



VIBRANCY IN MEETINGS PROGRAMME EVALUATION

**PHASE 1: EARLY FINDINGS REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Georgina Anstey and Sally Cupitt
NCVO Charities Evaluation Services
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About Vibrancy and the evaluation

Vibrancy in Meetings (Vibrancy) is a three-year pilot programme that aims to enable local and area Quaker meetings to become more strong, confident, connected and sustainable. The programme is run by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (Woodbrooke) and provides four development workers located in four pilot regions across Britain.

NCVO CES is conducting a three-year evaluation of the programme to investigate whether it is achieving the changes it intends to, and to explore the way in which it is set up, managed and received. This report is delivered at the end of the first phase of the evaluation to summarise the issues that led to the development of Vibrancy and describe early findings on the set-up of the programme and early work undertaken.

Early findings on set-up of the programme

- Overall the set-up of the programme has gone well and has generated learning about what works well in early contact with meetings.
- Vibrancy staff have been well inducted and feel supported, although they would value more contact with the steering group.
- Generally, the team have the equipment they need although IT has sometimes been an issue.
- Staff report working long hours.
- The programme might benefit from further communications with the wider BYM and Woodbrooke staff team about the purpose of Vibrancy and its developments.

Early findings on programme work so far

- Development workers have worked with an average of 17 meetings each.
- Support is being given to individuals more often than groups.
- About a third of the work is with area meetings, which is more than anticipated.
- In areas where the development worker attends a local meeting, most of the work has been reactive, responding to existing demand. In the one area where the development worker does not attend a local meeting, it has taken longer to generate interest and most of it has been proactively developed.
- Meetings are bringing a wide range of presenting needs, which are often hard to initially diagnose. The most common areas of need are around community and meeting for worship.
- The nature of the support given varies but is commonly focused on helping meetings to clarify their needs and then signposting them to the appropriate support. This is beginning to differentiate Vibrancy from other Quaker support.
- Development workers are beginning to feed useful suggestions from meetings back to BYM and Woodbrooke. However, there is no formal way of doing this or ensuring the issues are taken up and actioned.

Learning

In the early programme work, development workers have learnt about the needs of local meetings and how to identify them, particularly that the presenting need is often not the real need within the meeting.

Informal, face-to-face engagement has been key to building individual relationships within meetings and development workers have found that they have an important role in simply listening to Friends and building confidence within local meetings.

Development workers have learnt that understanding boundaries around their work is important, particularly in terms of signposting and not 'sorting out' for Friends in local meetings. There has also been an acknowledgement among development workers that this kind of work takes a long time to bring about change.

The initial period of the programme has generated some learning to be applied to the future evaluation plans. This includes: the need to be mindful of the development workers' workload; some changes required to the monitoring spreadsheet; the need to leave space in the work to capture support being given at area meeting level and to explore the effect of being spirit-led.

Early recommendations

For Vibrancy

Recommendation 1: Review the workload of Vibrancy staff and consider action to reduce travel, administrative or meeting-focused responsibilities. This could include sending a single representative to internal meetings and increasing flexibility around logging time and hours swapping.

Recommendation 2: Set up a formal process for feeding back needs and issues from local meetings to BYM and Woodbrooke staff. This could include monthly catch ups, while being mindful of the administrative load on the development workers' time.

Recommendation 3: Consider strengthening the contact between the development workers and Vibrancy steering group.

Recommendation 4: Create a plan for ongoing communications to BYM and Woodbrooke staff around the purpose and role of Vibrancy and its developments. This could be led by the Steering group, to manage the additional workload for Vibrancy staff.

Recommendation 5: Allocate more time to familiarisation with Quaker Life staff, offer and processes, as well as with other BYM staff providing services being signposted to, in any future induction processes for new development workers. Additional time spent with Quaker Life staff could still be of use to current development workers.

Recommendation 6: Invest in well-functioning IT equipment and access to IT support for any future regionally-based development workers.

Recommendation 7: Discuss the pros and cons of taking a reactive approach to support, as opposed to a proactive one, to ensure that this is taken as a considered decision on an ongoing basis.

For the evaluation

Recommendation 8: Further explore how necessary it is for development workers to be Quakers in order to perform the role effectively.

Recommendation 9: Further explore whether the advantage that some development workers have of being part of a local meeting in their area is sustained further into the programme.

Recommendation 10: Capture data on where development workers were particularly spirit-led in their work and what effect this was felt to have.

Recommendation 11: Ensure that data collection captures work at the area meeting level as well as local meeting level.

Recommendation 12: Check with development workers whether the classifications in the monitoring spreadsheet around needs and type of work are fit for purpose.