



# PEACEWORKER JOURNAL LETTER

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Dear Friends

Happy springtime to all of you.

Spring at Medact on the Peace and Security programme has teemed with activity. It's been a busy, invigorating time. As I wrote in my last journal letter, the Health Through Peace conference in November last year aimed to be a 'springboard' for the revitalisation of the engagement of the health community in the peace movement. I've been working with health professionals in London and around the country to take forward this vision, by organizing a series of workshops and events, and facilitating the formation of budding health through peace 'action' groups.

The first of these events was an 'action planning' workshop in January in London, where health professionals and students discussed what the health through peace movement could become over the coming months and years: how to build it, and how to make it sustainable. We have a Facebook group for members of the movement here:

[www.facebook.com/groups/healthpeace](https://www.facebook.com/groups/healthpeace)

Please join and spread the word if you are interested!



Since the January workshop, several health through peace ‘action groups’ have sprung up and are growing. I’ve been excited and encouraged to see them blossom in the past few months, and to support their coordinators with the development of strategies and ideas. So far, these ‘action groups’ are the Medact Refugee Solidarity Group, and the Medact Arms Control Group. New members have also joined the longstanding Medact Nuclear Weapons Group.



*A Skillshare Day in London.*

The Medact Arms Control Group have been working on a signed letter from leading health professionals and members of the wider health community, joining the call for an immediate end to arms transfers to all parties to the Yemeni conflict, including British arms sales to Saudi Arabia. They’ve also been running a Book Club that meets every month in central London, called the ‘Shadow

World Book Club’ – where we discuss Andrew Feinstein’s devastating expose of the international arms trade.



The Medact Refugee Solidarity Group have been working on two different threads to their strategy: direct action, and education. They have been to Calais to volunteer in the so-called Jungle, supported protests in support of refugees (including one outside the notorious Yarl's Wood detention Centre), and are planning an event for Refugee Week in June. They are also working on developing materials – leaflets, information booklets and postcards – on migrant and refugee access to healthcare rights, to disseminate in hospitals and GP surgeries around the UK.

The most recent 'health through peace' events I ran were:

### **A 'Skillshare' Day in London**

The day featured workshops led by London Campaign Against Arms Trade on creative direct action, and ICAN on speaker training, and shared updates from the action groups.

### **A 'Network Day' in Oxford**

Medact joined together with Oxpai (a medical partnership between Oxford and Palestine, the Oxford Migrant Health Initiative, CND Oxford, The Public Health Film Society, the Abingdon Peace Group, The Oxfordshire Peace Campaign, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Movement for the Abolition of War and Refugee Resource, to share information and discuss how to work together to build an inclusive 'health through peace' movement in Oxford.

### **An action for the Global Day of Action on Military Spending**

Medact members involved in the 'health through peace' movement dressed up in scrubs outside St Thomas' hospital, London – and asked hospital staff and members of the public to vote on how they would spend this year's military budget, in the interests of global security. See the excellent video made by one of Medact's volunteers, Ciprian Diaconita: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ozJ5MgXEq8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ozJ5MgXEq8)



### *Global Day of Action on Military Spending.*

The next event is a workshop in Truro, on 14 May, where we are gathering health professionals and social activists to discuss how to build the health through peace movement in Cornwall.

You can see information, photos, videos and blogs from the health through peace movement here: [www.medact.org/healthpeace](http://www.medact.org/healthpeace)



### *Network Day in Oxford.*

Meanwhile, my coordination of the public health paper on the recruitment of under 18s into the UK armed forces is reaching its final stage. We will be publishing it soon, and holding a launch event – stay tuned on the Medact website for updates!

So what have I been learning over the past few months? Among many things, I am learning a lot about my own relationship with activism, and



working with activists, both seasoned and new. I've seen patterns in the past of people becoming disillusioned and burnt-out, and I feel increasingly strongly that it is imperative to maintain an intentionally warm, nurturing culture where people feel personally valued and their skills and contributions are recognised. I am greatly enjoying working with and learning from some dedicated, talented people spending their valuable free time to help develop the health through peace movement. As I work with them, I take inspiration from the Quaker values embedded in the peacemaker scheme, which have enabled all of us peacemakers to feel encouraged, valued and supported.

With so much activity and so much still to do, my time on the peacemaker scheme is flying by. As I spend time over the next few months thinking about where to go next on my journey as a newbie peacebuilder, I am grateful for both the skills and knowledge I'm gaining on this scheme, and the much-needed and appreciated support of the Quaker community. I've grown so much since a year ago, and I'm excited for whatever is ahead of me after this year is over. Thank you, for giving me this opportunity to delve into life as a peace campaigner.

In friendship,

Rhianna