**Minutes: Probation Sub-Committee Meeting**

**Friday 5th April 2019**

**Attendees:**

Maxine W. (Trustee, Probation)

Bill J. (Probation SC)

Bob MacD. (Probation SC)

Neal C. (Probation SC)

**Apologies**

None

* **The meeting opened at 4:00pm**

Maxine informed all that Paul B. had resigned from the sub-committee. An advert will therefore be placed in the next AA Service News in order to find a replacement for Paul and also for Bill J who rotates out this June.

* **Approval of minutes** (Probation/Prison meeting 8th - 9th Feb 2019) - These were approved.
* **Matters arising** – none
* **Probation Activity Round-up** 
  + **Bob** **(London Region North)**
* Meetings for these two disciplines in the Region are combined because they are so interconnected. They have just had third bi-monthly meeting.
* The Region no longer has a Probation Liaison Officer as Bob has rotated out
* Much work is being done, with 7 of 11 Intergroups active
* Are still trying to get ‘demonstration’ meetings going. Have been dealing with CRC on this but the CRC are to be abolished and so things have ground to a halt. The next plan is to seek progress through meeting with the NPS.
* Had a meeting with representatives from 10 Approved Premises, many of which refer offenders to meetings. As APs are still public sector, they seem reasonably well organised.
* There are 200 meetings offering the chit system in London Region North. The East End & Middlesex are not using Chit System much/at all.
* By combining the resources of the prison and probation disciplines, there is a pool of around 15 people who can act as prison 12th Steppers.
  + **Bill (South West)**
* A recently presentation was made to trainee barristers/solicitors at St Mary’s college, Oxford (4th year in a row). 46 students attended. The chit system was discussed; questions were taken. After Bill rotates out, the Probation L.O. for Poole Intergroup will cover this event.
* Bill has had a meeting with an ex-prison governor who runs one of the Forward Trust centres (formerly RAPt). Bill commented that the unit has some AA members working there.
* The Reading Probation Liaison Officer is soon to rotate out.
  + **Neal (Midlands)**
* Until very recently there has only been one probation liaison officer (Neal) out of the 9 Midlands Region Intergroups. Some probation activity is, of course, being covered by the various prison teams. Good news – Birmingham Intergroup have just appointed a probation liaison officer who is retiring from a career as a criminal lawyer and so he has connections with magistrates etc. Nealwill liaise and see how they can work together.
* On 4th April, Cov & Warks Intergroup Prison and Probation LOs met with the head of ‘Reducing Reoffending’ at HMP Onley as the prison had questioned matters of security and protocol for one to one visits (sponsorship and ‘through the gate’ 1:2:1s). The meeting went well and it was agreed that a broad-based memorandum of understanding would be drawn up so AA members and the prison know what is expected.
* **Feedback on Recent Meetings** 
  + 7th Annual offender management forum (London 18/03/19)

Trustees Maxine W. and Pat McG attended this event.

In her address, Dame Glenys Stacey (HM Chief Inspector of Probation) said that probation services are failing, with the inspections in the majority of geographical areas rated in the lowest category. Part two of the forum was a bit more positive with the Head of the Parole Board expressing support for AA.

Maxine will see if AA can cover the cost of Bob attending an upcoming joint MOJ & HMI Probation event relating to Youth Offenders - to be held in London on 9th July 2019.

Maxine commented that we need to continue to try to get our message to professionals about the transformative effects of recovery for an AA member. Could we use some of AA’s statistics to illuminate? We should continue to do our bit and keep other AA members motivated. If we can help one person we’ve made a difference.

* ***Approved Premises Suicide Prevention Group Meeting (London 19/3/19)***

Below is an abridged version of Bob MacD.’s post-meeting letter to the person who arranged the above meeting.

* Bob gave some of the history and current data about AA.
* Emphasised that AA have remained in robust health by being self-reliant financially and by having a clear single purpose of always being available to the alcoholic who seeks help.
* Outlined the work we are currently doing in the Criminal Justice System.
* Work in prisons includes regular meetings, postal sponsorship for those unable to access meetings and help with the transition from prisons to the community.
* Alongside probation services, we manage a Proof of Attendance (“chit”) system, which is well used in areas where there is good contact between our two organisations.
* Talked about our plans to pilot demonstration meetings in Probation Premises, beginning with the office in Islington.
* The attendees (‘Champions’) talked about their generally positive experiences with AA and all knew the location of their local meetings.
* Discussed other things we might do. Bob was keen for Probation Officers to attend open AA meetings and offered to direct people to one convenient to them.
* Talked about AA members being invited to talk to staff and service user groups. Bob offered to be the point of contact for such requests. We could use those events to explore the possibility of holding AA meetings within their premises.
* Bob asked if his post meeting letter of thanks (containing the above points) could be forwarded to the other AP group members and for them to be encouraged to contact Bob if they want to take any of this forward locally.
* ***Meeting on Chit System for Midlands area: Public Health England (PHE) and Probation Services (Birmingham 25/03/19)***
* This meeting was instigated by Tony Mercer (PHE) in order to explore ways of introducing and/or enhancing the operation of the Chit System across the AA, NA and CA Fellowships
* AA was represented by Ron J (Midlands PLO), Jane (Midlands HLO) & Neal C. (Probation Sub-committee member)
* Representatives from each Fellowship outlined how the Chit System operates. Only NA with 9 current ‘chit-friendly’ meetings are up and running in the Midlands.
* The two CRC/probation officers said that AA meetings could form a part (possibly up 30%) of a relevant offender’s ‘Alcohol Treatment Requirement’ hours. They considered that mere attendance would constitute a value, without any need for feedback (that AA is clearly not able to provide)
* The method of confirming attendance was discussed around the table with NA preferring an attendance card. The probation officers preferred the idea of issuing a form for the offender to have stamped at a meeting. AA handed around an example of a chit currently in use but did not commit to a method prior to our further discussions within AA
* All participants were positive about furthering cooperation and agreed to meet again in the near future to feedback on subsequent discussions within the Fellowships and on progress made towards implementing the Chit System in the Staffordshire and West Midlands area
* **Chit System**
  + **Bob:** is not finding any resistance to the Chit System in London
  + **Maxine:** our task is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic; outside issues are not relevant
  + **Bob**: ultimately anxieties expressed by groups have turned out to be imagined. One meeting has handed out 100s of chits – no problems have arisen
  + **Bill:** in the South West the chit system was working in places but has now petered out.
  + **Maxine** distributed a very informative Probation report from North East Region, which centred on the chit system.
* **June Seminar Review of speakers**
  + **Neal** had not yet secured a speaker from the probation services. He will continue to work on this with some urgency.
  + Literature pack/informationto hand out. At seminar – above mentioned North East Region chit system report or extracts from it.
  + **Bill** has a Conference approved AA probation DVD which could possibly be reproduced?
  + Other items for the pack – AAGB ‘Structure Triangle’, posters (Bob and Neal thought the 2 existing posters are fairly good)
* **Website content**
* The probation handbook (2015) needs a lot of pruning and updating
* The Probation Video should be prominent on the first page (of which part of our website though? - as the site serves newcomers, existing members and professionals)
* Need an attractive, clearer, up to date, modern message – using bullet points, more video content.
* Sub-committee members to consider creating a pamphlet along the lines of the London Region North one as a resource.
* Could one of the new members on sub-committee take on responsibility for updating & maintaining the website? Ideally a younger and/or creative person.
* **Establishing a WhatsApp group?**

This is likely to also be discussed in the joint session with the Prison sub-committee on Saturday 6th but the 4 members of this committee were happy to proceed.

* **Starting time for future meetings**

It was agreed that a 5pm start on the Friday is preferred (with the exception of the 4pm start for the ‘pre-seminar’ meeting on Friday 28th June). The 5pm start time can always be reviewed if the amount of committee business demands more time.

* **A.O.B.**

**Bob:** Polish AA members (not AAGB) do a lot of work in prisons and are very keen. Can we work together more closely?

**Maxine** gave a vote of thanks to Bill for his 4 years of service on the Probation sub-committee – this being his final meeting (albeit, Bill will be attending the June Seminar)

* **Close and Serenity Prayer** – 7.05pm