



GUIDELINES for A.A. in Great Britain

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PROBATION/SOCIAL SERVICES

Revised April 1998 No. 13

The term Probation/Social Services is used in the document to indicate Probation for England and Wales, Social Services for Scotland

Experience has shown that positive results can follow when Regions, Intergroups or Groups co-operate with the Probation Service/Social Services in helping the still suffering alcoholic who might be directed by them to the Fellowship, experience has shown that positive results can follow.

In our pamphlet *How AA Members Co-operate*, the following appears:

We cannot discriminate against any prospective AA members, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.

Although the strength of our programme lies in the voluntary nature of membership in AA, many of us first attend meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by our inner discomfort. But continual exposure to AA educated us to the true nature of our illness. Who made the referral to AA is not what AA is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern. We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

Sometimes, courts or the Probation Service/Social Services ask for proof of attendance at AA meetings. Experience has shown that using a system, which avoids members' signatures on attendance cards, forms or other documents helps to avoid problems at group level. Whilst each Group, Intergroup, or Region is of course autonomous, and free to use any method it see appropriate, *one such method could be:*

- Each participating group with an Intergroup or area would be issued, by

their local Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer, with cards, each within a sealed envelope (each group would have its own individual number or code written on the card).

- A card would be given out to any member who required proof of attendance, *after having the date written across the envelope by the secretary or other group member.* This way personal anonymity would be maintained.

The reporting of attendance is not part of AA procedure. Each attender reports on himself or herself, at the request of the referring agency.

Wherever possible a prospective AA member should be Twelfth Stepped in the usual manner, and for this purpose a well structured Committee of AA/Probation Sponsors is found to be the most effective.

Experience once again shows that, as in many areas of service, setting up a system of co-operation between AA and the Probation Service/Social Service is most likely to prove successful if patience and perseverance is practised. *A plan of action could be:*

- The election of an Intergroup Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer, who should familiarise himself or herself with the 12 Traditions, the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, and the AA Service Handbook on Public Information.

- Visits by the Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer (by prior arrangement, and with Intergroup approval) to each group within the Intergroup in order to explain the proposed system and to obtain permission (usually by voting at a Group Conscience meeting) to include a group in the “attendance” scheme. Emphasis needs to be placed upon the importance of personal presentation and involvement at group level.
- The setting up of an AA Probation Committee in order to communicate between AA and the Probation Service/Social Services, and supply “Twelfth Steppers” to probationers. Whilst selection of the ‘Twelfth Stepper’ remains ultimately with AA, experience shows that a cross section of AA members best serves this purpose.
- Contact with Probation/Social Services, first by mail or telephone, and then by personal contact, to explain what AA is, what it can and cannot do, and eventually to put into place a plan of co-operation. It is during this personal contact that our Tradition of co-operation not affiliation needs to be explained. *Remember that liaison with the Probation Service/Social Services often leads directly to contact with magistrates, who will need to be informed of AA in a similar manner.*
- Keep groups informed of progress.
- Making contact with other Regions and Intergroups already employing an AA Probation system will help to avoid pitfalls, and aim the new Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer in the right direction.

The Probation Service/Social Services in your area may also run other groups such as ‘drink drivers’ to which AA could be invited. The principle is the same, whilst an AA member can sit in on the group as an observer to inform participants of the Fellowship of AA and how it works; we must never be seen to be affiliating ourselves with it.

GROUPS

Tradition Five tells us that ‘*Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*’

Sometimes the way in which a person enters AA may seem unorthodox, controversial or even in breach of our Traditions, however, a closer look will show us that AA is not interested in how a person comes to us, but simply in how we can help in that person’s release from alcoholism. Each group is of course autonomous and how it chooses to co-operate (if at all) with Probation is for the Group conscience to decide.

INTERGROUP

INTERGROUP PROBATION/SOCIAL SERVICES LIAISON OFFICERS
(Refer to Guideline No. 4 INTERGROUPS)

A Probation Officer/Social Services AA Contact is responsible for establishing links with the Probation Services in England and Wales. In Scotland, Social Services provide the Probation Services.

These officers should have an established period of sobriety, ideally not less than two years. It is recommended that they should serve for not less than two years and not more than three years.

It is through the Intergroup Assembly that the Intergroup Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer is elected, and it is to the Intergroup that the officer reports at each assembly. An important task of the Probation/Social Service Liaison Officer (as with all other officers) is to keep Intergroup informed of events on a regular basis.

A good working relationship between AA and the Probation Service/Social Services often takes many months and sometimes years to build up. It is therefore good practice to ensure that the AA Probation Committee, or the Intergroup Secretary, has ready access to

all relevant material e.g. diary of past and forthcoming visits and presentations, contacts within the Probation Service/Social Services, and the AA Twelfth Step list, so that in the event of someone having to take over a short notice, all ground gained would not be jeopardised.

REGION

REGIONAL PROBATION/SOCIAL SERVICES LIAISON OFFICERS (Refer to Guideline 5 REGIONS)

It is recommended that officers should have at least three years continuous sobriety. Consideration should be given to their experience or interest.

It is recommended that the officers should serve for a maximum of three years and be confirmed annually.

It is through the Regional Assembly that the Regional Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer is elected, ideally, though not essentially, a member with some experience at Intergroup level.

The task of the Regional Probation/Social Services Liaison Officer is to communicate with, and to collate information from, the Intergroup Probation/Social Services Liaison Officers within the Region. This information is passed on to Region in the form of a report, given at each Regional Assembly.

Another function is often to encourage Intergroups where activity is slow or non-existent.

Experience has shown the following methods to be helpful:

- Holding Probation Workshops, perhaps under the umbrella of a Regional 'Combined External Services' Workshop, where all Liaison Officers and helpers are invited to share their experience and to encourage others into service.

- Visits (by invitation) of officers and helpers from Intergroups where AA and the Probation Service/Social Services co-operate, to Intergroups where help, assistance and guidance is needed. The visits may be directed to Intergroup Assemblies and individual groups, or perhaps the Probation Service/Social Services, by accompanying the local AA Liaison Officer, to lend support.
- Holding meetings of Intergroup Probation/Social Services Liaison Officers between Regional Assemblies, in order to share experience.

EXPENSES

(Refer to Guideline No. 12 – Finance)

The payment of expenses depends upon the Group Conscience of the Region or Intergroup, always bearing in mind our Tradition of self-support.

- Service is defined as that which makes the Twelfth Step possible.
- It is agreed that no expenses should be claimed for individual 'face to face' Twelfth Step work.

In principle, any member who is qualified to carry out a particular task in our service should not be prevented from doing so for financial reasons, and should be offered expenses.

When carrying out an Intergroup or Region function, duly authorised service workers should be offered expenses.

For a variety of reasons Regions and Intergroups will probably differ in their approach to this question, and there may be no uniformity, but there need be no controversy if decisions are taken in the spirit of AA with common sense