

Peace Pathways – Report to ECAM May 2025

This report covers developments with the Peace Pathways peace education project since our last report to ECAM in May 2024.

Looking back at the report from last year we can say again that it's been a positive and exciting year. Much of what we were aiming towards in our last report has been achieved, and more; of course, there have also been challenges and some of our aims have not come to fruition yet.

We continue to focus on inputs for primary schools in Key Stage 2 (Juniors). We are offering three main strands:

- a) **Peaceful Schools:** 6 sessions which can be delivered as a course or individual sessions, covering inner peace, building peaceful relationships and being part of a peaceful community;
- b) **Handling Conflicts Well:** 6 sessions over three half-days, covering how we handle differences and conflicts between us;
- c) **Peer Mediation:** 2 full days, plus introductory sessions for school staff and pupils and a follow-up review, enabling the school to introduce and run a playground peer mediation scheme, with trained pupil mediators who help to sort out everyday disputes.

In addition, we can also offer stand-alone sessions for secondary schools if approached, and taster sessions for primary schools.

Team members and recruitment

As reported last year, the project members have regrouped, (following support with project organisation from Peacemakers in the West Midlands) into two clusters:

- a) operational work, supporting the project management, including the Steering Group
- b) delivery in schools

A couple of people work across both areas, which is useful for continuity.

Due to factors such as health issues and other commitments, both groups have capacity constraints. It would be very helpful to have at least one or two more people to serve on the Steering Group and/or project administration. The current number of facilitators is also too small and this directly limits the amount of delivery we can handle. We are seeking a position where there is a larger pool of facilitators so that we can offer more, and more flexible, delivery to schools. We also need to ensure that facilitators are not over stretched, given that everyone is giving their service voluntarily as one part of already busy

and committed lives.

On the plus side, we have managed to deliver a broader offer during the last year and also we have a few people who are potentially interested in joining as facilitators. More would be very welcome – please ask for an informal chat and copy of the role outline. We offer full training to all volunteers.

Work in Schools and with Teachers

In the last report we said that we wanted to focus on primary schools, and hoped in particular to find a local school with whom we could develop a “whole school approach”, that is, an in- depth commitment to peaceful approaches throughout the school.

a) We have been able to achieve this in our work with **St Basil’s Catholic Primary School in Hough Green, Widnes**. The school has a strong commitment to embedding restorative practices and becoming a more peaceful school, as part of its focus on Catholic social and spiritual education.

With our support, the school has introduced -and is successfully running, a Peer Mediation scheme (one of the first in North West England). This was also a first for Peace Pathways. We trained a cohort of twelve year 5 pupils as Peer Mediators; they are now coming to the end of Year 6 and will be moving on to secondary schools in the autumn. The school is now working with us to plan for the training of the next cohort. The scheme has been running for a year now, during which both staff and pupils have noted how effective the Peer Mediators have been in helping pupils to resolve the kind of everyday, frequent, low-level conflicts that arise in the playground and within the school. It has also been a positive experience for the mediators, who have grown in confidence and experience.

The school had an OFSTED inspection in the autumn term and a Catholic Schools inspection in the spring term and both commented favourably on the peer mediation scheme.

In addition the school asked us to come and run our new ‘Handling Conflicts Well’ course with their year 3s (first year juniors) which we did towards the end of the winter term and into the spring term. This was again very successful. This is a cohort of children that were particularly affected by the Covid lockdowns.

As a team, we have learned a great deal from our work at St Basils – organising and delivering these courses has helped us to refine our offer, and to reflect on our own skills and the content of these courses.

b) We have also contributed to teacher training. Two Peace Pathways members have worked closely with Ben Harper (the national Peer Mediator Coordinator for QPSW) to deliver training for teachers from Greater Manchester schools. The courses enabled staff to introduce a peer mediation scheme in their own schools and to train the mediators. As a result, peer mediation has been introduced into at least five Manchester schools.

c) After the course, one school , **Crosslee** in Walkley, asked Peace Pathways to train the Peer Mediators for them, which we did in the autumn term. However the school did not then implement the planned scheme. This has also been a useful learning experience for us, in assessing whether a school needs to take other steps first, and encouraging this.

d) We also worked with a further primary school, **Alma Park** in Levenshulme, in the autumn term, delivering a taster workshop on how we handle conflicts, to more than 300 key stage two juniors and their teachers – 8 classes in all ! (It is a two-form entry school). This was seen as an introduction for the school which is now focusing on developing a more restorative approach to behaviour issues and conflict management. The feedback from the children after these sessions was immensely positive and uplifting.

e) We are now currently working on co-organising, with the national Peer Mediator co-ordinator, the first North West of England school Peer Mediators celebratory event, for schools that have introduced a peer mediators scheme. This will take place in Manchester on 11th July at The Mechanics Institute . We would welcome additional ECAM Friends to take part on the day as stewards. It should be an exciting and joyous event!

Training and Development

During the year we have practised and refined the courses we offer.

We have participated in the Quaker Peace Education Network and in the national Peace Education Network, both of which help us keep up to date with new developments as well enable us to share our own experience.

We have also joined the Civil Mediation Council's Peer Mediation Working Group and have become accredited as approved Peer mediation training providers by the Civil Mediation Project.

Financial update

We now have an agreed a table of fees, and used this to invoice the three schools we worked in. Schools were made aware that the fee charged reflected the subsidy we receive from ECAM and also Manchester and Warrington AM, since ECAM and M&WAM Friends are giving their time as well as monies from within the AMs.

Income from delivery was £1,250; we also had a generous donation from South Manchester Quakers £90. We encourage all members of the team to claim their expenses, and travel costs have been the main item, along with initial outlay for training resources and materials. Total expenditure was £744, leaving a positive balance of £506.

We are very grateful to the support and encouragement from ECAM, and the invaluable assistance from Frances Hill, AM Treasurer.

We hope the Peer Mediator Celebration (see above) will be a joyful occasion for all concerned. There will be significant costs which we are contributing towards the cost from our Peace Pathway funds. We invite ECAM to consider whether Friends would like to make an additional donation (suggested amount £100) in support.

Ongoing Challenges and Aspirations

As noted above, we would hope to have a slightly bigger group of Friends and others to give some service in project organisation or delivery, so as to ensure that everyone can fit in their service with the rest of their lives. We would encourage AM Friends to mention the project to anyone they think might be interested in it.

We do not yet have a very diverse group of facilitators, and this may continue to be the case whilst we rely on facilitators who are able to offer their time unpaid.

Our more experienced facilitators have increased their range during the year, but for various reasons those who had joined last year as trainee facilitators have largely not been able to take part,

We want to develop our website and social media presence, and also have more attractive and accessible promotional materials; this will be an aim for the coming year.

Thanks

We are very grateful for the continuing upholding by ECAM. Most recently, we were asked to give a short input to a Yearly Meeting 2025 preparation session on How Can Quaker Meetings Build a Culture of Peace?. This gave us the opportunity to explain to the 100+ participants how a small project like Peace Pathways, because it is grounded in an Area Meeting as well as being part of a web of, mostly Quaker, peace education projects, can achieve some real success in supporting children and adults to develop inner peace, build peaceful relationships and recognise how to approach issues of justice and fairness peacefully.

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