Agenda

For

Conference

2013
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Contributions regarding service in the Fellowship are welcomed from all areas - individuals, groups, intergroups, regions, subcommittees, GSB. *AA Service News* is published in early March, June, September and December each year with deadline dates of the last Friday of January, the last Friday of April, the last Friday of July and the last Friday of October each year. The General Service Conference report is published each year in the summer issue and Questions and Topics for the following year’s Conference in the winter edition.

Please note that the opinions expressed in *AA Service News* may not necessarily represent the view of the General Service Board.

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The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) for 2013 is chaired by Erik from Continental Europe. The Committee consists of the elected chairs of six Conference Committees plus two Alcoholic Board Trustee Members (Wullie & Geoff). The General Secretary and one member of staff from the General Service Office (GSO) also assist the committee.

Only the 6 elected Committee Members are given voting rights, all other Committee Members are there only for guidance and advice whenever required. As Alternate Chair it is my pleasure to be able to report back to the Fellowship on behalf of the Conference Steering Committee as to how the meetings have gone.

I will never forget my first Conference Steering Committee Meeting at GSO in York on 11 May 2012. I got lost on the way from the hotel to the office even though it was just around the corner. The concentration required to find my bearings, the fear of being late, or worse, of not finding the office at all, I guess, triggered all those too familiar and unwelcome feelings you have to face whenever you attempt to do something for the first time. Luckily, at AA, we all share a common understanding of alcoholism and irrational fears. To know that others would be experiencing similar anxiety levels as me, brought some needed solace and the strength to get on with it.

I must admit that the apprehension I felt that morning had transported me right back to 5 years earlier, when I had just taken my first real service role at my home group at the Sunday Newton Meeting in Birmingham. A position for Group Service Representative (GSR) had become available and before I knew it, I was the GSR for my home group. I asked myself then how I had ended up being GSR. It all happened very quickly, an immediate reflex to a nudge from Wendy.

One of my duties as GSR was to discuss the questions for Conference with in my home group. I did not really know how it worked, nor did I understand the questions or the background material, but I was willing to pay the price to find out. The task ahead was so daunting we felt inclined to suggest that all questions should submitted in multiple choice format to make it easy for newcomers alike, thinking that by limiting the possible answers to each question we would be making a
great contribution in simplifying and speeding up the process of arriving at a unanimous decision. It was a naïve idea, for the more options you give human beings, the harder it is for them to reach a decision.

When I finally got to the office in York, we all settled down and introduced ourselves. The preamble and the 12 traditions were read out. By then all tension had vanished.

One of the first items on the agenda was the theme of Conference, which is always suggested by the Chair. The theme for Conference 2013 proposed by Erik was “The Gift of Service” and we unanimously agreed to it.

Roger, the General Secretary briefed the Committee on the history of the Conference Steering Committee and literature was handed out to all members. During this meeting, the six Committee Members voted against the GSB Board Trustees having voting rights during the CSC meetings. Claire B was elected Committee Secretary and I was elected Alternate Chair. Our first Meeting was exceptionally short as we had finished by Friday evening. We were advised that this would not be the case with the forthcoming meetings (scheduled for 14 & 15 September 2012 and 12 & 13 October 2012) to discuss and decide the questions for Conference 2013.

Soon after our first CSC meeting, the first questions for Conference started to come through. A total of 62 questions were submitted for Conference 2013 and a further two incorporated by the CSC itself. A significant increase from the 42 submitted for Conference 2012.

During our first meeting to discuss the questions for Conference in September we asked a number of people who had submitted their questions to look at either re-writing the questions that would be more relevant to the Fellowship or sending through some more background information to their question so that the CSC could better understand the questions being asked to the Fellowship. During this meeting we got through around 50% of the questions and after two long meetings the committee were to meet again only in October.

The time passed quickly and before we knew it the final meeting was upon us to decide on the questions for Conference 2013. We reviewed the resubmitted material and the remaining 50% of the questions. Due
to the high volume of pertinent questions submitted, the CSC decided to combine relevant questions of similar categories into two further questions.

I would like to truly thank the Fellowship, especially those who took the time to forward their questions for Conference 2013. My personal view is that there are no right, wrong or stupid questions. All questions are the direct result of a desire to understand something better, a willingness to be exposed to someone else’s opinion or plain simple curiosity. In order to promote a thriving environment for ideas, suggestions and questions to develop, the CSC is committed to answering every question forwarded, not only those selected to go forward to Conference.

I hope that it is the consensus within the Fellowship that the questions selected for the 2013 Conference best help us convey the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

I would like to thank Tim W, sponsor and friend who sadly passed away this year, for introducing me to the Fellowship and Wendy, whom I cannot thank enough for having pushed me into service (yes pushed) and ignited my curiosity. I often find myself in challenging situations for giving into her every dare. A special thank you to all of you whom I have had the pleasure of working with on the 2013 Conference Steering Committee and those who have helped guide us all: Wullie and Geoff, Roger, Sharon and Erik. Thank you for approaching all with an open mind and loving heart.

Love in the Fellowship
Andy G
(Midlands Region)
Committee No. 1

1. Review the draft Service Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain.

Background

Draft Service Structure Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain

2. Would the Fellowship share experience and then make recommendations whether to include Regional Representatives in Guideline 4 ‘Intergroups’, with a view to keeping new members to service fully informed of our third legacy and avoiding any misinterpretation as to the role of Regional Representatives and their election at Intergroup.

Background

The structure of AA under ‘Regions’ clearly states ‘Representatives of Intergroups’ Guideline 4 states “The GSR is the first vital link in the communications chain between Group, Intergroup, Region and General Service Board” and yet the vital link is also the Regional Representative at Regional and Intergroup level.

“It is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of ‘checks and balances’” (Introduction to 12 Concepts for World Service by Bill W.)

Clarification of AA as a democracy can only be stimulated by the Regional Representatives inclusion in Guideline 4. (“Importance of realising AA as a democracy’ (AA Comes of Age page 225.)

Guidelines 3, 4 and 5
Traditions 1, 5 and 9
Concept X
Structure of AA Gt. Britain
Third legacy (AA’s legacy of service by Bill W. 1951)
Committee No. 2

1. Share experience on getting articles on AA in the local press and make suggestions on how the Fellowship can get articles into the national press.

**Background**

1. Members are having some success on getting articles on AA in their local newspapers
2. The Fellowship has not succeeded so far in getting articles on AA in the national press.

2. Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on the question of:

   What can AA do to better carry the message to young alcoholics both inside and outside of the Fellowship?

   More specifically, would Conference consider, discuss and make recommendations on the following:

   a. What can be done to make AA more of an attractive place to young people inside of AA?

   b. What can be done to make AA more of an attractive place to young people outside of AA?

   c. Consider updating the “Too Young?” poster with input from younger members?

   d. Could young people be represented in the AA structure?

**Background**

In Continental Europe Region there is a position of Young People contact who has a Liaison Officer role with full voting rights.
Committee No. 3

1. Inventory Question
   Would the Fellowship discuss and share experience on whether we as a fellowship are satisfied with the level of 12th step work that is being done at the various levels of Service?

   Background

   “Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, page 164)

   Tradition 5

2. Would the Fellowship share experience of Public Liability Insurance at Group, Intergroup and Regional level?

Committee No. 4

1. Would members share their experience on how they pass on or collect experiences and views on the Conference questions? What methods are the most successful in collecting responses from members of the Fellowship?

   Background

   During the past 15 years of participation with the discussing and collecting of responses for Conference questions, I have observed the following:

   The most effective place and time to discuss Conference questions is at the nearest point of entry for the newcomer (where the main business of AA is taking place) i.e. the individual group.
Many Groups however do not want to use meeting time discussing Conference questions.

Special meetings held to discuss Conference questions are poorly attended.

Many members regard Conference as something that happens in York in April and do not realise that conferring takes place at all “levels” and that all members can participate.

Probably less than 1 in 20 members participate.

2. Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations whether, throughout AA's service structure, members of special interest groups are sufficiently represented?

Committee No. 5

1. a) Would the Fellowship discuss and share experience of disabled AA members suffering progressive diseases who require a full-time professional carer to accompany them in their AA Home Group meetings?

b) Would the Fellowship discuss the implications within Tradition 12 of the professional carer attending meetings, thus enabling the disabled group member to continue to attend the AA meeting of their choice?

c) Would the Fellowship discuss and make recommendations on how best the special needs of disabled AA members who need professional carers might be met in closed AA meetings?

Background

1. The Information Sheet on AA Special Needs Organisation in the United States:
"SPECIAL NEEDS / ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEES"

Some AA entities are attempting to meet such needs by forming
Special Needs-Accessibilities Committees.

Since the goal is to make AA accessible, some committees refer to themselves as Accessibilities Committees. In some localities committees name themselves according to the specific need addressed, such as "Hearing impaired" committee".

When one or more members of an AA group have special needs (such as the need for American sign language interpreter or wheelchair accessibility), or has an illness which prevents them getting to the meeting room or needs special physical help, i.e., getting to the toilet during the meeting, AA members from that Group will see their needs are met.

The Members of Special Needs Committees explore, develop and offer resources to make the AA message and participation in our AA PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE WHO REACHES OUT FOR IT.

A G.S.O. Staff member who serves on the Special Needs Assignment is available as a resource and communicates with the local Special Needs Committees. In the interests of good communication and working together, Special Needs Committees are encouraged to keep their area Committees and local central/intergroup informed of their activities.

It is also helpful to work closely with committees handling Public Information and co-operation with the Professional Community in terms of keeping the public and appropriate agencies informed about AA BEING ACCESSIBLE TO ALCOHOLICS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

2. This has been a local experience:

My Home Group has a long term female AA member with 24 years unbroken sobriety who suffers from a progressive disease.

She is unable to walk and has to use a wheelchair. She has valiantly attended her home group meeting regularly for some years since it was first started. She is an ex-journalist, in possession of a brilliant mind which is unaffected by her illness. Unfortunately, she is physically trapped in an extremely poorly functioning body.
When her health deteriorated she made a request to the members of her Home Group, which is a Closed Meeting, for permission for her Professional Carer to be present. There was minor dissent within the Group and the question could not be resolved as it was said that it only takes one member to raise an objection.

This incident has raised very serious, broader present and future issues for ALL AA Group members who may develop a serious progressive disease and who would eventually need a Carer present in the AA meetings.

2. Would Conference consider what response can be given to Groups who refuse to accept the group conscience of Intergroup/Region?

Committee No. 6

1. Would Conference endorse the selling of AA Conference approved literature in electronic formats?

AA World Service have developed an E-Reader which allows registered AA members to purchase the Big Book and the 12 & 12 as a download.

2. Would Conference reconsider the decision taken in 2008 to prohibit all “external links” on the AA (GB) website?

Background to re-submission

This question has been re-submitted, having been rejected for Conference 2012 by the Steering Committee on the grounds that “….the Committee felt that the question is more suitable for consideration by the Electronics Communications Sub-Committee, to which your question has been referred.”

This was discussed at the annual RECLO/ECSC meeting at GSO on 18th August 2012 at which two GSB members were present. It was thought that the Electronics Communications Sub-Committee (ECSC) did not have the authority to reverse a specific decision of Conference. As the meeting was in favour of the revision of this
policy, it was agreed that the question should be re-submitted to Conference. It was felt that, subject to the consideration of certain safeguards, such as the approval of external links by the ECSC or a nominee of the ECSC, and/or the use of a disclaimer on clicking a link, as is done on the www.aa.org website, where appropriate, external links should be permitted.

**Background to original Question**

In 2008 Conference accepted Committee 4’s majority recommendation that:

“….in principle and in accordance with Tradition 6, that:  
1. There should be no links from the GSO GB website.  
2. In the spirit of unity, a list of AA National websites (in a non-linkable format) is provided on the GSO website, in order that, for example, members for whom English is not their first language, will find the support needed.  
3. Guideline 19 needs to be reviewed and reported back to Conference 2009, if practical.”

Should Conference be reluctant to simply reverse the 2008 decision it is quite possible to add safeguards, such as requiring external links to have the approval of members or nominees of the ECSC, and/or the adding of a disclaimer as is done on the AAWS site www.aa.org. This website links to local sites which use interactive mapping sites extensively. For these links to local sites, and for other external links, such as that to the AA (GB) website, the site displays a warning disclaimer on following the link stating that the visitor is leaving the AAWS website and that AAWS accepts no responsibility for the content of the site linked to.

**European Wide On-Line Meetings**

In the Central European Region, English-speaking meetings are usually easy to find in large cities, but outside of these cities they can be few and far between. There are many AA members who do not have access to English meetings on a regular basis—perhaps because they are geographically isolated, because they are homebound, because there are no English meetings in their area or because local
meetings in the host nation language do not follow the AA program as we know it. Young people's meetings are even more rare.

I got sober in a city where there were approximately 1500 meetings per week. Then, when I moved to Belgium in early 2001, I had a shock. There were no English meetings near me - the closest meeting was 2 hours away. The meetings in French in my town didn't use the programme as we know it. We co-founded an English meeting 40 minutes from our house, one meeting a week. But we wanted more. The answer was the internet. We found online 'chat' meetings, but we wanted to hear voices, to feel the presence of other alcoholics. The answer for us was another kind of online meeting.

The First164yp group started as an online Skype meeting for young people in AA. After a few months, attendance dropped off and the technical host made the meeting known to all of AA in Continental Europe. From there it quickly grew and, as a result, became a group, elected officers and affiliated with the Continental European Region of AA. Now the group has five meetings every week and business meetings every 4-6 weeks.

Although we have participants from all over the world, our group was organized to serve English-speaking AA members in Continental Europe. In Eastern Europe, AA has not taken hold to the extent it has in Western Europe and there are many English speaking members who do not have access to meetings. Some of our members are on ships or oil rigs and can't get to meetings. Others travel extensively or are housebound. We also have participants who are serving in the armed forces -- in Europe, in Afghanistan and Iraq. For some of them, living in a war zone means that crossing town to get to a meeting is difficult or impossible.

How does it work?

At the beginning, all of our meetings took place within the framework of a conference call on Skype. Many of them still do. As much as possible, we try to give our meetings the feel of face-to-face meetings. As with any meeting, ours needs someone to 'open the door and set up the meeting room'. This person is the technical host, who signs onto the Skype account about 30 minutes before the meeting to do any 'housework' that needs to be done and to start the meeting.
We have a chairperson who conducts the meeting (with the help of a written format) and introduces a topic. As with face-to-face meetings, participants share on that topic or any other topic they wish related to alcoholism and recovery. At the end of each meeting we make any AA related announcements and ask who would like to chair the following week. Our meetings end with the Serenity prayer.

Our technical host opens a virtual door by establishing a Skype conference call and adding members who have indicated by means of chat messages that they would like to join the meeting that day. Other tasks include reviewing and accepting contact requests from AA members who want to join the group and to be included on the group's Skype contact list - a requirement for attending meetings. After the meeting has started the technical host adds members who come late, inserts meeting-related information in the chat box, and calls back into the meeting anyone who has dropped out. On the rare occasions when the conference call crashes, the technical host re-establishes the call. We have developed guidelines for new technical hosts and provide training and coaching so that they can take over the responsibility of opening and maintaining a meeting with confidence.

Attendees need to be logged onto their personal Skype accounts about 10 or 15 minutes before the meeting and send a chat message asking to join the meeting. The technical host responds to these requests and starts the conference call about 5 minutes before the meeting time, adding those who have asked to be included. As participants are added, they say “hello” (unless the meeting has already started) and mute their microphones. It's important that participants do not turn on their video, as video decreases the bandwidth available to us and severely limits the number of participants who can be on the call. For the same reason we ask that participants not use the animated emoticons (e.g., ‘clapping hands’) available on Skype.

In our group we don't have many of the typical service positions. For example, we don't have a coffee maker or a literature person. Instead, our service positions are the officers (Group Chair; Secretary; Treasurer and GSR) and the technical hosts. We try to have two technical hosts available for each meeting in case one is unable to be there for some reason. Sometimes the two technical hosts take turns hosting the meeting.
At present our officers and technical hosts need to have at least one year of continuous sobriety and to be located in Continental Europe. Technical hosts also need to have a strong, fast internet connection.

7th Tradition. It's difficult to pass the hat in a virtual environment. Luckily, Skype is free and we each provide our own coffee! In the beginning we simply suggested that participants make an additional contribution to the next face-to-face meeting they attended. As our membership grew, however, we began to exceed the technical capabilities of Skype. We saw the need for a more stable platform for our meetings and recognised the need for a treasury to pay for it. We elected a treasurer, opened a PayPal account, and began to collect 7th Tradition contributions. We have since subscribed to a commercial teleconferencing platform which we currently use for two of our five weekly meetings. We also make quarterly contributions to the Continental European Region (CER) and send a GSR to their meetings.

Communication among the officers of our group is by email, and we copy each other openly. Communication with the membership as a whole is also by email (by definition our members have computers). However, the membership as a whole is blind copied to preserve anonymity.

Limitations of Skype: We have found that the stability of the meeting depends on many factors, some of which are not in our control. The most important one that we can control is the bandwidth. As mentioned above, we do not allow video and we ask participants not to use the animated emoticons. The technical host needs to have a good strong internet connection. When that’s the case, in general we can have about 14 people in a meeting with no problems. We have had up to 18 people on a call at one time without serious problems, but normally it's closer to 14.

When there are too many participants on a call, the sound quality deteriorates rapidly. Participants who have weak connections may 'drop out' of the call. They lose the connection and the technical host calls them back in. If the technical host ‘drops out’, the call is lost and the meeting stops until the technical host can re-establish it.
Other options: We often exceed the technical capability of Skype for our meetings, and we've tried several alternate strategies for augmenting our ability to handle increasing numbers of participants. One such strategy is to have a second technical host open another meeting at the same time. We're still working on the logistics of this but at the present time it seems to work fairly well. Another strategy, mentioned above, is to use a commercial teleconferencing platform. We evaluated nine platforms and chose WebEx, a Cisco product. In order to join the WebEx meetings, participants need only click on a link and sign in with the name they would like to use in the meeting (normally a first name and a location, e.g., Kate in Belgium). They can use video if they choose. The technical host can place meeting-related information on a whiteboard that all participants can see.

With WebEx we are able to accommodate more attendees, but some prefer the more familiar Skype environment despite its limitations. At the end of the year we will evaluate our experience with this platform and either extend the subscription or try another one. As this is an area where new alternatives appear frequently, we're gathering information to help us evaluate our options at the end of this year.

Problems we've had:

Sound quality: On Skype, the sound quality depends on many variables, only a few of which are in our control. We do our best to maximize our bandwidth and sound quality and leave the rest to whoever it is that controls outcomes.

Disruptive behavior: We deal with this in accordance with the guidelines in the AA Service Handbook of Great Britain. If there's disruptive behavior in a meeting, the tech host sends a private chat message to the individual involved, pointing out that their behavior is not acceptable and asking them to stop. If that fails, the tech host warns the person that they can be removed from the meeting if it continues. If it continues, the tech host has the ability (in both Skype and WebEx) to remove that person from the meeting. They can be added back after they've cooled down. As of this writing, we've not had to go to that final step.
Contact requests: Our members join our group by sending a contact request to our group’s Skype account. If they mention AA or meetings we automatically accept them as contacts (and therefore as members of the group. We also get a fair number of random contact requests. If they don’t say anything that lets us know they are in AA, we ask 'do you have a home group?’ or some other question to let them show us that they know we're AA.

Questions we're often asked:

How do you know people are using their real names? We don't. Just like a face-to-face meeting, we accept people as they present themselves.

How do you keep anonymity? We use bcc to email membership, but cc for officers communications. In the meetings, members decide to use their whole name or not, just like face-to-face meetings. Some of our members have an ‘anonymous’ Skype account.

Why didn't you join an intergroup: There is no logical Intergroup for us -- our officers are spread all over Europe and our members are in more than 35 countries around the world (as well as one ‘undisclosed location’). While there is an online intergroup, they don't meet or link to AA as a whole. They provide a valuable service with a website and information about meetings, but we wanted to link to AA as a whole. We wanted to participate in Conference. The Continental European Region allows unaffiliated groups to affiliate with CER directly. We send a GSR to CER meetings, and through CER we participate in AA through the GSO in York.

How do you solve problems in a virtual world? We realized early on that we needed to prevent ourselves from believing that we're special, and so we adopted a model for solving our problems. When we have a problem to deal with, we use the model of a clubhouse. So far, this model has served us well.

Do you have a problem with transient participants? We get lots of drop-ins, people who attend one or two meetings and disappear. Just like meetings in holiday places like Paris, Florence, or Brussels. We have a core group of regulars and lots of new people to keep it interesting.
If you have any questions or if we can help you to start your own meetings, please contact us at first164yp@gmail.com

A plea for ‘Non-Interference’

I have a high regard and respect for AA’s Twelve Step programme and have witnessed countless success stories. AA has saved many alcoholics’ lives through support and sharing. As a counsellor who has worked in the front line for ten years, with alcoholics and their families, I am also aware of unnecessary human pain and suffering among recovering members.

Often I have heard AA members who think they know best for all alcoholics and perceive that if you just “work the program” everything will be fine. That is not always the case. There are members in your programme who have experienced traumatic, life threatening events and who need professional help and, sometimes medication.

On several occasions I have had clients who were extremely suicidal and have sought professional help. Recently, two clients threatened suicide, and because AA members thought they knew more than the medical and psychological professions, the individuals almost died. Antidepressants had been prescribed to help eliminate the suicidal ideations and acute depression, yet AA members stepped in and convinced my clients to discontinue the use of medication. Using the argument often heard at AA meetings, they said “You are breaking your sobriety if you continue using the drugs.”

The two suicidal individuals of whom I speak had been sexually abused as children by three or more members of their families and had experienced other abuses as well. Both were emotionally and psychologically fragile.

Those individuals chose to drink to cope with reality and life, and to numb the pain of their youth. Both realised that alcohol was a problem and joined AA to achieve sobriety. Unfortunately, they had not dealt with the ghosts of the past. Trying to cope with these feelings and to confront them is often terrifying. It requires all the resources a person can muster to resolve and come to terms with the ghosts. Incest survivors often become acutely depressed and suicidal.
Occasionally, because of this acute depression and the haunting thoughts of suicide, more supportive measures are required. In these cases, even therapy and AA is not enough; medication may also be required. The temporary use of medication, coupled with therapy and AA, is sometimes needed to help prevent suicide and to facilitate recovery.

As a counsellor, I must admit that I feel anger toward AA members who practice medicine and psychotherapy without benefit of training and licensing. AA members may have good intentions but they can also cause more pain than they know. Members often advise vulnerable, emotionally confused people not to seek medical and mental health assistance, and to take *no drugs*. These advice givers often don’t realise that removal of tightly monitored medication may be endangering a life.

As an experienced counsellor, I know I have more background in treating emotional problems of this magnitude than do most AA members, and I resent interference in a recovery process members know nothing about. I have had many hundreds of hours of hard work sabotaged, due to an oversimplified attitude of “If you take your pills, you’re eating your booze.”

It is time AA members realise that alcohol may be only one problem and once the alcoholic is in recovery, other life threatening issues may surface. I suggest that each AA member read in the Big Book where it addresses the issues of obtaining outside professional help when it is necessary.

I do not like to be placed in a position where people want to die and it’s up to me to try to protect them from self-harm. I am the person in the trenches, passionately dedicated to saving lives and helping all people recover not only from alcoholism but other life threatening problems. Please stop telling other recovering AA members not to consult physicians and psychotherapists. Please stop telling members that they are “breaking sobriety” by taking needed medication. Please stop enabling members to attempt suicide.

*By Patricia Beirne, Alcoholism Counsellor, Aurora, Colorado. Printed in Grapevine, May, 1990*
PI Service News

PI Service News (PISN) is an electronic newsletter that can be sent out to any member of the Fellowship. The purpose of PISN is to share information about PI activity with the rest of the Fellowship and to share ideas that have worked. PISN covers all aspects of PI activity carried out. It includes articles from groups, Intergroups, regions, trustees and members working on specific projects such as the parliamentary events or responding to Conference recommendations.

Anyone who wants their personal copy of the newsletter should send their email address to the address below. You can also drop a line to GSO with any items for inclusion. Please could you limit your articles to a maximum of 1,000 words so that we can include more of your ideas then we’ll do the rest. aainformation@btconnect.com

Yvonne C,
Editor PISN

Telephone responders needed in Glasgow

Alcoholics Anonymous
AA Helpline Tel: 0845 769 7555
Alcoholics Anonymous Telephone Answering Service
How Did You Make Your First Contact With AA?

If you are interested in becoming an AA Telephone Answering Service Responder please contact: the Telephone Liaison Officer of Glasgow Northwest Intergroup through your home group GSR or by phoning the Northern Service Office on 0141 226 2214

To be a Telephone Answering Service Responder the minimum sobriety requirement is one year of continuous sobriety

Telephone Answering Service Responders are on call approximately every nine weeks and we operate a person to person service which consists of 21 separate shifts covering a 7 day period. The Telephone Answering Service offers guidance on answering calls and gives full support to enable all new and regular responders to assist callers who
seek the help of Alcoholics Anonymous

Are you able to do one of the following shifts?

Day shift: 0900 - 1700
Evening: 1700 - 2359
Night shift: 2359 – 0900

The Answering Service works through your own telephone via a BT computerised conversion code. You can use a landline or a mobile phone but if using a mobile phone please do so from your home or another secure location where you can keep the necessary information close at hand. (This transfer operation is carried out by the Telephone Answering Service Co-ordinator or Telephone Liaison Officer.)

To put it simply your phone number is masked by the helpline number, but this still allows family and friends to phone you when necessary or in an emergency. AA Answering Service calls are diverted to your phone only when you are on duty and once your shift is finished you will be notified by the co-ordinator. If you require an amended length of shift please ask the co-ordinator who will endeavour to be flexible.

Please note: Responders do not go out to 12 step callers at home. Responders do not 12 step callers on the phone or share their experience, strength or hope.

We are the first point of contact for those calling the AA Helpline, whether we are giving general information about AA or answering a call for help from a suffering alcoholic, when we should take the caller’s details and pass them on to an AA contact to continue with the 12 step work. Thus we will keep the phone line free for more incoming calls.

I am responsible when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there and for that I am responsible.

AA Helpline Tel: 0845 769 7555

Jim B,
TLO
Lincolnshire Intergroup Comes of Age

On 30th September Lincolnshire Intergroup held their first ever mini-convention to celebrate its “coming of Age”. Yes it was 21 years since it came into being and the current intergroup thought it was an appropriate time to remember those who had been instrumental in its inception plus those who had been involved over the past 21 years. Much to everyone’s delight 3 of the founders were in attendance on the day and this helped add to the sense of occasion and celebration. The Convention committee headed by Sheila started planning and organising months previously and thanks to their efforts the day went splendidly and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

In the planning stages it was decided to invite Al-Anon to participate, which they did with enthusiasm and their contribution helped to broaden and deepen the experience. It gave Fellowship members a valuable insight into how our illness affects other people.

The morning session was dedicated to shares by AA members whilst the afternoon was a shared platform with Al Anon. There was a strong theme of Service running through the entire proceedings, which emphasised the debt owed to those who started the whole thing 21 years ago. It also gave our archivist, Elaine, an opportunity to put on a magnificent display of our intergroup’s history. This is thanks to her hard work and also the efforts of those who have taken the time to record the history and progress which AA has made in Lincolnshire. This was an event which was a testimony to hard work and commitment by a multitude of dedicated individuals. It demonstrated the power of Service and the fact that when a group of AA members decide on a course of action their combined resolve makes it a wonderful occasion.

Remember we should be proud of where we started and how we reached where we are today. So if anyone out there has any misgivings on their ability to organise an event, start a new meeting or just get into Service just remember it has all been done before. With the love, help and kindness in our Fellowship no task is too demanding. I am proud to have been involved in Lincolnshire Intergroup’s first ever Convention. Unity is our strength.
I was recently appointed Health Liaison Officer for the Essex Intergroup which covers Southend, Colchester and Chelmsford, with approximately fifty seven meetings per week. My home group, Broomfield Hospital, has had a long history of visiting patients on the hospital wards. Over the last nine months this has been enhanced in no small way by the appointment by the hospital of a new Drug and Alcohol Addiction Nurse.

A small team of Fellowship members was created to develop various initiatives. This consisted of me, as co-ordinator, a person with NHS and doctor surgery/hospital experience and a member with many years of sobriety to keep us AA honest.

With the help of several other members and people with experience in this area of AA, reviewing our proposals we have now made presentations for GP surgeries, junior doctors and nurses all with the title “There is a Solution”. A manned stand has also been erected in Broomfield hospital on an ad hoc basis and will be available during ‘Awareness Month’.

Although our action has been mainly confined to Chelmsford, which has approximately forty-five per cent of the meetings, it is my intention during the next two months to see what the Colchester and Southend meetings do in the health area in order we can pool our resources and ideas to produce an effective Health campaign. Next month Chelmsford hosts World Mental Health Day (10th Oct.) and AA will be manning a stand.

With the upcoming changes to the NHS we regularly attend the Essex and Southend Link meetings to ensure Alcohol issues are represented. There will be undoubtedly massive changes to the way services and care will be delivered in the treatment of Mental Health, including drugs and alcohol addiction. Mental health and alcohol problems seem to be innately intertwined and often reported as such by Fellowship members whose recognition of this seems to need more active promotion.

Health and alcoholism has affected all of us to a greater or lesser degree and we all have thoughts on how services could be channelled.
Please use your enthusiasm to support initiatives to pass the message of recovery.

Yours in fellowship
Graham B.

**Events**

**DECEMBER 25 - LONDON CHELSEA INTERGROUP CHRISTMAS CONVENTION** Theme: ‘Celebrating Recovery at Christmas’. Hall of Remembrance, Flood Street, Chelsea, London SW3 5SY. 9am to 9.30pm. Eight one hour meetings and between each meeting enjoy Fellowship, tea, coffee and biscuits. Crèche from 11am to 1.30pm. All meetings open. Contact: Nicky C-H 07826 733440 or Bryony L 07973 512090.

**JANUARY 3-6 - 10TH 2013 - BRIGHTON AREA INTERGROUP CONVENTION** Theme: ‘New Year – New Beginning’. Full and varied programme with Al-Anon participation. Early booking essential. Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel, 106 Kings Road, Brighton, E Sussex BN1 2FU. Tel: 01273 775432 (office hours 9-5 Mon-Fri only) or email: reservations.brightonmet@hilton.com Ask for reservations and mention AA Convention. Enquiries/Flyers Tel: AA Dave: 01273 500942; Dennis 07919 146804. Email: info@brightonaaconvention.org.uk Website: www.brightonaaconvention.org.uk Al-Anon email: Alanon@brightonaaconvention.org.uk

**FEBRUARY 3 - NORTH WEST INTERGROUP ONE DAY CONVENTION** The Swallow Hotel, Preston New Road, Preston PR5 0UL. Registration 09.30 £2.50. AA and Al-Anon closed meetings 10.00-12.30. AA marathon meeting 13.00-17.00. Shared platform meeting 14.00-17.00. Refreshements available all day. Large free car park. Sorry – no crèche facilities. For further information contact: Martin R 07790 207680 or e-mail: nwigconvention@btinternet.com

**MARCH 3 - DERBYSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAM & LEICESTER INTERGROUPS JOINT ONE-DAY MINI-CONVENTION** Theme: “Unity Service Recovery”. Wilmott Street Community Centre, Wilmott Street, Heanor, Derbyshire DE75 7EF. Registration from 10.30am for an
the Convention Dance ‘Interaction – Into Action’ 7.30pm to 11.30pm. Dance tickets £9. For combined convention and dance advance tickets at £10 phone: Bryony L (Chelsea Events Co-ordinator) on 07973 512090.

OVERSEAS EVENTS 2013

JANUARY 25-27 - LANZAROTE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH SPEAKING CONVENTION Theme: ‘A Full and Thankful Heart’ Barceló Lanzarote Resort Hotel, Costa Teguise, Lanzarote, Canary Islands. Full programme of AA meetings, plus entertainment Friday and Saturday nights. For info go to: www.aalanzarote.com

FEBRUARY 8-10 - 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION NEAR THE WAVES. Theme: ‘A Design for Living’. Animation Centre, Kovalam, Trivandrum, Kerala, India. Full and varied programme (including candle light meetings on the beach). Al-Anon participation. For information: www.conventionnearwaves.com Email: recoverybywaves@gmail.com UK contact: Terry 07585 910929; topwalkterry@yahoo.co.uk

APRIL 19-21 - CYPRUS PAPHOS GATHERING INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH SPEAKING AA CONVENTION (with AL-ANON) Theme: ‘Courage to Change’. Avanti Hotel, Paphos, Cyprus http://www.avantihotel.com Avanti Hotel special convention rate from €36 pppn (bed and breakfast and in double room). Please book direct with the hotel & quote reference ‘AA Gathering’. Room reservations : Phone + 357 26 965555 or email: avanti@avantihotel.com Registration €15 for weekend from 4pm Friday April 19 at Avanti Hotel. Tea & coffee included. Other accommodation available nearby. Contacts: Daphne +357 99 182070, Chris +357 97 686720. Email: paphos.gathering@gmail.com

Vacancies for Board Sub-Committees

Please note that applications for Board subcommittees need to be accompanied by a covering letter of recommendation from a serving officer from the applicant’s region or intergroup.
Vacancies for Literature Sub-Committee

The Literature Committee is a sub committee of the General Service Board. Its role is:-

To undertake selective review of the content and appearance of the entire range of literature published by the Fellowship in Great Britain.
To assess its suitability for revision or discontinuance
To consider needs for new literature.

The work of the Committee is generated by the requirements of Conference, requests from the Fellowship and a systematic, proactive review of current literature, guidelines and handbook.

The Committee meets up to four times a year in York, although some of the meetings may take the form of telephone conferencing. Much of the work is done in the interim, generally in partnership with another member of the Committee. This is very much a team position working with others to ensure that our literature is of the highest possible standard, and is fit for purpose.

The post is subject to rotation after four years.

It is suggested that applicants would fulfil the following criteria:

- Minimum of five years continuous sobriety
- A sound grasp of AA structure, Steps, Traditions, and Concepts.
- Accuracy of written grammar and style.
- Experience in copy-editing, design, document drafting or similar work would be very helpful.
- I.T. skills would be an advantage.
- A personal service history at either intergroup and/or region.

Sub Committee applicants should be endorsed by the AA structure i.e. a serving officer of their intergroup or region. The serving officer’s
endorsement should be in the form of a letter attached to the completed nomination form.

Application forms are available from Region Secretary, or directly from GSO.

*Willie Mac.*  
*GSB Trustee*

**Vacancies on the Prison Sub-Committee**

Due to rotation nominations are sought for two vacancies on this sub-committee. All members will have been nominated through their Region or Intergroup and be appointed via the GSB Nominations Committee process.

It is recommended that members will have a minimum of five years continuous sobriety and experience in prison service at either intergroup or regional level is essential. Also knowledge of the Scottish Prison Service would be useful. The term of appointment is four years.

Role requirements:

To have a working knowledge of the AA structure and to adhere to the Traditions, Concepts and Guidelines.

Importantly, as a member of the team, to assimilate the needs of the Prison Sub-Committee.

To work within the terms of reference for the Prison Sub-Committee. To accept guidance from the GSB Trustee if and when required.

To attend Prison Sub-Committee meetings in York, currently three times a year, and participate in ‘conference call’ meetings, giving notice to the GSB trustee if unable to attend/participate.

Application forms are available from GSO (contact Sophie Perring on 01904 644026 or email: sophieperring@gsogb.org.uk) or from the documents library on the website (in Situations Vacant folder: Sub-Committee nominations form).

Application forms need to be accompanied by a covering letter from a
serving officer (Chair or Secretary) from the applicant’s intergroup or region.

The closing date for applications is 30th June 2013.

Probation/Criminal Justice Services Sub Committee Vacancies

Due to rotation, nominations are being sought from members to join this Sub-Committee. To this end applications are invited from the Fellowship for three of the posts.

A minimum of five years continuous sobriety is required, as is experience at intergroup or region in the discipline of Probation or Scottish Criminal Justice Services. Good organisational and communications skills are desirable, as is the ability to produce verbal or written reports. Relevant IT skills would also be an advantage.

These posts will be filled by selection through the Nominations Committee and will be for a period of three years.

The main aims of the committee are to produce information handbooks for liaison officers in this discipline in intergroups and regions throughout Great Britain, production of a periodic newsletter, supporting Regional Liaison Officers, and developing the Probation/Criminal Justice Services pages in the Members’ area of the AA (GB) website. Applicants will receive an information sheet which includes the Terms of Reference and outlines the work of the subcommittee.

The closing date for applications is 15 January 2013. Applications would need to be supported by a letter of endorsement from a serving officer of the relevant intergroup or region.

Applications can be obtained by contacting Sophie Perring at General Service Office, 10 Toft Green, York, YO1 7NJ. Tel 01904 644026. Email:sophieperring@gsogb.org.uk.

Geoff H
GSB Trustee, Probation/Criminal Justice Services
Vacancies on the Employment Sub-Committee

The newly formed Employment Sub Committee is looking for four new members to join a committed team who are passionate about finding innovative ways of passing the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic at a national, Regional & Group level.

Our primary functions are to:

- Create a consistent message externally that differentiates AA from other bodies
- Establish & maintain good relations with professionals & professional bodies at national level
- Establish & maintain good relations with employers and companies at national level
- Increase public & professional knowledge of the AA program.
- Offer support and advice to Regional PI committees & liaison officers
- Create & maintain an accurate system of record keeping for future officers & events.
- Communicate effectively with the Fellowship
- Comply with the principles & guidelines of AA.

The position is rotational after four years and requires a minimum of 5 years sobriety. A sound knowledge of the structure & Traditions of the Fellowship is necessary.

Application forms are available from GSO and can also be found in the document library at www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Please forward applications to GSO by 20th April 2013.

Winnie C
Board Trustee
Employment
Regional Contributions

Extract from Guideline 12:

GUIDELINES for AA in Great Britain from the General Service Office, Finance No. 12

“Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

All Groups, Intergroups and Regions should accept responsibility for the funding of the General Service Office. The financial operations at GSO, the methods of accountability to Conference through the Board, and the broad financial strategies adopted on behalf of the Fellowship, are all subject to continuous revision.

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**PRISON POSTAL SERVICE**

We are in urgent need of male Prison Postal Sponsors.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this rewarding service and have a minimum of 2 years continuous sobriety please apply in writing to Jenny at:

Prison Postal Service, GSO, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York. YO1 7NJ

or Email: AAInformation@gsofb.org.uk

Telephone: 01904 644 026