not explain the 'scaffolding' of our structures. How *does* the Quaker Nominations process work? More clarity is needed. Can we change how we communicate, and the resulting narrative, especially for less experienced members?

Pooling resources across AMs

'There are some imperatives about the need to be proactive, the need to be creativewhat we are talking about is a process of change' (Workshop participant)

- Yes we can share people/resources across AMs
- It is worth considering which roles/resources might be shared across area meetings, examples are Registering Officers, Safeguarding Co-ordinators, archiving.
- Safeguarding is a subject where it is difficult to find role holders and surely there are opportunities for sharing responsibilities. Forming an email contact group could be the first step in exploring opportunities. QiY has two Safeguarding Officers, and one QiY Trustee with responsibility for general oversight of Safeguarding; and AMs have at least 2 each + one Trustee charged with oversight; plus those in LMs.
- Talking between AMs first requires that Friends get to know each other.
- Distinguishing between the service that requires discernment and the work that *carries out* Friends' discernment, we can be ready to buy in professional help. Employing professionals both to advise and to carry out work in areas such as premises and finance, charity law and other legal matters could take the 'fear factor' out of many of our essential roles; making the work of nominations easier and more joyful.
- "I hope it will be possible to have all-Yorkshire appointments in the future for some roles"

Training

- Many role holders are not provided with induction, or offered training.
- People newly appointed to Nominations committees often do not know what the Quaker Nominations process is, let alone how to do it.
- Training for roles is available from Woodbrooke (although sometimes there is a wait for the training to be held)..

- Lots of support is available [BYM, Woodbrooke, experienced Friends]; and possibly mentoring, buddying, on-going support in the role
- Training for difficult conversations could be useful (c.f. Turning the Tide); not only for Nominations roles, but for many of the other roles in which we serve

Nominations is a pro-active process

- Getting to know people is an essential element. How do we build our communities? Are we accessible and inclusive?
- Being more open with everybody about nominations
- Being more *positive* about nominations
- Promoting transparency, clarity and understanding about the Nominations *process*, in meetings and at different levels
- Clarifying and promoting understanding about different roles
- Being explicit about what a meeting needs to fulfil its witness
- A skills survey can be useful

General

'Sympathy, communication, realism, imagination, prayer and thought.....and flexibility' (Workshop participant)

- Gratitude expressed to Friends who have taken on the challenges of lockdown.
- Holding zoom meetings is making us think about travel and what is really important.
- Flexibility is helpful.