

REPORT FROM PATTERNS AND EXAMPLES DAY MAY 2018

The day began with a warm welcome to Liverpool Meeting house, a lovely, person-friendly building in the centre of the city with a vibrant community café downstairs. The history of Quakers in Liverpool is attractively displayed around the building, an interesting read during lunch. The day was structured around the following topics: pastoral care, mental health, Meeting for Worship for Business, finding people for roles and looking after property. Following a short meeting for worship, there was a general introduction to the day in which we introduced ourselves, followed by an opportunity to get to know someone new through a short exercise.

The remainder was spent in workshops of our choice; we both joined the „mental health in our meetings“ discussion. This was facilitated by Alison Mitchell, Mental Health Development Officer, 8 and the session forms part of a longer workshop available to Area or Local Meetings who want to explore this topic further. The session initially looked at language around mental health and how mental health difficulties can be hidden and not necessarily obvious. We split into smaller groups and were given scenarios with questions to discuss. One of the themes that came out of this was the need to foster a culture within which we are all valued for who we are in our meeting. For someone with mental health issues, this means being able to say as much or as little as they wish whilst still being a valued member of the meeting, as well as feeling they have something to offer. There may be opportunities for people to take on responsibilities within the meeting to help them feel included. We talked about the need to get to know people in our meeting and create a welcoming environment where mental health can be accepted, discussed openly and individuals supported in whatever way is appropriate to them. Part of this could be having resources at our meeting houses such as information about sources of support and books to help us better understand mental health issues. We recognise we are not experts but seek to accept those who come through our doors with whatever they bring.

John Townley and Sue Riley