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Sensing The Extraordinary Within The Ordinary:

Understanding the spiritual lives of people living and working within Camphill Communities.

Executive Summary Report

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Contents

Context and background

Introduction

The importance of spirituality for the process of health and social care is rapidly taking on significance across the disciplines. Recent research has indicated that spirituality is an important dimension of the lives of people with special needs and one which they desire care and support providers to understand, value and take seriously[1]. Whilst the Camphill communities are in many ways ideally placed to provide for this dimension of care, to date there has been no empirical research that has sought to explore the significance of spirituality for the ethos and practices of these communities.

The study from which this report has emerged sought to begin to fill this knowledge gap by presenting data to support (or otherwise) the suggestion that spirituality is important for the people involved with the Camphill Communities and to point towards possible ways in which Camphill's support services could be challenged and improved through reflection on this dimension of people's experience. Through a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups with co-workers and people with special needs[2], the study sought to gain a clear sense of the significance of spirituality - defined in people's own terms - and whether it might form a significant dimension of their lives. We hoped that by listening to people's experiences and trying to understand their spiritual perspectives, we might be able to begin to understand the importance (or otherwise) of this dimension of their lives and start to draw out some of the implications of this for understanding and practice.

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[1] John Swinton (2002) *A Space to Listen: Meeting the spiritual needs of people with learning disabilities.* London: Mental Health Foundation.
John Swinton and Elaine Powrie (2004) *Why Are We Here?: Understanding the spiritual lives of people with learning disabilities.* London: Foundation for People With Learning Disabilities.
[2] See glossary for definition of these terms as they apply within the Camphill communities.

The Camphill communities

Camphill is a worldwide movement, with over 100 communities in 23 countries supporting people of all ages with special needs. In these communities, volunteer co-workers and people with special needs live, learn and work together. The 50 Camphill communities in the UK and Ireland include schools, colleges and adult communities. Each community is different. Some are large; some are small. Some are in towns and cities; some are in quiet rural areas; some are on the urban interface where town meets country. All are caring, life-sharing communities, where the contribution made to community life by each person is valued. The ethos of the Camphill communities is that everyone is appreciated for who they are, for their unique personality and the special qualities they bring to community life. The Camphill philosophy is that no matter what anyone's outward disability may appear to be, the spirit - the essential core that makes us all human - always remains whole. Everyone is therefore deserving of equal respect and opportunities in life in order that they may be able to fulfill their potential. Artistic and cultural themes run through the daily lives of all the communities where life is based on Christian values and inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, known as anthroposophy[3].

The impetus for the study

The impetus for the study came from recent research on spirituality and mental health[4] and spirituality and learning disabilities carried out by Professor John Swinton at the University of Aberdeen's Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability. These studies have indicated that spirituality is a significant aspect within the lives of many people with special needs. The current study sought to build on this foundation within the particular context

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[3] For more information on the Camphill communities see :www.camphill.org.uk
[4] John Swinton *Spirituality and Mental Health care: Rediscovering a "Forgotten" Dimension* (2001) London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
Swinton and Powrie (2004) *Why Are We here? Understanding the spiritual lives of people with learning disabilities.* London: Foundation for People With Learning Disabilities.

of the Camphill communities. The project was carried out in three adult Camphill communities: Aberdeen, Stourbridge and Botton. By reflecting on these three communities, it was hoped that we might gain a deeper and richer picture of the role of spirituality in the Camphill communities.

We do not claim that the findings presented in the report are representative of all Camphill communities in the various forms in which they exist. We do, however, believe that the experiences of the people captured in the research report will resonate with the experience of others and that this resonance, if used thoughtfully and creatively, might have transformative power.

What do we mean by 'spirituality'?
In understanding what people mean by the term 'spirituality', it is helpful to distinguish between 'religiousness' and 'spirituality' as commonly defined.

Religiousness is defined as participation in the particular beliefs, formal rituals, community and activities of a specific, formally acknowledged religious tradition. Religion is a particular way in which people may express their spirituality but, according to common assumption within western cultures, it is not necessarily synonymous with it[5].

Spirituality is a more subjective experience that exists both within and outside religious traditions. Spirituality relates to the way in which people understand and live their lives in view of their sense of ultimate meaning and value. It includes the need to find satisfactory answers to fundamental questions about the meaning of life, illness and death. It can be seen as comprising elements of meaning, purpose, value, hope, love and, for some people, a connection to a higher power or something greater than self.

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[5] It is useful to notice that this separation of religion from spirituality is a relatively recent Western phenomenon. People from other cultures, and even within Western culture, may well not recognise this split; for many religion *is* spirituality and religion is a way of life that cannot be separated into beliefs and practices. For the purposes of this report we will be accepting the religion/spirituality split as it is articulated by our participants.

Spirituality is, therefore, much more of a personal and social construction than religion, although both contain constructed elements. One of the intentions of the study was to listen to how the people living and working within the Camphill communities understood and constructed the term 'spirituality' and to explore the ways in which this understanding impacted upon their lives together. An important thing to bear in mind as one reads the accounts of spirituality and spiritual experience outlined in this report, is that our focus is on how people define and describe spirituality and its significance for their lives. Throughout we make no judgements as to whether a person's understanding is right or wrong or whether the 'thing' described as 'spirituality' actually exists in any kind of empirically verifiable way. The pattern throughout this study was to allow people to construct spirituality in their own words and on their own terms. Our task was to endeavour to capture, interpret and present these understandings as accurately and sensitively as possible. This short summary report cannot adequately capture the richness and diversity of perspectives and individual stories contained within the main report, but aims to highlight the key themes that emerged.

Aims and methods

The aim of the study

The study aimed to explore the significance of spirituality for those living and working within three Camphill communities in the United Kingdom.

We originally focused on three main research questions:

1. How do those living and working within the Camphill communities understand the meaning and significance of spirituality for their lives and practices?
2. Is there anything unique about the Camphill's environment or/and philosophy which helps to sustain a sense of spiritual well-being?
3. What is the potential impact of the Aberdeen City Bypass road on this aspect of quality of life?

The third question was discontinued due to a change regarding the route of the Aberdeen City bypass.

The goals of the study

In essence, the study sought to achieve the following goals:

1. To provide an in-depth analysis on how people living and working within three Camphill communities perceive the role of spirituality.

2. To provide evidence as to whether or not the claims made by Camphill regarding the importance of the spiritual aspects of community life have some veracity and practical utility for people with special needs and those living alongside them

3. To produce research data with which the Camphill communities might be enabled to contribute to the discussion on how to meet the spiritual needs of people with special needs and their support workers.

4. To provide evidence that there is freedom of expression of spirituality (or otherwise) within the Camphill communities

5. To provide information to help evidence the ways in which Camphill is located within the spectrum of provision for people with special needs and whether it offers something that is unique and valued by people with special needs.

Qualitative research methods*: *In-depth interviews and focus groups

In-depth interviews
One of the initial difficulties we encountered was how to communicate the word 'spirituality' to participants within a wider cultural context where the meaning of the word has become so diverse and fluid. To this end we developed an interview schedule based on the findings of previous research consisting of the following questions:
1. What is spirituality?
2. What makes you feel good about yourself? (value)
3. What are the good parts of your life? (meaning)
4. Are friends important to you? Why? (connectedness/relationships)
5. What do you want to do with your life? (hope)
6. What helps when life is difficult?
7. Do you think there is a God? (searching for the transcendent)
8. Why do you think you are in the world? (existential search for identity and purpose)

These questions opened up some fascinating areas of discussion and reflection. Question 1 enabled us to explore what the word spirituality actually meant for people. The following questions enabled us to test and deepen our understanding of the responses to question 1. For people who had no expressed idea of spirituality as a formal concept, the questions allowed the researcher to explore those dimensions of human experience that have been recognised within the wider literature as falling within the

boundaries of 'the spiritual' and to examine what they meant for different individuals.

Focus groups

Our second mode of data collection was via focus groups. The main advantage of focus groups was that they not only allowed the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time, they also allowed us 'direct access to the language and concepts which structure participants' experiences'[6]. In particular, the planned and structured focus groups provided a valuable strategy that offered participants the opportunity to make their views known in ways that were open and safe. The dynamics generated within focus groups seemed to help participants gain confidence, created a safe, non-threatening and non-intimidating environment for discussion and also provided strong peer support. This enabled participation by people who might otherwise be excluded due to problems with articulation. They were, therefore, potentially of value in achieving the participatory goals of this study[7].

How we structured the main report

It is important from the start for the reader to be aware of how we have structured the main report and why we have done so. As mentioned, the report contains data from our conversations with three Camphill communities. What we have tried to do is to present the accounts of spirituality that people shared with us accurately and clearly. Our analysis and interpretation has been focused on, and carried out with, the specific intention of providing the reader with an in-depth understanding of the role and function of spirituality within these communities. Inevitably, there was a good deal of overlap between the various themes and perspectives that emerged from our interviews and focus groups in the different communities.

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[6] Ella Mclafferty (2004). Focus group interviews as a data collecting strategy. *Journal of Advanced Nursing.* 48 (2), pp.187-194.
[7] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research Methods.* (2006) London: SCM Press

Nevertheless, there were certain key experiences that all of our participants had in terms of religion, relationships, community and so forth. There were also subtle, but important, differences in the ways individuals and communities understood and worked with these common themes.

In structuring the main report we have tried to offer a rich and deep insight into some of the nuances of these similarities and differences; though not through formal comparison, which would be a contradiction of our methodological assumptions that people's experiences are unique and not generalisable. Rather, we have tried to lay out people's experiences in such a way as to enable the reader to understand and reflect on that which is common and that which is different or even dissonant between the communities. As the reader immerses herself in the material and reflects on, and interacts with, our interpretations, she should be able to gain a deep understanding into the nature of spirituality and the role and function that it plays within these communities and beyond. In this way the descriptive data we offer might find modes of operationalisation as it encounters the world in which the reader lives, works and practices her own spirituality.

In this executive summary of the main report, we seek to highlight the main themes which emerged from the three communities, and offer some reflective conclusions which we hope will be of value to each community and to those from outside the Camphill communities.

Summary of findings and discussion

1. What is spirituality?

A difficult concept to articulate

Spirituality was perceived to be a difficult concept to articulate. This was so for both residents and also, at times, for co-workers. Both residents and co-workers displayed an intuitive sense of what spirituality was *about* - how it impacted upon their experience and practice - rather than what it actually *was* as an intellectualised concept or idea. This lack of formal conceptualisation and articulation does not necessarily mean that spirituality is inexpressible. Rather it seemed to indicate that formal conceptual or definitional language was not the way in which people chose to articulate this aspect of their life experience. In other words, the nature of the area of human experience that spirituality refers to requires a different form of language (narrative, imagery etc) than the formal language of rational definition. Residents in particular (but not exclusively) expressed their sense of how spirituality impacted upon their lives through reference to concrete experiences and practices. For them, spirituality had to do with *sensing the extraordinary within the ordinary.* Nonetheless, both residents and co-workers expressed a heightened awareness of the significance of spirituality and spiritual experiences at particular points in their life, particularly at times of crises such as illness, death and trauma.

A significant aspect of life

Spirituality was recognised as a significant dimension in the lives of the people we spoke to within the Camphill communities - residents, co-workers and employees. It was generally perceived to be important for both individual and community life, although definitions and understandings of precisely what spiritually was were varied and diverse.

A framework for living

Ideas and perspectives on spirituality created world-views and explanatory frameworks within which people made sense of and interpreted the events that occurred within their lives and the lives of those around them. In other words, spirituality was more than a set of beliefs about certain issues; it was the way in which people made sense of everything that occurred to them in every aspect of their lives.

Life as a spiritual journey

A strong unifying theme which emerged with the co-workers was the belief that their life was a 'spiritual journey', within which there were many different paths. We might draw these paths together under four headings, each of which had a different emphasis indicating the primary mode of engagement with spirituality:

1. *experiential:*originating and being sustained through personal inner experience
2. *intellectual:*engaging the mind with the paradoxes and puzzles inherent in existential questions
3. *confirmational:*adopting concepts which confirmed an already chosen 'world-view'
4. *revelatory:*seeking to find 'truth' wherever it might be revealed

All had had different starting points for their 'spiritual journeys'. Some people's spiritual journeys were initiated from previous experiences with religion; others emerged from different roots such as trauma, loneliness or a general existential search for 'truth'.

Universality yet individuality of spirituality

Spirituality was perceived as a fluid and contextual concept which had individual and universal implications. At one level, it was generally acknowledged as a universal phenomenon which related to all people. All

people have a spirituality in some shape or form. However, its particular manifestations were varied, contextual and individual. The individuality of spiritual expression posed problems and challenges for community living. What was perceived as supportive to spiritual well-being for one person often had quite a different and even opposite function for another. For example, festivals as celebrated within Camphill were seen to have the potential to foster both inclusion and exclusion. For some these were important spiritual resting places; for others they were irrelevant impositions. Thus, what 'works' for one person may have the opposite effect on others. This being so, spiritual strategies that are inflexible, unreflexive and fail to take note of the diversity of spiritual experiences and desires will inevitably be problematic. There is thus a need to discern and to be sensitive to the underlying diversity of meaning that people place on particular spiritual practices. What is good for one person may not be good for others.

Such individuality of spiritual expression inevitably offers a threat to the cohesion of the community at a certain level. This appeared to be more so in a community without boundaries such as Stourbridge, which is set in an urban context and is not a traditional village community. The lack of physical boundaries and 'village identity' meant that it was perhaps less able to 'hold' divergent expressions of spirituality and still retain a strong sense of community. The size of a community might also have an influence on its ability to accommodate divergent and individual expressions of spirituality insofar as within smaller communities there are less people and therefore differences are more obvious and less easily 'absorbed' than within larger communities.

2. Spirituality and spiritual well-being

There was an important difference between spirituality (understood as a formal and identifiable concept) and spiritual well-being (understood as the

outcome of practical engagement with the beliefs and practices that emerge from a person's spirituality).

Spirituality might be understood as a general term for those aspects of a person's belief system that contributed to a sense of meaning or purpose in life. Spirituality thus understood is the foundation for spiritual practices.

Spiritual well-being differs from spirituality in the sense that it is the end result of how well one's spirituality has functioned in terms of facilitating meaning, purpose, hope, relationship and so forth. One may use many different ways and modes to achieve such well-being – prayer, meditation, Scripture, work, community, relationships and so forth – but such things are primarily practical tools designed to facilitate the search for meaning and, in some cases, contact with the Divine and a movement towards a sense of wholeness and connectedness.

3. Religious and non–religious expressions of spirituality

Whilst a number of people expressed their spirituality through traditional forms of religion, primarily Christianity but also other religions such as paganism, there was a general acknowledgement that spirituality included, but was not defined by religion.

Even so, religion remained a significant vehicle for the expression of some people's spirituality. Religion was described as a framework within which they made sense of the world and found structures which helped them cope with life's difficulties. It was, for some, a basic point of orientation in their lives; a lens that they looked through as they made sense of what happened to them in good times and in bad. When people reflected on such deep issues as death and the afterlife, their religion offered both guidance and hope.

Whilst some people had a formal commitment to a particular religious system, others mixed their religion, primarily their Christian religion, with insights and values from anthroposophy, creating a fascinating blend of perspectives. A good example of this was the way in which the ideas of reincarnation, karma and destiny, which are not traditional Christian ideas, were melded with traditional Christianity to provide a spiritual framework that people found spiritually edifying.

4. Informal and formal spiritual practices

Spiritual practices were important as a mode for the outworking of people's spirituality. Spiritual practices (prayer, scripture reading, meditation etc) could be described as activities that one associates with cultivating one's spirituality. People developed and expressed particular spiritual practices in what might be described as formal and informal ways.

Formal spiritual practices are forms of action that are intentionally designed to express and develop a person's or a community's spirituality. These might include such things as prayer, bible study, meditation, celebration of festivals and formal worship within a religious framework.

Informal spiritual practices are likewise comprised of actions or series of actions that work together in order to cultivate an individual's or a community's spirituality. However, unlike formal spiritual practice, they are not formally structured by any particular religious tradition, nor are they necessarily intentional. They simply occur as part of day-to-day life. So in this study such things as searching-for-relationships, finding-meaning-in-work, connecting-with-nature and being-in-community take on particular spiritual importance (from the perspective of our participants) even though, when viewed from other perspectives, they may not appear to be explicitly spiritual endeavours.

Religious practices

It was clear that religion remained for many a significant locus for spiritual expression and development. People engaged with religious communities and were clearly nurtured through participating in them and their formal religious practices. Residents in particular identified a number of spiritual practices which were clearly religious in origin - church going, prayer, studying the bible, celebrating seasonal and religious festivals - as primary ways in which they made their spirituality tangible and concrete. However, the meanings of these practices were individualised, with specific meanings being connected to the particular ways in which people processed their beliefs within their lives.

In general, co-workers were less likely to express their spirituality within a traditional religious context than residents. Many of the co-workers with whom we spent time appeared to come from backgrounds wherein they have had no formal religious input or who had, for whatever reason, rejected and/or reinterpreted their traditional religious background in the light of anthroposophy. This contrasted in an interesting way with the perspectives of a number of the residents who, in general, did not appear to connect strongly to anthroposophy or its Christian community[8] worship and often appeared comfortable with the traditional Christian religion and worship of their upbringing. This tension may be significant insofar as it may be important for co-workers to recognise that religion forms a significant aspect of the spiritual experience of many residents and that they should be given the opportunities to connect with rituals and forms of worship with which they feel comfortable.

Relationships

A primary informal spiritual practice that people associated strongly with the experience of spirituality was *relationships.* Relationships could be with God/a higher being but more often they were temporal/human. In village

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[8] See glossary

communities residents appeared to have a range of relationships with an accompanying strong sense of interconnectedness within the community and beyond it. For many, family ties remained significant. Relationships appeared to function in a spiritual manner insofar as they offered the individual a sense of meaning, hope, purpose, fulfilment and direction in life.

Again, residents in particular tended not to *theorise* about relationships as 'spiritual transactions' but rather to *engage* with them, i.e. they were not perceived as a means to an end but as an end in themselves. Residents explicitly connected relationships with spirituality, finding them contexts which were vital for the expression of their spirituality. For some they were the main means by which their spirituality was expressed. In relationships there was perceived to be a 'meeting of the other' which transcended the physical, psychological and emotional. Through relationships people defined themselves within the context of their past, found meaning in life in the present, unravelled their purpose and found support to continue their life journey with hope. Relationships were the channel through which deep existential questions were asked and answered. Relationships provided:

- A sense of continuity: connecting the past, present and future giving continuity through place and time
- Sense of shared direction and story: a context in which life events acknowledged and support given
- Identity formation: affirmation of the self, confirmation of self-worth, a firm and recognisable place in the world
- The possibility of intimacy: of knowing and being known, the breaking of isolation, the experiencing of connectedness
- Opportunities for self-development
- A sense of purpose e.g. opportunities for service

Work

Work was another important informal spiritual practice that was seen by some as a specifically spiritual activity. Meaningful work, through which inner

aspirations and ideals could be expressed and even realised, provided and enhanced a sense of meaning and purpose in life. When work was a means of expressing a person's values and ideals, the work, and the individual's perception of their own worth, was enhanced by doing it.

Thus, work provided a sense of meaning, purpose, identity and fulfilment. However, it only seemed to operate in this way if it 'fitted' in some way with the individual's aspirations and/or sense of the work's importance and value to themselves and others/wider world. The Camphill ethos, within which work was seen as done for others and of worth no matter what it might be, helped this process of valuing and self-affirmation, particularly within the village communities. Here it was easier for the community itself to determine the value of the work done; i.e. work was given its value by the place accorded to it within the community where work was seen as goal orientated and contributing to the wider good. It was, however, less successful in Stourbridge. Here residents in particular sought to be accepted by wider society (including its values and judgements) and to find jobs there. Thus, the meaning and the value of work was quite different in this context. This is not in any sense a value judgement, simply an observation that shows the ways in which spiritual meaning can relate to context rather than object; i.e. work in itself is not necessarily spiritual, it is the particular meanings that people place on it that moves it into the realm of the spiritual. These meanings are closely connected to the context in which people experience work and what values they choose to place upon it.

5. The unseen

Although much of what residents described as relating to spirituality was grounded in day-to-day experiences and practices, there was a keen appreciation amongst all participants that it had also to do with the unseen. Spirituality had to do with the sense of a higher power/spiritual beings involved in one's life which, at times such as crisis and death, could be

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evidenced in dramatic ways. People expressed this differently but a sense of 'more than' and 'beyond' yet as real as and also inhabiting/permeating the physical was a unifying theme. For many of the residents 'the unseen' was rooted in some sort of religious framework, but often with elements of anthroposophy intermingled, e.g. angels, god, heaven, spiritual world etc. The idea of the individual spirit, which contains the inviolable and eternal essence of the person, was a common theme. This had practical utility for life in the present especially, for some, in making sense of living with their disability. It was also central to the ethos out of which the co-workers related to those they supported.

6. Death, dying and the afterlife

Tied in with the idea of the unseen were various spiritual perspectives on death, dying and the afterlife. This was one of the common areas that residents associated with spirituality, particularly with the 'unseen' element of it. All expressed belief that death is not the end; that there is something more. Precisely how this 'something more' was defined and conceptualised varied. Three main stances emerged:

- Traditional Christian belief: heaven
- Reincarnation: as per anthroposophy
- Uncertainty

However, even within these broad categories it was clear that concepts such as heaven and reincarnation had specific and often highly personalised meanings.

7. Theme of good and evil

It was clear that whilst spirituality was, for many, perceived as a force for good, this was not so for all. One participant's expression of spirituality included strong elements of Satanism and was quite explicit in its rejection of

God, religion and the goodness of the spiritual. It was apparent that free-floating spirituality defined in terms of meaning, purpose, hope, transcendence and relationships need not necessarily manifest itself in ways which are inherently good. Without a formal religious or moral framework, it is possible to define the spiritual quest in terms which many would not associate with goodness.

8. Anthroposophy

Anthroposophy, as a conceptual framework within which spirituality was worked out, held relevance for a number of participants. However, their relationship to it and the degree to which it was taken up varied considerably. Anthroposophy was commonly expressed as central to the spirituality of the co-workers. Elements of it were incorporated by some residents but these tended to be mixed with Judaeo-Christian concepts. Some rejected it, particularly when it conflicted with their religious upbringing. The main concepts expressed were reincarnation, karma and destiny. These ideas had an influence on the caring practices of co-workers and seemed to form a significant aspect of their motivation.

While for some people this anthroposophical perspective proved to be a helpful framework, for others it acted as a barrier insofar as it was perceived to be overly intellectual. There was a further interesting contrast between the idea expressed by some co-workers that anthroposophy was perceived as being beyond the ability of residents to comprehend and the clear understandings of this system that were expressed by some residents. There may be scope for closer interaction and communication between co-workers and residents around these issues.

Related to anthroposophy, ideas of destiny, karma and reincarnation seemed important aspects of some people's spirituality. These concepts were linked together by the participants, although reincarnation and karma were the only

ones discussed in detail. They appeared to be concepts which some of the participants found helpful in making sense and finding meaning in some of their life experiences, particularly in the realm of relationships. The idea of karma was seen to play a significant role in relationships, both as an explanation for relationships and also as a way of coping with relationship difficulties. It was perceived that in terms of karma no relationships are 'accidental'; relationships as part of our learning on earth are 'purposeful' and thus are invested with spiritual significance. Further, linking the concepts of karma and reincarnation gave people a sense of continuity throughout lives and provided them with comfort and the possibility of a second chance.

9. Community living

The significance of community living for spiritual well-being varied between communities and individuals. Similarly people's motivations for entering and staying in community were diverse with the common factor, at least amongst co-workers, seeming to be that all considered themselves to be engaged on a 'spiritual path'. Community living offered the possibility of:

- Purposeful living
- Confirmation of place
- Identity
- Meaning
- Vehicle for expressing spirituality
- Opportunities for individual spiritual development

For some of the co-workers community living was identified as a spiritual practice in itself. Community living was that which had brought some into Camphill as a means of furthering their own spiritual journey, rather than the desire to live and work with adults with special needs per se. Thus, for co-workers community living was a means of pursuing their individualised spiritual paths. For residents it did not overtly hold this meaning. It was more the context within which their life was currently unfolding, the place where

they chose for that to happen, rather than a vehicle for their spiritual journey per se.

10. Tradition and change

The spirituality of the Camphill communities is shifting and changing. New members of the community have different and more diverse spiritual perspectives than some of their predecessors and there is a sense of spiritual change in all of the communities. This need not be seen as a problem. The developing spiritual diversity is in line with similar spiritual changes that are occurring throughout the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Camphill faces the challenge of recognising this shift and striving to develop constructive, innovative and creative ways of dealing with the emergent changes. Finding means of supporting, developing and expressing these changing and varied spiritualities in ways that are relevant for today, yet respect the spiritual traditions on which the Camphill communities are built, is a key task for co-workers and residents alike. This may be easier to do in the village communities where the physical boundaries of the community created some spiritual cohesion. In these communities, individuality of spirituality and questioning of spiritual practices may not be such a threat to the integrity of the community. In urban communities such as Stourbridge, where there are no physical boundaries, this may be more complicated as the centre of coherence is much less clear. When these communities are going through periods of change and questioning they are inevitably more vulnerable to crisis and disintegration.

This is clearly a time of change and transition. There seems little doubt that spirituality remains a highly significant dimension of the life and experience of residents and co-workers in the Camphill communities. The question is, 'How will the new spiritual culture that is emerging accommodate itself within current structures and assumptions?', or perhaps more importantly, 'Can current structures and assumptions accommodate the changing spirituality of

those living and working within the Camphill communities within the United Kingdom?'

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Our research has shown that people living and working in the Camphill communities clearly have an awareness of the spiritual and have, to varying extents, integrated that awareness into their day-to-day practices. The intuitive perception that spirituality is an important dimension of the life and work of Camphill seems to have some degree of empirical validity.

Nevertheless, there is, to some extent, a lack of clarity and a degree of miscommunication around important spiritual issues, at least within the communities participating in the research. To a point this is inevitable within a social context which, as we have highlighted, is shifting and changing quite considerably in its relationship to, and understanding of, the spiritual dimensions of life. In a spiritually plural country such as the United Kingdom, within which the contours and boundaries of spirituality have become expanded and blurred, it would be surprising if this was not reflected somehow in the spiritual lives of the Camphill communities.

We hope that by highlighting some of these tensions as they are being worked out within the communities, co-workers and residents might become conscious of some spiritual aspects of day-to-day living that they may not have noticed or effectively understood up until now. In noticing differently, perhaps their practices will be enhanced as they try to accommodate the new ways of looking at things that we hope this report offers.

How might these findings be used?

People described spirituality as a journey or a process rather than a 'thing'. What emerged was a need for all in the community to discover how to become appropriately sensitive to the subtle and complex aspects of their own and of others' spiritual journeys. It was clear that there was no

universally applicable model of spirituality that 'fitted' all of the Camphill communities. Although there were core features (relatedness, community, journeying, God/the unseen and so forth), each community, and to some extent each individual, worked out what spirituality meant in their unique situation.

The emergence of formal and informal spiritual practices and their significance for people's spiritual well-being emphasises that spirituality is very much tied up with everyday life. To discern where and when spiritual practices are occurring often calls for the ability to listen differently and to be sensitive to perspectives other than the obvious. What is required, therefore, is a strategy and an approach which will enable co-workers to recognise and engage with the wide variety of spiritual expressions that are present within the communities. We believe that the essence of such an approach is present within the findings offered in this report. The key is to actualise and operationalise the data.

Thus, we would be keen that the findings of this report not only inform our understanding of the spiritual practices of the Camphill communities, but that they also act as a catalyst for practical change. There appears to be a need to re-assess current ways of understanding and meeting spiritual needs within the Camphill communities. Bearing in mind the expressed importance of the spiritual for both residents and co-workers and the obvious diversity in precisely how such needs might find fulfilment, it would be helpful for communities to explore whether and how people's spiritual journey is being supported within the life of the communities. We suggest that this could initially be done in two ways:

1   Attending to the spiritual requires looking, listening and seeing in quite particular ways. Such ways of looking and listening are not necessarily natural or obvious. Learning the skills to support the spiritual dimension of people's life requires some degree of training and

exposure to new ideas and perspectives. Therefore, we would recommend that the findings of this report be used to develop formal programme of education for co-workers. The programme would distil the key elements of this report relating to the nature and practice of spirituality within the Camphill communities. It would explore ways in which people could effectively work with these within the diverse Camphill communities. The intention would be to help people to see the importance of the spiritual for the lives of all involved with Camphill and to work out specific strategies and approaches that would enable people to effectively support this dimension of people's experiences. Professor Swinton through the Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability has developed similar programmes in the past and would be in a position to advise on how best this might be done.

2   As part of this general educational initiative, we would recommend a series of facilitated meetings involving residents and co-workers. The intention would be to explore ways in which the kinds of miscommunication and differences in perspective highlighted in this report could be recognised and worked through together.

Taken together, these two relatively straightforward initiatives would lay a firm foundation for the recognition and effective incorporation of spirituality into the daily practices of Camphill in ways which are intentional, rather than simply implicit.

It is our hope that this report acts as a foundation for further development. Spirituality is central to the identity and practice of the Camphill communities. But its meaning is shifting and changing. We hope that what we offer here will give people a sense of the direction and implications of such shifts and changes and open up new possibilities for being together in ways that are life-bringing and, perhaps, transformative.

Glossary

Special needs: the term 'special needs' is used throughout the report to encompass people who have a range of disabilities and difficulties including learning disabilities, mental health problems and other difficulties requiring additional support, e.g. emotional and behavioural problems.

Resident: the term used throughout this report to denote those with special needs living within a Camphill community.

Village community: by the term 'village community' we mean a community with clearly defined geographical boundaries, within which most community members live and work. In principle a person can live, work and worship without having to leave the boundaries of the 'village'. Within Camphill there is a variety of different modes of community living, but it is perhaps this way of doing community that is most associated with Camphill in the mind of the general public.

Villager: originally a term used within Camphill village communities to denote those with special needs living in the community. Now no longer universally used.

Co-worker: those living within Camphill communities, some with their families, supporting those with special needs. They have responsibilities in the home, work, administrative, social and spiritual life of the community. Co-workers do not draw a salary, but their reasonable needs are met by the community from its resources.

Employees: those working in the Camphill communities who receive a salary. Historically Camphill communities have relied on co-workers but all centres now also rely to varying degrees on employees. Typical areas of responsibility include specialist and craft teaching, therapies, social care support, administration and estate maintenance.

Short term co-workers: those who come from all over the world to join a Camphill community as resident guest volunteers for a period of six months or more.

The Christian Community: The Christian Community was established in 1922 under the leadership of Friedrich Rittelmeyer. Rudolf Steiner played a role in creating its constitution and forms of service. The centre of the community's life is a morning Eucharist, or communion service, known as The Act of Consecration of Man. The Christian Community has a creed that states the central truths of Christianity. For further information see: www.thechristiancommunity.co.uk

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