

## NEW EARSWICK WARM PLACE REPORT QiY IN LEEDS 21/01/2023

**By way of background,** I'm sure we're all familiar now with the general idea of Warm Places or Spaces ..... somewhere warm and safe for people in need, that offers hot drinks and refreshments, somewhere to sit and relax, a place to chat and share ideas that could help us all get through the winter, and where children accompanied by an adult are very welcome. This is what we're doing at New Earswick, and while being a limited offer in itself, we can sign-post people to other sources of support available to them, and also offer food, clothes etc. that are donated by other local organisations. We are in a network of Quaker Warm Places, all learning from each other.

### **We applied to QiY's Outreach Projects Committee (OPC).**

From the start last autumn, we have had the whole-hearted support of our local meeting which has bought the necessary equipment, but we needed secure funding for running costs and training. We applied to the Outreach Projects Committee (OPC) last November, and began opening the Meeting House every Friday afternoon. Making the application was in itself enormously helpful, because to explain what we wanted to do we had to think through a range of 'setting up' issues like risk assessments and insurance, food hygiene training, DBS status of regular volunteers, first aid awareness, and essential equipment ..... as well as the running costs we need. The committee were brilliantly positive and prompt.

**In the first 10 weeks it's been going well, though with fewer people coming than we anticipated.** We realise now that numbers will build gradually, as people hear about us and gain the confidence to come. Having started in November, we plan to keep going at least for 6 months. As well as meeting current need as far as we can, during this first 6 months we are learning a lot about what local people need at this time. The population of about 3,000 in this Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) village includes a high proportion of people on very low incomes, with 47% of the children in the primary school on free school meals.

We have been made aware of levels of hunger, loneliness and anxiety in the elderly, and also of families extremely worried about pressures increasing over the coming months. We are working with other local (non-Quaker) concerned individuals, churches and organisations. Especially we are hand-in-hand with an informal group of 4 local women called 'Helping Hands'. They are very well-known in the village, and it is they who bring food, clothes, shoes, toys and books every week.

After ten sessions we have an idea of how many of us are likely to be needed as volunteers on a Friday afternoon. We have regular as well as one-off visitors, and also people from local organisations who are interested in what is going on. All are warmly welcomed of course. We are aware that it's early days, and that people in most acute need won't necessarily come even if they *have* heard about us. We are looking for ways of spreading the word, and strategies to help people find their way to our door.

## **Now a little about the outreach aspects of Warm Place.**

At the end of each session, after we have cleared up and packed away, volunteers sit down together for a short de-brief. This is when we share joys, problems, events and brainwaves! There's a wonderful feeling of in-reach that comes from working together all afternoon, drawing us all closer, week by week.

At first we were focused on outreach just in relation people who might come because they need the Warm Place. But ever since we opened, people we haven't previously known have also been calling in – partly out of curiosity and sometimes to offer some sort of help. It's not just the Warm Place people-in-need who are coming to the Meeting House for the first time, it's many others who didn't know about us before. And several of the regular Friends volunteering are people new to Quakers, who in various ways are finding out what being Quaker might mean.

Recently during a de-brief we talked over possible ways forward with a challenging, potentially explosive situation, I realised that the person next to me, a non-Friend who had, I think, assumed an inevitable explosion, was listening with great attention to a very experienced and much-loved Quaker. *She* was making the point that we can never *know what* impact our consistent Quaker warmth, openness and kindness might have – we just need to keep on being that way. Although this project isn't *primarily about* outreach, it was clear that this short conversation – and many others at the heart of our Warm Place - are resulting in wonderful outreach spin-off.

If you would like to know more, please do ask me at lunchtime. Or better still, come up to York on a Friday afternoon and just drop in, you'd be very welcome.

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for 21/01.2023