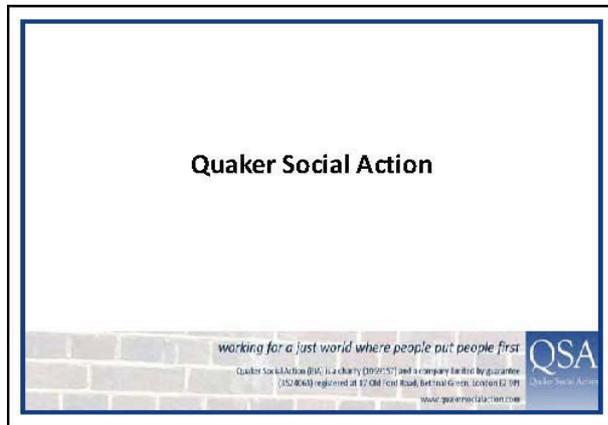
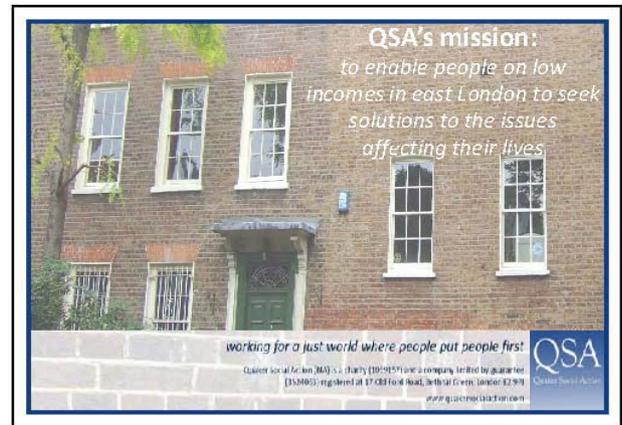


Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering: Prepared Ministry on Economic and Social Justice

Joycelin Dawes, clerk /chair of Trustees, Quaker Social Action



Slide 1



Slide 2

[Slide 1] I begin with words from Documents in Advance for this session: “Let us put our faith into action and challenge the conscience of society.”

Friends, Quaker history demonstrates that a (relatively) small group of people can challenge the conscience of society and contribute to change.

The recent statement from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting on ecology and economy shows Quakers applying equality, integrity, simplicity, community and peace to address systemic and attitudinal deficiencies in capitalism. Now we must discern *our* witness.

What I say draws on my observations as clerk of Quaker Social Action, a Quaker-led charity addressing poverty and social exclusion in east London for nearly 150 years.

During 2011 and 2012, QSA's Quaker Trustees, with the support of Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, are re-examining our witness, asking what the *Quaker* in QSA currently means in pursuing our mission **[Slide 2]** “to enable people on low incomes in east London to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives.”

Reflecting on the *Quaker* bit of QSA today explores our core identity -what Quaker Faith & Practice 2.66 calls “....what is on one's soul..... It's what the Inner Light gently pushes you toward or suddenly dumps in your lap.” It's risky because we don't know what this might require of us.

QSA is a small charity. We fundraise and spend nearly £1m a year, delivering innovative projects that tackle poverty and social exclusion.

**Slide 3****Slide 4**

We work principally in **[Slide 3]** Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney, 3 diverse boroughs consistently amongst the most deprived in the UK.

Our Trustees are all Friends or long-term Attenders, our staff almost wholly non-Quaker; collectively we are committed to practices based on Quaker understanding of equality, justice, and integrity. **[Slide 4]**

Putting our faith into action:

To enable people on low incomes in east London to seek solutions to issues affecting their lives we find ways to activate equality, justice and integrity, putting faith into action through 5 working principles:

being user-focused,

inclusive,

professional,

accountable and creative.

In being *user-focused*, I see QSA 'answering that of God in everyone' though that term is not spoken around the office or to our service-users;

Being inclusive is our way to demonstrate equality by example. We are currently pioneering **[Slide 5]** 'community patrons', supporting service users to become our patrons rather than conventionally approach the great and the good to speak truth to power for us.

Our *creative* projects uphold *justice* by enabling service users to re-claim their innate resources and dignity.

Our working practices uphold integrity in being *professional* and *accountable* and our governance uses Quaker business methods. Challenging the conscience of society:

Like Quakers in Britain, we are not big thus must focus what we do. And we cannot challenge the conscience of society unless QSA first commands the respect of our peers for our work.

QSA is highly respected in the charity field; and the numerous charity awards we have received for our work are based on evidence of our impact in addressing poverty, not just our ideals.



Slide 5



Slide 6

This year QSA received a Centre for Social Justice award given to ‘effective poverty-fighting groups’ for *Made of Money*, our project for families on low income to talk, listen and learn about the impact of money in their lives.

Such Centre for Social Justice awards are assessed on clearly-defined criteria of **[Slide 6]**

- effectiveness,
- innovation,
- compassion, and
- excellence,



Slide 7



Slide 8

These criteria are then defined to assess impact; and impact has long been the bedrock of Friends' challenge to the conscience of society. -I will illustrate these criteria with examples from our projects.

[Slide 7] Effectiveness – you can show through evidence that you are transforming lives.

Homestore, our furniture recycling project on the slide, enables 1,600 people a year on low incomes to furnish their home, selling on unwanted furniture at low cost.

John, one of our customers, said “There was very little furniture there so we needed furniture and I came across Homestore. It was a godsend, it was really amazing, especially because of

the deliveries. The difficulty with us was not having any transport. I don't drive, so there was no way of ever getting any furniture into the house.”

[Slide 8] Innovation – you have developed solutions that are practical, successful and unique.

Knees Up, our community-building project, uses street parties to engage people's imagination and break down barriers, a step in building safer, more sociable neighbourhoods, and supports fledgling community action. After one Knees Up street party, Mari commented “I think it's nice to do something for the whole community. I think this one of the first organisations I have come across that don't state this is for this group or that group...it's like anyone's welcome.” She went on to organize family film nights and an after-school club.



Slide 9



Slide 10

[Slide 9] Compassion – your ethos is person-centred.

Homelink is a project helping single homeless people, not eligible for local authority help, move into rented accommodation. Every client is a person needing to take vital steps to re-integrate with society. Derek, like Alfredo shown here, was a homeless recovering alcoholic, addict and ex-prisoner wanting to live a normal life. He said “*Being able to choose my flat with Homelink, it gives you a bit of responsibility. I felt I was being treated like an adult.*”

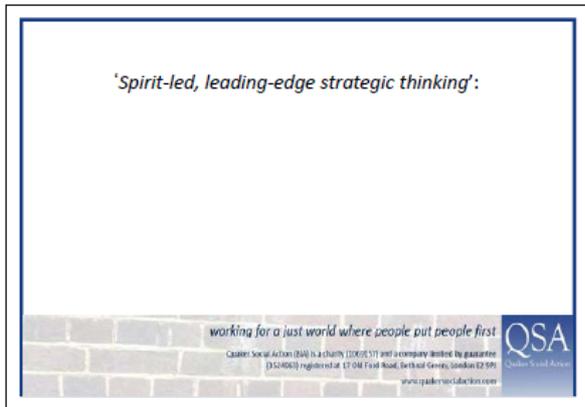
[Slide 10] Excellence – you can show through evidence that you are a leader in your field.

Prior to this year's award, in 2008 Made of Money, our family and money learning project, also won a Charities Aid Foundation Award, and was chosen by New Philanthropy Capital as their leading example of a "creative approach by a small charity".

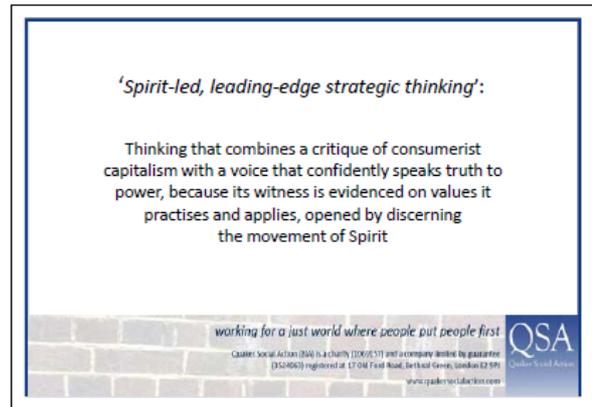
Dainhea, the mother of three shown here, took the Made of Money course last year, and has since managed to begin paying back rent arrears and avoid eviction. “*Not having the money is such a dark place. I'd been unwell since 2004, but [now] I'm sleeping again... To hear my children saying 'thank you mummy for going to MoM' is wonderful. This is just the start – there'll be a long-term impact because I'm giving them skills to manage money*”.

These are some of the ways QSA puts faith into action, applying Quaker values in its work, translating them into innovative means and practices that help people find effective solutions to the poverty and social exclusion that affect them.

Is there a connection between QSA's approach to poverty and Quakers in Britain putting faith into action and challenging the conscience of society?



Slide 11



Slide 12

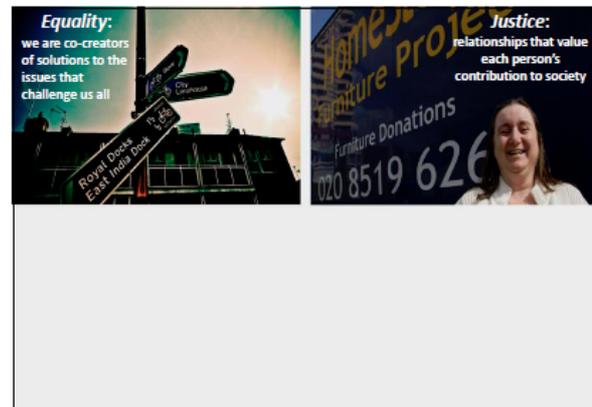
To challenge the conscience of society, I see Friends corporately needing a perspective epitomized in the statement by Philadelphia Friends; one I call [Slide 11] 'Spirit-led, leading-edge strategic thinking' [Slide 12] – which is a bit of a mouthful for anyone.

Thinking that combines a critique of consumerist capitalism with a voice that confidently speaks truth to power because its witness is evidenced on values it practices and applies, opened by discerning the movement of Spirit.

QSA works for such change by the creative application of established Quaker values: showing through evidence that lives can be changed, putting equality, justice and integrity into action.



Slide 13



Slide 14

[Slide 13] *Equality*: the measure of the light that is in each person: we are co-creators of solutions to issues that challenge us all;

[Slide 14] *Justice*: relationships that value each person's contribution to society rather than a wage economy that dissociates useful work from proportional reward and ethical behaviour;



Slide 15

[Slide 15] *Integrity*: living our values in how we work; Trustees and staff building a thriving and resilient organization – from one person hearing our joys and challenge to shared responsibility for fair and equitable ways for all to live;

[Slide 16] Adding, *simplicity* –practical, effective strategies, organisation and mechanisms that deliver.



Slide 16

This sounds prosaic. But it is demanding. QSA is digging deep, challenging ourselves to renew the core Quaker element of our witness.

Our purpose here today is reviewing and renewing Yearly Meeting’s witness on economic justice. How will we speak truth to power, evidenced on values we practice and apply, opened by discerning the movement of Spirit?



Slide 17

What, Friends, is on *our* soul? What is the inner light pushing us toward? What is it putting in our lap? **[Slide 17]**

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