

Learning & Research Team Background Information

About Woodbrooke

Woodbrooke came into existence in 1903 and remains the largest provider of Quaker learning in Europe. It has evolved to also become a busy, professional conference and accommodation centre. Woodbrooke now offers over seventy bedrooms and ten meeting rooms set in ten acres of organically managed gardens and grounds.

Woodbrooke offers learning to Friends in Britain and beyond which aims to support the needs of individual Friends and Quaker communities. Our learning is open to, and welcomes, others who are interested in and drawn by the spiritual principles, practices and witness of the Religious Society of Friends.

We have a staff group of about 55 people, some full-time, some part-time. Our teams cover our learning programmes, administration and finance, marketing and sales, housekeeping and maintenance, gardening and catering.

Learning & Research Team

The Team is responsible for initiating, planning and delivering the programmes of learning and research which are the core of Woodbrooke's charitable objectives. This includes running courses on site, off-site ("Woodbrooke on the Road" and at Swarthmoor Hall in 1652 country) and online. Woodbrooke also runs the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies which is the leading research centre into Quakerism in the world and provides research degrees (in partnership with the University of Birmingham) and online Postgraduate Certificate and an MA in partnership with Lancaster University.

Overseeing the team are the Head of Learning & Research and three Team Leaders. These four posts play a part in the strategic development of Woodbrooke's learning and research work. They have responsibility for coordinating the development, implementation and review of course programmes, for managing the team and for budget management. All are also involved in delivering courses.

Strategic Direction of Learning

Over the period of the current strategy (2020-2025) our learning and research will focus on four areas:

- A. Strengthening Quaker communities
- B. Deepening worship & spiritual lives
- C. Supporting witness in the world
- D. Rooting and renewing Quaker faith, practice and witness

In implementing the strategy we will:

- develop a 'Quaker community-centred' programme of learning and deliver this in line with clearly identified needs and requirements of Friends
- deliver more learning locally, regionally and online while continuing to provide some residential learning.

- be responsive and flexible to the needs of Quaker communities as well as pro-active in offering learning
- build active ongoing relationships with Friends and communities throughout the Yearly Meeting and beyond
- work collaboratively with Britain Yearly Meeting on delivering an integrated cross-organisational strategy for supporting Quaker communities, working with BYM 'support for meetings' staff and communities to assess what is needed, and co-create a programme of learning that meets the needs of that part of the Yearly Meeting.
- work collaboratively with other Quaker organisations including Friends World Committee for Consultation, especially FWCC-Europe & Middle-East Section
- work in partnership with other groups and organisations to build mutually supportive relationships
- systematically evaluate and measure the impact of our learning.

Integrated Work with Quakers in Britain

Woodbrooke and Britain Yearly Meeting (the national organisation for Quakers in Britain) will be working together to support Quakers, individually and collectively enabling them to thrive and be the communities they are called to be.

This work will be spirit-led, supporting their leadings and discernment, and will

- **Be community-led and community-focused¹**, supporting Quaker communities in discerning their leadings, needs and priorities. Staff involved in both local and YM-wide service delivery will be involved in identifying needs, patterns and trends in order to develop tools and approaches so that our work responds effectively to what communities need and want.
- **Enable Quaker communities to reach beyond** those who are currently active and involved to people at, or beyond, the margins of existing Quaker communities.
- **Encourage innovation and experimentation**, adapting our organisation and structures in response to current needs while remaining true to Quaker discipline and practices.
- **Complement other work**, so we do not duplicate effort or have gaps in support provided to Quakers. Work will be developed and offered by those with the skills, expertise, leading and time to deliver it, including paid staff and those giving service.
- **Be collaborative between BYM and Woodbrooke**, with other groups and with individual Quakers and their communities.
- **Be underpinned by a commitment to equality and diversity**. We will look beyond those who currently access services and support; and will experiment with different ways of offering support.
- **Be undertaken in ways which support 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.

This joint work will be a key element of Woodbrooke's learning and research programmes.

¹ Community-led means communities determine the services they need and want, community-focused means yearly meeting-wide activities and resources are offered in a way that suits the local context.