

Quaker Youth Development Work

Theory of change narrative

May 2021

Introduction

Purpose of the theory of change

The theory of change map and narrative for the Quaker Youth Development Work has been developed to encourage the extension of the youth development work in the west region and in Yorkshire and to inform Quakers in other regions of Quakers in Britain to explore possibilities for future youth development. The theory of change supports clarity of purpose and a way in which we can evaluate the impact of the employment of youth workers.

A theory of change is a description of change occurring over the short, medium and long-term. These theories help us understand in more depth how programmes make a difference to participating individuals and their organisations. As organisations become more outcome focused – and new ways of working are tested and implemented – a theory of change is a model to better understand what change is desired or expected (e.g. young people are more engaged with Quaker communities) from the activities undertaken (e.g. regular events are held for young Quakers). As well as supporting evaluation, a theory of change can help staff within an organisation or service to understand the work they do and to better communicate their purpose.

Explaining the theory of change map and narrative

This narrative should be read alongside the theory of change map. The map contains the information gathered about intended changes through the evaluation process of the initial youth work pilot project areas (carried out by NCVO), discussions within the pilot regions with staff, stakeholders and local support

groups, discussions with the Reference group and Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) and through a workshop bringing together representatives of the above groups facilitated by NCVO in March 2021.

The narrative is an explanation of the map. In the map we use boxes of different colours to represent the key aspects of the theory that it sets out and to differentiate between what is delivered by the Quaker Youth Development Work, namely its activities, services and products (also known as outputs) and what difference it intends to make (outcomes) for young people and Quaker communities.

The following definitions are used in this document and the accompanying map:

- **Impact** is the broad or longer-term effect of the work that happens after outcomes have occurred. This can include effects on people and on culture or policy.
- **Outcomes** are the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of the work (its activities). Short-term and intermediate outcomes are steps along the way to long-term outcomes; they need to happen before the more significant long-term outcomes can be achieved.
- **Activities** are the work undertaken to bring about these changes. These are the things the work delivers in order to bring about change and are also often referred to as outputs.
- **Assumptions** are all the 'givens' underlying the theory and might be a statement of key aspects of the approach.

Glossary

Terms used by Quakers in Britain's Quaker Youth Development Work project to describe aspects of its work and its stakeholders:

- **Quaker community** refers to a group of Quakers who worship together. This could be a local meeting, area meeting, regional grouping, summer event, non-geographic community (e.g. Young Friends General Meeting), or a short-term community (e.g. Junior Yearly Meeting).
- **The meeting** refers to the combination of meetings undertaking the project. This could be one local meeting, an area meeting or, most probably, a group of area meetings.
- **Young person** means an individual aged 11-18.
- **Young Quaker** means a young person connected in some way to a Quaker community, through attendance, family or social connections.

Narrative for Quaker Youth Development Work project

Impact and long-term outcomes

The impact is the broad societal change in Quaker communities to which the Quaker Youth Work project (Youth Development Work) intends to contribute, with the recognition that other factors outside Youth Development Work's remit also play a role.

The ultimate impact the Youth Development Work seeks to achieve is:

Young people are welcome, integrated and can participate within a loving, all-age Quaker community on equal terms.

Some long-term outcomes have been identified that are believed to arise from Quaker Youth work and felt to be essential for realising this impact:

- Young people have their own relationship with Quakerism [A].
- Young people feel they belong in Quaker spaces [B].
- Young people can influence their worshipping community on equal terms [C].

The earlier changes that bring about these long-term outcomes are articulated in the outcomes section below.

Activities

The intended impact and preceding outcomes (explained in the next section) are expected to result from the Youth Development Work's activities, which are summarised as:

- individual support to young people,
- outreach,
- residential events,
- one-off events,
- support for shared concerns,
- regular youth sessions,
- all-age events,
- representing young people,
- contribution to national resources,
- volunteer training and support.

Narrative for Quaker Youth Development Work project

The activities of the Youth Development Work are provided for those in the regions of the work and also for individuals on the boundaries or those who have connections to those regions. Youth Development Work creates outcomes for three groups which can be categorised as:

- **Service users:** the **young people** and groups who participate in Quaker Youth Work activities and events.
- **Volunteers:** the people who assist with the running of Quaker Youth Work
- **Quaker communities** and the individuals who are part of these communities.

However, people who participate and interact with the Youth Development Work may fall into more than one category, and each activity may create multiple outcomes for those people.

Outcomes

To achieve the intended impact the Youth Development Work will need to first achieve a number of changes or benefits (outcomes) in the short, medium and long-term for those three groups identified above. Here they are grouped into types of change for ease of reading although, in reality, these changes will lead and contribute to each other across groupings.

Awareness

An early outcome of Quaker youth work is that young people, those who have and have not come across Quakerism before, will be **more aware of Quakerism [1]**. Young people will then be better able to **understand the potential of their relationship with Quakerism [2]**.

Access and values

The Youth Development Work aims to ensure young people are **more able to attend Quaker events [3]**. This then helps Young people to have **access to worship and community with peers and in the wider all-age community [4]**. In the

medium-term **more young people will then experience Quaker worship and/or values [5]** and hopefully young people will **identify more strongly with Quaker values [6]** and then feel **more able to live out their values in the world [7]**.

Ownership and feeling valued

It is an important early outcome of the work that young people have more of a sense of **ownership of activities affecting them [8]**. This will then lead to young people being better **listened to and feeling more valued [9]**.

Individual growth

Youth work supports and encourages young people as individuals, helping them to be **more able to discuss and manage difference [10]** and to feel that they are better **supported through their growth and development [11]**. This will then lead to young people feeling more **accepted and able to be themselves/value themselves more and being able to share their gifts [12]**.

Changes in Quaker communities

The youth project works directly with adults in Quaker communities, as well as young people. This is so that, in the short-term, **Quakers are more aware of young people, their needs and experiences [13]**. In the medium-term, Quaker communities will feel **more confident and supported to engage with young people directly [14]** and individual Quakers will know **more about how to work with young people [15]**. In the longer-term, this will lead to **more meaningful, diverse interactions between young people and the wider Quaker community [16]** and ultimately **stronger relationships between young people and adults [17]**.

It is intended that the Youth work will also help young people to make new connections with other young people and to feel **more bonded as a community themselves [18]**.

Values and Our Faith in the Future

Embedded in the theory of change are the values from 'Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities 2020-2025'.

Be community-led and community-focused:

Quaker youth workers support Quaker communities in discerning their leadings, needs and priorities. This means they can then shape approaches to respond effectively to what communities need and want.

Enable Quaker communities to reach

beyond those active: by supporting young people, the youth workers will reach people who are currently less active and involved or on the edge of existing Quaker communities.

Encourage innovation and experimentation:

Youth workers adapt how things are and can be done to make them more accessible to young people but remain true to Quaker discipline and practices.

Complement other work: the Youth Development Work complements and supports work done by other staff and those giving service, developing their skills and expertise where needed.

Commitment to equality and diversity: the Youth Development Work seeks to involve those who currently do not access services and support and to experiment with different ways of engaging people.

Be collaborative: youth workers work collaboratively with others to develop approaches to support young people.

Be sustainable: continuing delivery both locally and online, the Youth Development Work supports the Yearly Meeting's commitment to being a low-carbon, sustainable community, especially in relation to travel, use of resources and the use of technology.

The anticipated outcomes from the theory of change speak strongly to the areas of *Our faith in the future*. In particular, changes such as **young people identifying with Quaker values [6]** and **living Quaker values out in the world [7]** would be expected within the theme of 'Quaker values are active in the world'.

Others such as **young people being more aware of Quakerism [1]** and **better understanding their relationship with Quakerism [2]** fit well into 'Quakers are well known and widely understood'. Some outcomes cross over *Our faith in the future* themes, such as **young people have access to worship and community with peers and in the wider all-age community [4]**, which sits across 'Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker' and 'Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age'.

The two themes that are more loosely represented within this theory of change are 'all Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline' and 'Quakers work collaboratively'. However, young people will have increasing experience of Quaker discipline through involvement in their wider Quaker communities. Work is also being considered for collaborations with other organisations offering support and opportunities to other young people who wish to explore Quaker values.

Key success factors

Quaker Youth Development Work staff noted that the following need to be in place for it to deliver its activities effectively to create the desired outcomes.

A Local support group needs to exist to support the worker in the local context of role holders and dynamics within local and area meetings.

Engagement of local friends is paramount. To build all-age communities, all Friends need to engage with activities of the Youth Development Work and be willing to adopt changes that enable the community to be inclusive. Working towards intergenerational involvement means overcoming a pattern and culture of exclusion of young people. Designing for the needs of young people means events are likely to be dynamic and inclusive for all.

Volunteers are engaged in many aspects of the Youth Development Work's activities and it relies on them to operate successfully. It is therefore important that the Youth Development Work has the capacity to manage those volunteers and is able to find the right roles for them.

Youth-led work: youth work comes from a place of always being open to young people bringing suggestions, to have a place where they can voice ideas and lead where they wish. Young people can choose to facilitate with or without support, as they wish. Youth workers also offer a space in which young people are under no obligation to have responsibilities for running things if they don't wish to. Youth workers have skills in unpicking, understanding, responding to and advocating for young people's concerns, interests and needs.

Visit www.quaker.org.uk/cyp for more information on our youth development work. You can contact our Youth, Children & Families team at cypadmin@quaker.org.uk or by calling 0207 663 1160.

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