

The Structure Handbook of
Alcoholics Anonymous,
Great Britain

2011

The Structure of AA in Great Britain

This seventh edition of the Handbook was approved by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain held in York on the

Future alterations or additions to this Handbook require a two-thirds majority of Conference.

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Alcoholics Anonymous – The Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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A Declaration of Unity
This we owe to AA's future;
to place our common welfare
first; to keep our Fellowship
united. For on AA unity
depend our lives, and the
lives of those to come.

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.

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INTRODUCTION

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1: A Brief History of AA in Great Britain

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the Fellowship was established in Great Britain. During 1945 and 1946 a few individuals tried to achieve sobriety through correspondence with the Alcoholic Foundation in New York. There was also a lady AA contact living in London who gave her name and address to New York as a contact with her heart in the work. She certainly answered many letters of enquiry sent to her during the year she was in London, but they do not appear to have borne much fruit.

In March 1947, an American lady member, Grace O., who was visiting this country with her husband, wrote to the five members who were in contact with the Foundation and arranged a meeting which took place in her room at the Dorchester Hotel, London, on 31 March of that year. A Canadian member, Canadian Bob, whom she had met in a London restaurant on the previous Saturday and another lady member of the Hollywood Group, whom she met on the boat coming over, also attended. There were eight present at this meeting in the Dorchester, and it was probably the earliest AA meeting to take place in Great Britain.

From then on there were meetings, which were held in a variety of places: cinemas, cafes, restaurants and homes. After a time the members decided to advertise the existence of the Fellowship and an advert was produced which read "Alcoholism – a small body of anonymous ex-sufferers place themselves at the disposal of any requiring help; the offer is quite gratuitous." Fifteen national newspapers either temporised or rejected the advertisement. One enquired how requests for help would be dealt with. The explanation resulted in a decision that the advertisement could not be accepted. Only one newspaper, the Financial Times, finally agreed to run the advertisement and "the few" braced themselves for the expected deluge of letters. To their bitter disappointment there were only two letters, one post-marked "Skegness" and the other "North Wales". However meetings continued to take place more or less regularly in the homes of members and well wishers and in other places.

In the autumn of 1948, the first London Group was formed and began meeting in a room at 11 Chandos Street, Cavendish Square. There were only about a dozen members but in January 1949 they produced the first monthly Newsletter – 25 stencilled copies. This included a notice about an open meeting to be held in February, together with articles on Twelfth Step work and Sponsors, and it concluded: "Let's stay sober. Just a reminder that we are alcoholics and that we should never be fooled by the thought that we can have just one drink today." Contact had by now been made with two or three loners outside London, and in December 1948 the first provincial Group of about five members met in Manchester.

If the message was to be spread and new Groups established a bare minimum of organisation was required and so an Advisory Committee consisting of four members was formed early in 1948. This Committee's terms of reference required it to maintain liaison between members and new Groups, and to provide all possible assistance and experience to the new Group leaders. It also gave guidance on matters of publicity, distributed literature and directed enquiries from potential members to the appropriate Groups. In October 1949 it

was recognised that the title “Advisory Committee” was inappropriate, and the Committee became known as the Central Committee with the same members serving.

The early days of the Fellowship in Scotland were somewhat similar to those in England. A lone member from Glasgow had registered with the Foundation in New York in 1946. In 1947, however, a gentleman farmer living in Campbeltown in the West of Scotland with a history of problem drinking went to a Christian Association Conference in the United States in the hope of finding a solution to his problem. At this Conference he met a lady who introduced him to AA and he attended a meeting. He was so deeply impressed that on his return he devoted all the time he could spare to carrying the message, visiting prisons and hospitals to seek out alcoholics who wanted help. A few of those he contacted started meetings in their homes in Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, these few knew little about the Fellowship and how it worked and were having difficulties when early in 1949 they had a visit from an American member. Between his experience and the undaunted enthusiasm of the farmer from Campbeltown, the first two Groups in Scotland were established and registered in May 1949. These were Glasgow Central, meeting in the St Enoch’s Hotel, Glasgow, and First Edinburgh, meeting in Mackie’s Restaurant, Princes Street, Edinburgh. Then, as in England, the message spread and Groups were established at Perth, Ayr, Dundee and Larbert, Stirlingshire, leading in time to the formation of the Scottish Intergroup Committee.

The first known meeting of a Group in Wales took place on 13 April 1951 in a room in Cathedral Road, Cardiff. Present were four alcoholics from South Wales and a member from Ireland. At this meeting it was decided to register with London and New York. At about the same time there were one or two alcoholics in North Wales struggling to achieve sobriety through correspondence. They were referred by London to the newly-formed Liverpool Group and, despite the difficulties of travelling; they managed to get to some of the meetings in Liverpool. By 1954, there was the nucleus of a Group in North Wales with meetings in members’ houses at Corwen, Bangor and Llandudno. The original Cardiff Group did not last, but a new Group was established in 1960. This was closely followed by the formation of a Group at Caerleon.

In the summer of 1950, our Co-Founder Bill W. and his wife Lois came over from New York to visit Groups in England and Scotland, and talked at several Group meetings. At a specially-convened meeting of Group representatives, Bill presented 1500 copies of the Big Book from the American Alcoholic Foundation, the sale of which was to assist in the growth of the Fellowship in Great Britain and promote the carrying of the message in Europe. To manage the distribution and income from the sale of these books, a separate Pre-Foundation Committee was formed, consisting of five of the very early members. By 1952, this Committee included well-established members from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eire.

In 1953, this Committee was incorporated as the Publishing Company, and duly registered. It took over responsibility for the distribution, sale, and, subsequently, the printing of AA literature in Great Britain. The steady growth of the Fellowship had been such that early in 1951 it was felt that the time had come to consider drawing up a constitution to provide for regular meetings of Group representatives to deal with the various activities of the Fellowship.

At a meeting of Group representatives held on 16 March 1951, the first Group Representative Committee was formed to be responsible for all matters relating to the growth, welfare and activities of the Fellowship in England and Wales. A Central Committee of five members with at least one year’s sobriety was made responsible for safeguarding the Traditions and, so far as was in their power, the functioning of the London Service Office and liaison between the Groups and the Foundation. The Central Committee was also required to take whatever steps it considered necessary for the welfare and development of the Fellowship both in Great Britain and overseas, as advised by the Group Representative Committee.

In February 1952, the London Service Office was opened at 11 Redcliffe Gardens, London SW10, having previously been run from the office of one of the early members at the London Fruit Exchange, London E1. In 1953, a loner in Dumfries wanted to establish a Group there, and at his request a number of Midlands and Manchester members decided to hold a meeting in the town. Invitations were sent out in the form of a challenge to the various Groups in Scotland – the English were once more invading Scotland! The Scots rallied to the old Border war cry “Blue Bonnets over the Border!” and an amazing weekend of sharing took place, which has continued to be held each year ever since. The Blue Bonnets Gathering was the forerunner of the English and Scottish Conventions.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain and Ireland) Limited had its inaugural meeting on 29 June 1957 and was incorporated in accordance with the Companies Act (1948) on 16 July 1957. The Fellowship continued to grow and later in 1957 the first Intergroup in England, the North-West, was formed. About the same time the Glasgow Central Group had to stop meeting in the St Enoch’s Hotel, because of alterations taking place within the hotel. It was felt that the Fellowship in Glasgow should have its own premises, and in due course premises were obtained at 114 West Nile Street leading to the establishment of the Glasgow and District Intergroup. In a very short time the rooms were used every night of the week for Group meetings and they also became the AA Central Office for Glasgow.

By the late 1950s there were about 100 Groups in England and Wales and about 30 in Scotland. Intergroups like those in Manchester and Glasgow were being formed in other parts of the country. In England and Wales the Group Representative Committee was extended to become the Area and Group Representative Committee, and the first meeting of this new Committee took place in London in June 1958. This Committee met three times a year, once in London, and usually once each in Birmingham and Manchester. One of the sub-committees of the Area and Group Representative Committee, called the General Purposes Committee, was given responsibility for the Central Service Office at 11 Redcliffe Gardens and its services.

As early as 1952, Scottish Intergroup was formed in the realisation that there was a need for an adaptation of the service structure in Scotland because of the marked differences from England and Wales in culture, education, law and government systems. By 1972, the Scottish Intergroup had evolved into the Scottish Service Committee. With regionalisation in 1977, the Scottish Service Committee took its present form. The growth continued. New Groups continued to be formed and by 1964 there were nearly 200 in England and Wales. The General Service Board considered that the Fellowship had, by then, grown to a size which justified the convening of a General Service Conference. In May 1964 a suggestion to move towards the formation of such a Conference was put to the Area and Group Representative Committee by the Board. At the end of October 1965 an exploratory conference took place in Manchester to consider the formation of a General Service Conference Great Britain. In January 1966 the decision was taken to proceed and Conference was born. The first Conference was held in Manchester in October 1966. Over 100 delegates from throughout Britain attended this first Conference, the theme of which was “Working with Others”. It was held to be most successful – to such an extent that it has become an annual event and indeed the Fellowship in Great Britain celebrated its 30th Annual Conference in 1995.

In 1969 the Fellowship’s first World Service Meeting was held in New York and two delegates from AA Great Britain attended. Three years later in 1972 AA’s monthly magazine “Newsletter”, which had been going for twenty-five years, changed its name to *SHARE* and this in turn has continued monthly publication ever since. At that time the monthly circulation was about 2,500 copies. In 1974 the Fellowship in Great Britain was awarded the privilege of hosting, in London, the first AA World Service Meeting to be held outside of the United States. AA’s growth in Great Britain continued rapidly and in 1977 the 1000th Group was

registered. This was followed in the next year by the establishment of the European Information Centre at the General Service Office in Redcliffe Gardens, London in response to the increasing demand for information from English-speaking members in mainland Europe.

In 1980 it became apparent that some change in the structure of the Fellowship in Great Britain was required and to this end the format of regionalisation was adopted. Ireland had formed its own service structure and Board of Trustees in 1978. In 1981 the registration of the 1500th Group in Great Britain was recorded and this growth was mirrored by the ongoing development of English-speaking AA in Europe culminating in the first European Service Meeting (ESM) held in Frankfurt in October 1981 and the second ESM held early in 1983. In 1982 *SHARE* celebrated its 10th anniversary by which time its monthly circulation had risen to over 5,000 copies. In order to keep abreast of modern methods of communication and to assist in passing the message of sobriety through AA, the annual Conference in 1983 recommended that an AA video be produced. This was filmed early in 1984 and approved by Conference 1984. The video was entitled "One Day at a Time" and to date well over 2000 copies have been sold. In 1985 AA worldwide celebrated the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting of Bill W. and Dr Bob in Akron, Ohio and many special meetings and conventions were held throughout the UK.

It was now becoming increasingly clear that the continued sitting of the General Service Office (GSO) in London was not feasible - a massive proposed rent increase being perhaps the major reason – and in 1986 GSO moved to new premises in Stonebow House in the centre of York. Also at this time a problem arose when AA in Great Britain, in accordance with our tradition of self-support, had to refuse a substantial legacy. In order for AA to so refuse and yet to continue in its status as a registered charity a special Legacies Act had to be passed by Parliament.

In 1987 AA in Great Britain celebrated its 40th anniversary with Regions and Intergroups holding special meetings or conventions. Also in this year a computer was installed at GSO. In 1988 Bill W's widow, Lois, died and thus was lost the last remaining link with the past although the memory of Lois is continually recalled in the continuing growth in Great Britain and elsewhere of Al-Anon.

Following on from the success of the video "One Day at a Time" and in response to the increasing number of younger AA members, Conference 1990 recommended that a video for young people be made. This was done and the resulting "Message to Young People" became available at the end of 1991. To date over 500 copies of this video have been sold. In an effort to rationalise the expansion of the Fellowship in Great Britain, the Twenty Fifth Conference in 1990 recommended the introduction, where feasible, of multi-meeting Groups. In 1992 the Twenty Seventh Conference introduced for a trial period a further tier between Intergroups and Region, to assist London Region with handling over 450 Groups through 18 Intergroups. The number of Group meetings had by this time reached 3000.

As the result of a recommendation at the 29th Annual Conference in 1994 a pilot scheme for a single AA telephone contact number was instituted in the South-East Region in October 1994 and in two regions in Scotland in August 1995.

In 1994 the Fellowship was made aware of changes in the Charities Act and the Companies Act in Great Britain which, in order that AA in Great Britain could remain within their respective provisions, required the adoption of a Conference Charter and Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain (This was done by adapting the relevant sections in the then current *The AA Service Manual*. Fifty years of Fellowship in Great Britain were celebrated at Blackpool in 1997, when approximately 8000 members of AA, Al-Anon and their families gathered at the Winter Gardens and Boating Lake.

2: AA Archives

Alcoholics Anonymous Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of AA members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference. In keeping with our tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience.

Purpose

Like any other AA service, the primary purpose of those involved in archival work is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. Archives service work is more than mere custodial activity; it is the means by which we collect, preserve and shares the rich and meaningful heritage of our Fellowship. It is by the collection and sharing of these important historical elements that our collective gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous is deepened. AA members have responsibility to gather and take good care of the Fellowship's historical documents and memorabilia.

Correspondence, records, photographs, newspaper and magazine articles from the past need to be collected, preserved and made available for the guidance and research of AA members and others (researchers, historians and scholars from various disciplines) – for now and for the generations to come.

Policy statement

In 1995 the General Service Board adopted a policy statement, subsequently ratified by Conference, which reads: "Where any civilisation, or society perishes, one condition is present, they forgot where they came from." Carl Sandburg

These words represent one good reason why the General Service Board (and Conference) re-affirms its commitment and support for archival activity as a vital and integral part of the healthy life and growth of the Fellowship in this country. Just as each of us feels that it is essential to recall and appreciate where we came from, and how we got here, so it is with the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Board recognises the urgent need for accurate records to be rescued, retained, collated and used in a manner which will serve to dispel some myths which swirl disturbingly around our past, thus allowing us to obtain a truer perspective and reveal to us our real heritage, so that our future may be ensured. Archive activity may be regarded in the same light as the myriad (but minimal) support and services which we provide, in order that we may fulfil our primary purpose to the best of our ability. This is a responsibility and a debt, no less, which we owe to ourselves and to others; it is as richly endowed with the simple spiritual principles of humility, sacrifice and prudence as the rest of our work. It is also an act of practical simplicity and efficient business practice. Sound and prudent performance cannot be achieved on a basis of chaotic business records or the absence of a data base. Planned and co-ordinated records are an essential tool to efficient administration and the basis of any history to come. This combination of practical and spiritual simplicity can now be cemented by the continuity and commitment of its trusted servants, the flexibility of its form and the support of the General Service Board.

The Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous are the repository of personal collections, manuscripts, publications, photographs and memorabilia related to the origin and the development of the AA Fellowship. Consistent with AA's primary purpose of maintaining our

sobriety and helping other alcoholics achieve recovery, the Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous will:

- Receive, classify and index all relevant material, such as administrative files and records, correspondence, and literary and artefactual works considered to have historical import to Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Hold and preserve such material.
- Provide access as determined by the Fellowship Archivist in consultation with the Trustees' Archives Sub-Committee, to members of Alcoholics Anonymous and to those of the public who may have a valid need to review such material; access to be provided only during business hours and with a mindful view toward the anonymity of our members.

Getting started

One of the best ways to get started in archival service work is to obtain a copy of the Archives Service literature available from GSO. This Literature contains helpful information gathered from shared experience over many years.

The role of the Archives Sub-Committee

The Archives Sub-Committee was set up in 1991 by the General Service Board. It recommends policy, projects, budgets and procedures to the General Service Board. It advises the Fellowship on the storage, conservation and preservation of archival material deposited in trust. Members of the Sub-Committee are appointed by the General Service Board as required. The Fellowship Archivist and the Board Trustee are integral members of this committee.

One of the most important functions of the Archives Sub-Committee is to develop and maintain a network of interest within the Fellowship at all levels. Conference has recommended the appointment of Archivists within our service structure.

The role of the Archivist

Archivists are:

An informal network of enthusiasts who share the same aim of preserving the Fellowship's past and ensuring that fact prevails over fiction or myth. This network exists outside the formal service structure of the Fellowship but runs parallel to it.

Archivists are not:

- a. Officers in the Fellowship's structural sense, rather willing enthusiasts with a life-long desire to work in the name of, and be accountable to, their Region or Intergroup.
- b. Voting members of their respective assemblies and, as such, are simply observers with no voting rights.
- c. Subject to the principles of rotation, since continuity at all levels has been shown, through experience, to be a vital aspect of archival work.

The Archivist is the person responsible for the collection, its documents and artefactual items. He or she takes care of, and maintains the physical integrity of the collection and is instrumental in its further development. The Archivist is also responsible for ensuring the protection of the anonymity of its members and the confidentiality of the AA records.

The function of the Archivist can be considered therefore to be two fold: primarily, a custodial responsibility for assuring the physical integrity of the collection and its availability to persons with a valid reason for study; and also the parallel and critical role of data gatherer. It is in this latter capacity that service can be rendered to Bill W's urging that archives are needed "so that myth doesn't prevail over fact." In a real sense then, AA Archivists are "keepers of the past. "

The role of the network

The function of the informal network of Archivists is to further or facilitate the identification, recording and securing of archival material, as well as stimulating interest in archival activity by carrying the message of "Don't throw me away, I belong to AA."

Experience shows that this can be furthered by promoting workshops based on such archival topics as:

- Anonymity
- Ownership of Materials
- Storage and Accessibility
- Classification
- Cataloguing
- Conservation
- Confidentiality
- Questions to ask Old Timers.

Financing the archives

By necessity storage of archival material in any system GB may operate has to be implemented on a decentralised basis. GSO has not the space to store all the archival material in the Fellowship, and Regions and Intergroups cannot afford to hire storage facilities that they can easily access in order to work on their collections. If an Archivist or an individual member is able to store material in their home it should be kept as close as possible to the optimum storage conditions. If this poses a problem, please contact your Regional or Fellowship Archivist. An Intergroup or Regional Archivist cannot be expected to store vast amounts of archival material, nor should this factor be a barrier to taking up the post. The important fact here is that talks take place with the Fellowship Archivist as to what arrangements can be made if storage is required.

Developing a collection

Books, pamphlets, world directories, local meeting lists, GSO bulletins, Conference reports, international Convention booklets, newsletters, Regional and Intergroup minutes, written histories, photographs and audio tapes all serve as the foundation of a collection. The Archivist might also arrange to audio-tape local old-timers, thus adding historical oral histories to the collection.

Local AA historical material, such as letters, bulletins and photographs need to be sought out and gathered regularly from old-timers, past delegates, various committee members and so on. It is important to note that whenever a donation is made to the archives, it should be recorded and should indicate clearly that the material has been presented to the archives (rather than the Archivist) to avoid any misunderstanding later on regarding ownership of the gift. An example of this would be the signing of our standard form on Copyright for an audio tape. The Archivist can contact other archivists through the Network. In addition they can participate in and publicise local history gathering efforts, can make presentations and offer table displays at AA events.

Archival procedures

As soon as an item is received in the archives it should be added to the inventory list. Next, the conservation and preservation needs of the collection should be evaluated and followed up on. As a general rule any action on an original document or item that is not reversible, should never be performed. For example, sellotape or lamination ought never to be used. Removal of tape, repair, de-acidification and encapsulation are some of the steps necessary to protect the integrity of a document. Sometimes it may be necessary to seek outside professional help through GSO to help ensure the integrity of an item. Once prepared an archival item should then be categorically classified, entered into a retrieval system either manual or computerised, in order to provide readily accessed information to researchers.

Control over and access to material

The degree of access to archival material is divided into four areas. The main criteria on which the classification largely depends are dependent upon the nature and sensitivity of the material, or the wishes of the donor. Permission to access any material should be made in writing via the General Secretary.

The classifications are:

- a. General: Open to public access. Photocopying may be allowed.
- b. Supervised Access: Permission required from the Archives Sub-Committee. Under controlled conditions material may be withdrawn in certain circumstances, for a limited period. Limited photocopying may be permitted.
- c. For Research Only: Permission required from GSB. Full rationale for the research is required in writing. Removal of originals from the Archive Collection at GSO is not permitted.
- d. Confidential: Access only by agreement of GSB. Photocopying not permitted.

Research in the archives

Researchers working in the archives ought to be informed that they will be expected to adhere strictly to our anonymity Traditions – only first names and last initials of AA members may be used by them. It is recommended that there be no photocopying of private correspondence. This recommendation whilst designed to assure anonymity protection also helps maintain the physical integrity of archival documents. In addition to the preservation of the anonymity of the author of the correspondence, the writer's private opinions and observations, some of which might be highly controversial, must be treated with extreme delicacy. It should be remembered that members share these documents with a trust and expectation that their remarks will be held in confidence. No one has an intrinsic right to view another's private correspondence at will; it is essential that the Archivist's chief concern of assuring the spiritual wholeness of the collection be understood and supported.

References

For more detailed discussion of archival matters please read the Archives Service literature available from GSO and liaise with your Intergroup and Regional archivist.

3: AA's Legacy of Service by Bill W. (1951)

Extract from "The A.A. Service Manual"

Our Twelfth Step – carrying the message – is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer - ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service. Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and Intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship. These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion. Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A.

The most vital, yet least understood, group of services that A.A. has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely: the General Service Office, A.A. World Services Inc, the A.A. Grapevine Inc, and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities. Until 1950, these overall services were the sole function of a few old time A.A.'s, several non-alcoholic friends, Doctor Bob, and me. For all the years of A.A.'s infancy, we old-timers had been the self-appointed trustees for Alcoholics Anonymous. At this time, we realised that A.A. had grown up, that our Fellowship was ready and able to take these responsibilities from us. There was also another urgent reason for change.

Since we old-timers couldn't live on forever, newer trustees would be virtually unknown to the A.A. groups, now spread over the whole earth. Without direct linkage to A.A., future trustees couldn't possibly function alone. This meant that we had to form a conference representing our membership which could meet yearly with our board of trustees in New York, and thus assume direct responsibility for the guardianship of A.A. tradition and the direction of our principal service affairs. Otherwise, a virtually unknown board of trustees and our too little understood service headquarters operations would someday be bound to face collapse. Suppose that future trustees, acting quite on their own, were to make a serious blunder. Suppose that with no linkage to A.A., they tried to act for us in time of great trouble or crisis. With no direct guidance from A.A. as a whole, how could they do this? Collapse of our top services would then be inevitable. And if, under such conditions, our world services did fall apart, how could they ever be reconstructed?

These, briefly, were the conclusions that led to the formation of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. The deliberative body known as the Conference is made up of elected area delegates from the United States and Canada - now numbering about 90 - together with the trustees, the directors of A.A.W.S., Inc., and the A.A. Grapevine Inc, and GSO and Grapevine staff members numbering 40 or more. The Conference held its first annual meeting in 1951. Since then it has met annually in April in New York. It has proved itself an immense success - establishing a record of advisory actions that have served the Fellowship well during the intervening years of growth and development.

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4: Leadership in AA: Ever a vital need, by Bill W.

This is the original text of an article which first appeared in the April 1959 issue of *Grapevine* and reprinted in *The Language of the Heart*.

No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and A.A. can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we A.A.'s sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without any leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of "principles before personalities" around to such a point that there would be no "personality" in leadership whatever. This would imply rather faceless automatons trying to please everybody, regardless.

At other times we are quite apt to demand that A.A.'s leaders must necessarily be people of the most sterling judgement, morals, and inspiration - big doers, prime examples to all, and practically infallible.

Real leadership, of course, has to function in between these entirely imaginary poles of hoped-for excellence. In A.A., certainly, no leader is faceless and neither is any leader perfect. Fortunately, our Society is blessed with any amount of *real* leadership - the active people of today and the potential leaders for tomorrow as each new generation of able members' swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example." In effect we are saying to them "Act for us, but don't boss us."

A leader in A.A. service is therefore a man (or a woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgement of his own - well, he really isn't a leader at all.

Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can obtain, sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

A "politico" is an individual who is forever trying to "get the people what they want." A statesman is an individual who can carefully discriminate when and *when not* to do this. He recognises that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand against the storm - using its every ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

Nothing, however, can be more fatal to leadership than opposition for opposition's sake. It never can be, "Let's have it our way or no way at all." This sort of opposition is often powered by a visionless pride or a gripe that makes us want to block something or somebody. Then there is the opposition that casts its vote saying "No, we don't like it." No real reasons are

ever given. This won't do. When called upon, leadership must always give its reasons, and good ones.

Then too a leader must realize that even very prideful or angry people can sometimes be dead right, when the calm and more humble are quite mistaken.

These points are practical illustrations of the kind of careful discrimination and soul searching that true leadership must always try to exercise.

Another qualification for leadership is "give and take" - the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us "all-or-nothing drunks."

Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by *a series of improving compromises*. We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then it is truly necessary to stick flatfooted to one's conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situations for keen timing and a most careful discrimination as to which course to take.

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship. Then we have those who we like to call our "destructive" critics. They power-drive, they are "politickers," they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumours, gossip, and general scuttlebutt to gain their ends - all for the good of A.A., of course! Well, in A.A. at least, we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending entirely on how we relate ourselves to them.

To begin with, we ought to listen very carefully to what they say. Sometimes they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole truth, the half truth, or even no truth at all, can equally hurt us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they've got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we'd better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong, regardless. If it's nonsense, we can ignore them. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen and we can try to forget the whole business. We can think of few better means of self-survey, of developing genuine patience, than these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members can afford us. This is always a large order, and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must keep trying.

Now comes that all-important attribute of vision. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some might feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy because we A.A.'s are constantly telling ourselves, "One day at a time." But that valued maxim really refers to our emotional lives and means only those we are not to repine over the past nor wishfully fantasise or day-dream about our future.

As individuals and as a Fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the whole job of planning for tomorrow onto a kind of Providence. God has endowed us human beings with considerable capability for foresight and he evidently expects us to use it. Therefore, we must distinguish between wishful dreaming for a happy tomorrow and today's use of our powers of thoughtful estimate - estimate of the kind which we trust will bring future progress rather than unforeseen woe.

Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence - a sound virtue if ever there was one. Of course, we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part. But even so, this will be far better than to refuse to think at all.

The making of estimates has several aspects. We look at past and present experience to see what we think it means. From this, we derive a tentative idea or policy. Looking first at the nearby future, we ask how our idea or policy might work. Following this estimate we ask how our policies and ideas might work under the several differing conditions that could arise in the longer future. If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on – always experimentally, when that is possible. Somewhat later, we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is, or may soon be, working out.

At about this stage, we may have to take a critical decision. Maybe we have a policy or plan that still looks fine and is apparently doing well. Nevertheless we ought to ponder very carefully what its long time effect will be. Will today's nearby advantages boomerang into large liabilities for tomorrow? The temptation will almost always be to seize the nearby benefits and quite forget about the harmful precedents or consequences that we may be setting in motion.

These are no fancy theories. We have found that we must use these principles of estimate constantly, especially at world service levels where the stakes are high. In public relations, for example, we must estimate the reaction of both A.A. groups and the general public, both short-term and long-term. The same thing goes for our literature. Our finances have to be estimated and budgeted. We must think about our service needs as they relate to general economic conditions, group capability, and the willingness to contribute. On many such problems we must very often try to think many months and even years ahead.

As a matter of fact, all of A.A.'s Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future. Years ago we slowly evolved an idea about A.A. being self-supporting. There had been trouble here and there about outside gifts. Then still more trouble developed. Consequently we began to devise a policy of no outside gifts. We began to suspect that large sums would tend to make us irresponsible and could divert us from our primary aim. Finally we saw that for the long pull, outside money could ruin us utterly. At this point, what had been just an idea or general policy hardened firmly down into an A.A. Tradition. We saw that we must sacrifice the quick, nearby advantage for long term safety.

We went through this same process on anonymity. A few public breaks had looked good. But finally the vision came that many such breaks could raise havoc among us. So it went - first a gleam in the eye, then an experimental policy, then a firm policy, and finally a deep conviction - a vision for tomorrow. Such is our process of estimating the future. Our responsible world leadership must be especially and constantly proficient in this vital activity. This is an ability much to be desired, especially among our trustees, and I think most of them should be chosen on the basis that they have already proved their aptness for foresight in business or professional careers.

We shall continually need many of these same attributes, insofar as they can be had, among our leaders of A.A. services at all levels. The principles of leadership will be just about the same, no matter what the size of the operation.

This discussion on leadership may look, at first glance, like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of A.A. member. But this is not really so. We are simply recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at finance or foresight. And it is even less likely that a fine banker could be much of a musical success. When, therefore, we talk about A.A. leadership, we only declare that we ought select that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find, making sure that we land that talent, whatever it is, in the spot where it will do us the most good. While this article was first thought of in connection with our world service leadership, it is quite possible that many of its suggestions can be useful to everyone who takes an active part in our Society.

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Nowhere could this be more true than in the area of Twelfth Step work itself – something at which nearly all of us most eagerly work. Every sponsor is necessarily a leader. The stakes are huge. A human life, and usually the happiness of a whole family, hangs in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example - well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death.

Thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in each and all of its great affairs!

5: The Twelve Traditions (Long Form)

Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

1. Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.
3. Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.
4. With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.
5. Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose* - that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. - and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.
7. The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counselling alcoholics for fee or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual A.A. Twelfth step work is never to be paid for.

9. Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10. No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues - particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not to be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This is to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

GROWING INTO SERVICE

1. Growing into service
2. AA Money
3. Introduction to the AA Structure in Great Britain
4. Diagram of structure of AA
5. The Relationship between AA and Al-Anon
6. Introduction to Twelve Concepts for World Service, by Bill W.

1. Growing into service

Alcoholics Anonymous is more than a set of principles; it is a Fellowship of alcoholics in action. Service is at the centre of every AA concept and activity. It is as fundamental to AA as abstinence is to sobriety. Without this giving of oneself to another, there would be no Fellowship. This desire to serve improves recovery. As newcomers, we see people giving time, energy and love in the service of the Fellowship, and it is suggested that we too should become involved. Those of us who have done this will tell you of the enormous benefits we have received by willingly stepping into service. A great paradox of AA is that rewards come when we begin to forget ourselves.

What are these rewards?

Simple service tasks have helped to develop confidence, a belief in one's own value and opinions, self-respect and self-worth. We have all found that participating in service activities has helped our recovery.

Everyone in AA has some contribution to make. There are so many ways of practising our Twelfth Step. Some are talented in hospital or prison work, others can write to loners or answer telephones and some have abilities which lie in committee activities or sponsorship. But service is not just for a small number of experienced people. Each one of us has been surprised at the abilities which have emerged with a willingness to grow in service.

How do we become involved?

AA's Twelfth Step "Carrying the Message" is the basic service that our Fellowship gives; it is our principal aim, and the main reason for our existence. We must carry AA's message otherwise we ourselves may fall into decay and those who have not been given the truth may die.

Carrying AA's message is therefore the heart of our Third Legacy of Service. Any action which helps AA to function as a whole is service. Where better to begin than in our own home Group?

In the Group

It is as a result of Twelfth Step work that a Group is formed and we discover that we are a small part of a great whole. Regular attendance at our Group meeting is in itself a form of service. Group meetings are necessary for maintaining sobriety. Love and effort is needed to keep the Group growing and maintained. For some of us it is not always possible to do individual Twelfth Step work but for all of us regularly attending meetings, it is possible to

serve within the Group by helping to set up the meeting rooms; we can arrive early and help to:

- Put up the slogan signs;
- Display the AA literature;
- Arrange the chairs;
- Greet members, especially new ones, as they arrive;
- Help maintain the tradition of self-support;
- Make the tea or coffee; and after the meeting, help wash up and clear up.

The last two give a great service to everyone yet give us as individuals so much in return, for we all know the shared experiences gained during “washing up therapy” when shyness seems to evaporate. Perhaps here we feel our first sense of purpose and belonging.

Service to newcomers at Group meetings

A warm smile of greeting can make newcomers feel welcome. A cup of coffee or tea also releases tension. Giving your name and sharing your experiences on the spot can make them feel they are in the right place. Giving your telephone number, and taking theirs in order to call them, may not seem like service but where would we all be today if someone had not done this for us?

These little efforts on our part are sure steps into responsibility, reliability, and confidence. They are also steps into loving, the sort of loving that makes no demands, asks for no rewards, and fulfils our sense of purpose.

As we grow in sobriety, we may be asked to become a Group officer, described in our Twelve Traditions as a trusted servant. Each Group needs to have certain jobs done in order to function smoothly and responsibly.

Chapter 1 *Group Officers* sets out very fully the work to be done. Our Traditions remind us to be open-minded and that we are but trusted servants, we do not govern. We may hear of Public Information (PI). This consists of members who ensure that the public is informed about the work we do, and how and when we are available to give them our message. These members are from a collection of Groups working closely in Intergroups. Some of us who have tried to serve in these ways will tell you how anxious and nervous we have felt to begin with. Others of us were brimming over with over-confidence, aggression and arrogance. Service helps us to change, and these feelings are soon dispelled. We develop an even greater feeling of belonging and move still further in to loving and caring. The depth of our sobriety is strengthened with each task we do with willingness. Our sense of purpose is further developed.

A step further

Another service we may be asked to carry out is that of GSR. The mere name itself, Group Service Representative, describes the activity. It means: regular attendance at the Group you are serving, going to Intergroup assemblies having a good knowledge of Group opinions, experiences and decisions having an ability to share these with neighbouring GSRs at Intergroup assemblies and being willing to share the experience of others with the home Group. This service is also described in a fuller way in Chapter 1, “Group Service Representatives”. It brings benefits and an added breadth to a “society of alcoholics in action”. You will see a broader spectrum of the AA Fellowship, meeting members from many different Groups, thus giving a wider circle of AA friendship. Here, too, there will be a further step into responsibility, reliability, confidence and humility. There will be growth into deeper love and understanding, a greater strengthening of sobriety, and more opportunities to carry AA’s message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Service within the Intergroup

- Prison sponsorship
- Twelfth stepping in hospitals
- Talks to schools, the professions, and outside agencies
- Telephone service
- Arranging public meetings
- Arranging mini-conventions

In most of these activities the responsibility will be shared, creating a deeper bond between groups of members all trying to carry AA's message. Those members who do this work in isolation do not receive the same benefits as those who carry out tasks with one another. Sharing in every activity is the way the Fellowship of AA works best. The more we share our experience, strength and hope with each other, the more we will be able to maintain and deepen our sobriety.

Still more ways to serve

By this time we are usually comfortable in our service activities. The growth into responsibility, reliability and confidence is well under way. However, there is still more to be carried out by the willing member. There will be:

- Regional representatives;
- Regional officers; and
- Delegates to Conference.

These are similar services carried out in the same ways as previously talked about regarding the Group and Intergroup. They are discussed in Chapter 3.

Benefits

There is an ever-increasing feeling of security within the Fellowship and the sense of belonging is deepened and broadened. We enjoy the fellowship of members from faraway places, whom we might not otherwise meet if we denied ourselves the privilege of service. All of this should improve the quality of our sobriety.

The loner

Here let us not neglect the member who, because of distance and geography, cannot participate in a local Group. These members can give service by writing to other loners, by writing articles for *SHARE* or *Roundabout*, sharing with us their experiences and growth into sobriety. They can keep the General Service Office informed of their whereabouts so that travelling members may have a contact in that area. They may also provide a Public Information service in their particular location. Through service, loners can deepen their sense of belonging to the Fellowship.

The housebound member

Housebound members can be of valuable service to the Fellowship by telephone contact, and by writing letters and articles to *Roundabout* and *SHARE*. They can maintain contact with the local Group, Intergroup or Region.

The older member

At some stage in sobriety, many members may be labelled “the older member”. Let us hope it happens to us all. Here we may find service in AA is seemingly being taken over by those much younger in sobriety. This is how it should be; our Traditions have always supported the idea of rotation in our service activities, but we may be feeling passed over or even isolated. We have all had these feelings from time to time, and the older member, continuing in his or her practice of the Twelve Steps, will surely recognise this. Such a member will take on a measure of quiet solidity by standing aside yet remaining steadfast to his or her

Group and sharing experience when asked

Here another role can be assumed, that of Twelfth Stepping and sponsoring newer members in the varying forms of service. This can be of the utmost help in their own, and another's, growth in recovery. The symbol of AA is three-sided: Recovery, Unity, and Service. With Unity we are given Recovery; as Recovery develops we give ourselves in Service, creating deeper Unity and creating for ourselves deeper Recovery. The corners are forever turned; the road is always before us as we need to be continually furthering our progress into sobriety. Along this route we have all benefited from the love, compassion, and understanding incorporated in this three-sided symbol. Let us all, therefore, give these away in service to others in order that we ourselves may continue to grow, and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous will remain forever steadfast.

2: AA Money

Most of AA's revenue in Great Britain consists of the voluntary contributions of members at Group meetings. The remainder comes (predominantly) from literature surpluses, from interest on investments and from convention surpluses. There has been, and still is, other money in the form of gifts, bequests and legacies. The annual value of this money was significant, and notwithstanding the second part of *Tradition 7*, the General Service Board was legally bound to accept them

Alcoholics Anonymous (Dispositions) Act 1986

On 25 July 1986, therefore, a private Act of Parliament was obtained, known as the *Alcoholics Anonymous (Dispositions) Act 1986*, empowering the General Service Board to disclaim all, or part, of such donations. The Board has set an upper limit of £6,000 per year direct personal contribution to the General Service Office and a "one-off" contribution by way of a legacy to the amount of £6,000.

Money, whatever its source, is AA money and should be spent only to further our primary purpose of helping the still suffering alcoholic. All who are trusted with the responsibility of handling AA money at every level should remind themselves constantly of this simple traditional principle. Responsibilities at the various levels of service are outlined in the following sections.

(All the above has been taken from current Guideline No. 12)

Money, expenses and spirituality

An AA service is anything whatsoever that legitimately helps us to reach our fellow sufferers.

- There is a vast array of these services, rolling endlessly from emptying ashtrays, through telephone calls, travel, meeting places, literature, delegates, committees, Conference and on to the General Service Office. They add up to our Third Legacy.

Without its essential services AA would soon become a formless, confused and irresponsible anarchy.

- It is agreed that no expenses are paid for individual face-to-face Twelfth Step work. It is also widely held that trusted servants should be reimbursed for reasonable expenses even if they are subsequently returned to the pot. Such claims should be made and accepted lest the less privileged feel denied the right of participation.

(All the above has been taken from current Guideline 12)

3: Introduction to the Structure of AA in Great Britain

This is a Handbook for members of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain who are interested in any of the services provided by the Fellowship. As the article by our Co-Founder, Bill W., reproduced in Section 3 of the introduction suggests, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow-sufferer.

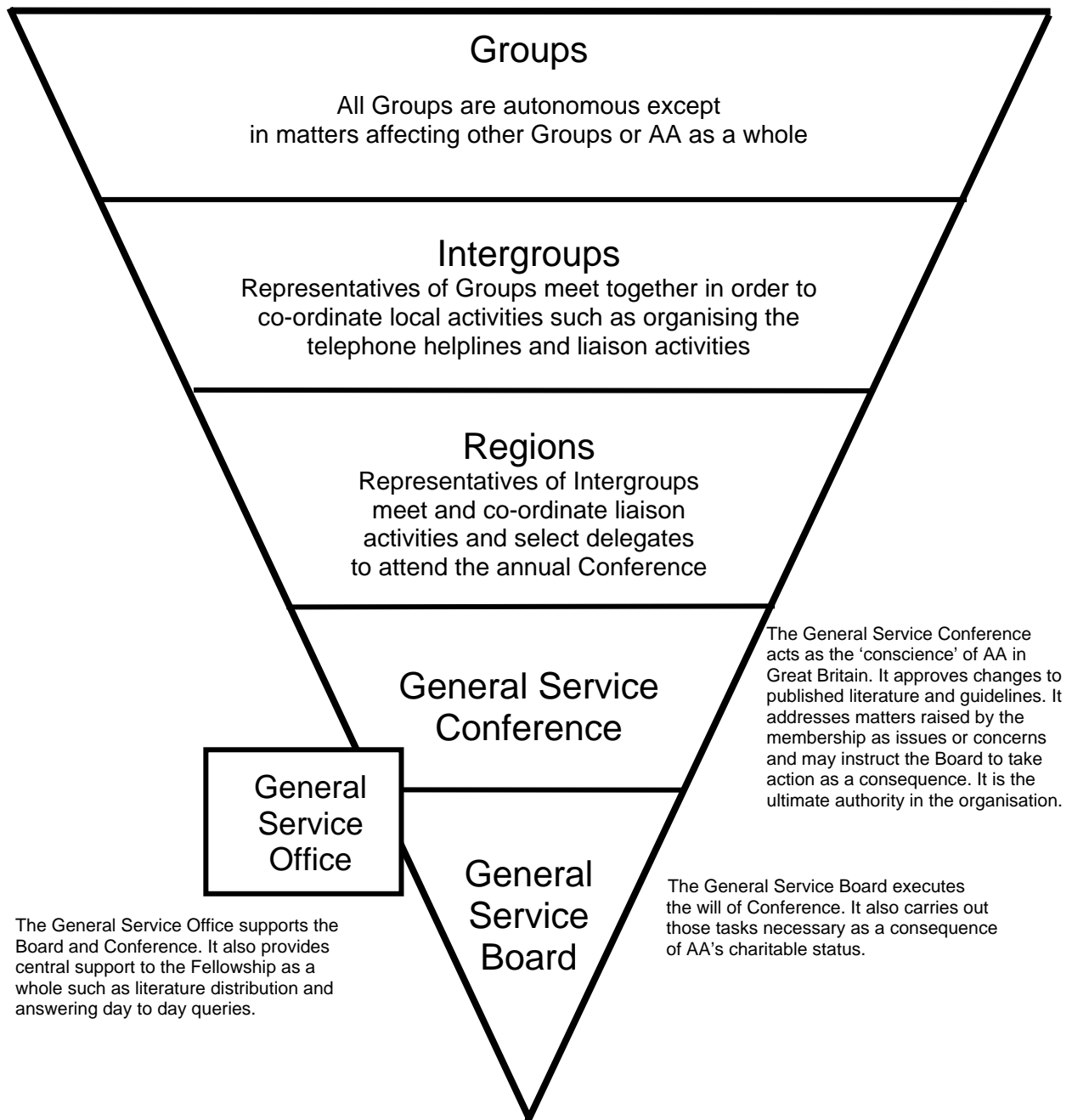
If the emphasis in later Sections is on the central services of AA, through which help is made available to ever-increasing numbers of alcoholics, this in no way diminishes the cardinal importance of the Group and its members. The servants of the Fellowship are ultimately responsible to their fellow-members for what is done in their name; and it is from the Groups, through the Intergroups, Regions and the General Service Conference, that AA as a whole gains the inspiration and drive to carry out the services that are vital to our existence.

The General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain and its related services in York are the means by which AA in this country functions nationally, and they are, therefore, at the heart of AA's Third Legacy of service. If Conference is to do its work effectively, it must operate according to acceptable and orderly procedures, the aim of which is to involve the Fellowship as widely as possible. In the first eight years of its existence, those who guided the deliberations of Conference relied heavily on *The AA Service Manual* published by the General Service Conference of AA in the United States. AA in Great Britain continues to adhere firmly to the principles that underlie that Manual, the Twelve Concepts for World Service, the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Steps and to the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. These are the yardsticks by which the activities of AA in Great Britain must be measured.

There is however some differences between Great Britain and the United States which made it desirable that we should have our own *Structure Handbook* (and *Service Manual* – to be reviewed by Conference 2012). AA started later in this country, and our national institutions are not always comparable with those of the United States. Over the years since the first Conference we have developed procedures for Conference that is more appropriate to the needs of the Fellowship in this country. Additionally there have been legal requirements to ensure that the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain fully complies with the Regulations of the Charities Act (1960, 1992 and consolidated in 1993) and the Companies Act (1985 as amended in 1989). Appropriate changes and additions reflecting these requirements are included in this *AA Structure Handbook*. These are mainly contained in the sections "Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain" and "Conference Charter - Great Britain" as adopted at Conference 1995.

4: The Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain)

“Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern” Extract from Tradition 2.



(Approved by Conference 2008)

5: The Relationship between AA and Al-Anon

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups have a unique relationship. They are naturally drawn together by their close family ties. Yet the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Boards, and the General Service Conferences of both Fellowships suggest that each functions more effectively if it remains separate, co-operating but not affiliating with the other.

Each Fellowship has always had its own General Service Board, General Service Office, Conference, publishing company and World Directory. Each has established its own policies and maintained its own services. This separate functioning has served both AA and Al-Anon Family Groups well. As a matter of fact, AA's policy of 'co-operation but not affiliation' was established as long ago as the early 1950's, and both Al-Anon and AA recognised at that time the importance of maintaining separate Fellowships.

However, from time to time, questions come to both AA and Al-Anon General Service Offices indicating confusion as to how AA and Al-Anon may best co-operate in the area of Groups, Intergroups or central services and Conventions and get-togethers. Trustees of AA and members of Al-Anon have met and discussed these questions. The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain approved the following suggested guidance.

Separate groups

Since the primary purpose of the AA Group is to help the sick alcoholic to recover, and the primary purpose of the Al-Anon Family Groups is to help the Al-Anon to live with herself or himself as well as with the alcoholic, they should not be combined but remain separate Groups. This should enable both Fellowships to function within their Twelve Traditions and to carry their message more effectively. Thus, the Group name, the officers, and the meetings should be either AA or Al-Anon but not both. Naturally, all are welcome at open meetings of both AA and Al-Anon Groups. The word 'family' is part of the Al-Anon Fellowship's incorporated name, and should not be used in an AA Group's name.

Combined Intergroup services

Both experience and the Twelve Traditions of AA and Al-Anon suggest that each Fellowship will function more effectively if each retains separate committees, separate staff and facilities for handling telephone and personal calls as well as separate telephone answering services, Intergroup activities, bulletins, meeting lists and all types of Twelfth Step services. Members who are involved in a service committee or office should be AA members, if it is an AA facility and Al-Anon members if it is an Al-Anon facility.

Where AA telephone services exist, only the national contact number for Al-Anon should be made available for partners, family, or involved friends enquiring. AA members on telephone duty should never attempt to deal with calls which are matters connected with the family and which should rightly be dealt with by Al-Anon.

Conventions and mini-conventions

In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a Convention would be either AA or Al-Anon – not both. However, most AA Convention Committees invite Al-Anon to participate by planning their own programme, and the Committee arranges for facilities for the Al-Anon meetings. If

AA invites Al-Anon to participate in this manner, all expenses involved in the Al-Anon meetings are paid from the funds of the AA Convention Committee. Since Conventions and Mini-Conventions are primarily for AA members and do not seek to attract the general public, the meetings will no doubt be either "Closed" or "Open" and reference should be made to Chapter 1 of the Structure Handbook of AA GB. At an "Open" meeting, the Chair and speaker are, of course, all members of AA but in any subsequent discussion, participation by non-members is welcome. Al-Anon have produced their own Guideline for co-operation with AA at national Conventions or local Mini-Conventions.

If an Al-Anon member is invited to attend an AA Convention Committee meeting, it should be remembered that Al-Anon have agreed procedures for dealing with such requests. Requests should therefore be directed to the Al-Anon District involved and not in the first instance to an individual Al-Anon member.

Convention finance

In accordance with the self-support Traditions of both Fellowships and to abide by the concept of 'co-operation but not affiliation', it is suggested that AA should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon from the financial profits of a Convention. By the same token, AA should not accept contributions from Al-Anon. Any collections at Al-Anon meetings belong to Al-Anon funds.

Alateen

These groups are part of Al-Anon Family Groups, and their formation and servicing is not an AA function or responsibility.

It was the desire of the Fifteenth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain to place on record and confirm the relationship between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups and to acknowledge AA's debt of gratitude to the Al-Anon Family Groups, and it unanimously approved the following resolutions:

"It is RESOLVED that Alcoholics Anonymous recognises the special relationship which it enjoys with the Al-Anon Family Groups, a separate but similar Fellowship. It is further RESOLVED that Alcoholics Anonymous recognises the great contribution which Al-Anon Family Groups have made, and continue to make in assisting the families of alcoholics everywhere."

(Revised April 2002)

6: Introduction to Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill. W.

Adopted by the 12th Annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous on 26 April 1962. Bill W's Introduction to the essays on the Concepts is reprinted with permission of A.A. World Services Inc.

The "Twelve Concepts for World Service" [to be described in this Manual]* are an interpretation of A.A.'s world service structure. They reveal the evolution by which it has arrived in its present form, and they detail the experience and reasoning on which our operation stands today. These Concepts therefore aim to record the "why" of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.

Quite rightly, each new generation of A.A. world servants will be eager to make operational improvements. Unforeseen flaws in the present structure will doubtless show up later on. New service needs and problems will arise that may make structural changes necessary. Such alterations should certainly be effected, and these contingencies squarely met.

Yet we should always recognize that change does not necessarily spell progress. We are sure that each new group of workers in world service will be tempted to try all sorts of innovations that may often produce little more than a painful repetition of earlier mistakes. Therefore it will be an important objective of these Concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experience of the past clearly before us. And if mistaken departures are nevertheless made, these Concepts may then provide a ready means of safe return to an operating balance that might otherwise take years of floundering to rediscover.

There will also be seen in these Concepts a number of principles which have already become traditional to our services, but which have never been clearly articulated and reduced to writing. For example: the "Right of Decision" gives our service leaders a proper discretion and latitude; the "Right of Participation" gives each world servant a voting status commensurate with his (or her) responsibility, and "Participation" further guarantees that each service board or committee will always possess the several elements and talents that will insure effective functioning. The "Right of Appeal" protects and encourages minority opinion; and the "Right of Petition" makes certain that grievances can be heard, and properly acted upon. These general principles can of course be used to good effect throughout our entire structure.

[In other sections],* the Concepts carefully delineate those important traditions, customs, relationships and legal arrangements that weld the General Service Board into a working harmony with its primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service – A.A. World Services Inc. and the A.A. Grapevine Inc. This is the substance of the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of A.A.'s World Headquarters. Concern has been expressed lest the detailed portrayal of our internal structure might not later harden down into such a firm tradition or gospel that necessary changes would be impossible to make. Nothing could stray further from the intent of these Concepts. The future advocates of structural change need only make out a strong case for their recommendations - a case convincing to both the Trustees and to the Conference. This is no more than would be required for the transaction and passage of any other important piece of A.A. business. Save for an exception or two, it is noteworthy that the Conference Charter itself can be easily amended.

Perhaps one more precaution ought to be observed when a proposed structural change is to be specially far-reaching. In such an event, the alteration should for an appropriate period be labelled as "experimental". On final approval, an alteration of this character could be entered into a special section of this Manual which might be entitled "AMENDMENTS". This would leave the original draft of the Twelve Concepts intact as an evidential record of our former

experience. Then it could always be clearly seen by our future service workers just what did happen and why. [In other chapters]* great emphasis is laid on the need for a high order of personal leadership, on the desirability of careful induction methods for all incoming personnel, and upon the necessity for the best possible personal relations between those who work in our services. The Concepts try to design a structure in which all may labour to good effect, with a minimum of friction. This is accomplished by so relating our servants to their work and to each other that the chances of personal conflict will be minimised.

In the A.A. services we have always had to choose between the authoritarian setup, whereby one group or one person is set in *unqualified* authority over another, and the democratic concept which calls for “checks and balances” that would prevent unqualified authority from running unrestrained. The first approach is that of the “institutional” or authoritarian type. The second is the method of “constitutional” governments and many large business corporations in their upper echelons.

Well knowing our own propensities for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of “checks and balances”. We have had to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. I’m the more sure of this because I possess these traits myself.

Consequently ideas like the following pervade the Concepts: “No group or individual should be set in *unqualified* authority over another”, “Large, active and *dissimilar* operations should be separately incorporated and managed, each with its own staff, equipment and working capital”, “We ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any service group or entity”, “At each level of service, authority should be equal to responsibility”, “Double-headed executive direction should be avoided.” These and other similar provisions define working relations that can be friendly and yet efficient. They would especially restrain our tendency to concentrate money and power, this being nearly always the underlying (though not always the conscious) motivation of our recurrent passion for the “consolidation” of world service entities.

Because of the large range of topics which had to be included, these Concepts have been difficult to organize and write. Since each Concept is really a *group of related principles*, the kind of abbreviated statements used in A.A.’s “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions” has not been possible. However, these Concepts do represent the best summation that I am able to make after more than twenty years experience in the creation of our service structure and in the conduct of A.A.’s world affairs. Like the earlier written “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions”, and the Conference Charter, these service principles are also the outcome of long reflection and extensive consultation.

It is much to be hoped that these Twelve Concepts will become a welcome addition to our “Third Legacy Manual** of A.A. World Service”, and that they will prove to be a reliable working guide in the years that lie ahead. * Phrases denoted thus are included for the sake of completeness of the original text but refer to the essays on the Twelve Concepts which follow this Introduction in “The A.A. Service Manual”, not to material reproduced in this Handbook. ** “The A.A. Service Manual” is an outgrowth of the “Third Legacy Manual”.

CHAPTER ONE: THE GROUP

1. Group Meetings
2. Group Officers
3. Group Service Representatives
4. Group money
5. Personal conduct and violence

1:1 Group Meetings (This is being reviewed by Committee 1 – Conference 2011)

The Traditions have these words to say on Groups in AA.

Tradition 3 (Long Form): Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Tradition 4 (Long Form): With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Types of meetings

Although a Group is free to determine its own format and structure, our experience has shown that Groups working within AAs Traditions and Guidelines seem to work best.

The most common types of meetings are:

The Group Meeting is for alcoholics only, or for those who think they may have a drinking problem. The Group meetings are limited to members of the local AA group or visiting members from other Groups. Usually these are informal discussions devoted to members' problems and questions, the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts, topics suggested by articles in the magazines *Share, Roundabout and Grapevine* etc. Many other formats are used but common to all meetings is the sharing of the experience, strength and hope of its members, with the purpose of affording them an opportunity to discuss particular aspects of their alcoholic problem.

In many meetings it is the practice for the Chair to introduce speakers who relate what they were like, what happened in their lives and contrast this with what they are like now. Group meetings are of particular value to the newcomer since they give him or her an opportunity to ask questions which may be troubling them and to hear 'older' members' experience of the recovery programme. In this way they may be offered hope for the possibility for their own personal recovery. These meetings are usually conducted informally and members are encouraged to share in the discussions.

The Open Group Meeting is one which non-members of AA (partners, friends and other interested members of the community) may attend. The Chair and speakers are, of course, all members of AA but non-alcoholics may take part in any subsequent discussion, with the approval of the Group conscience. Non-members should always be made aware that those attending the meeting do so anonymously.

A typical Open Group meeting will usually have a leader and other speakers. The leader opens and closes the meeting and introduces each speaker. With rare exceptions, the speakers are AA members. Each, in turn, may review some of his or her drinking experiences which led to his or her joining AA. Or they may give their interpretation of the recovery programme and suggest what their sobriety has meant to them. All views expressed are purely personal, since all members of AA speak only for themselves.

Open Speaker Meetings usually consist of a few members (often from another group), who tell what they were like, what happened, and what they are like now, as the Big Book describes 'sharing'.

Some Groups feel it is important to balance the programme, making sure both men and women are heard, newer members and older. Sometimes an announcement about the importance of anonymity in the public media is read aloud. In many places, the presiding member emphasises that 'anything you hear at this meeting is the opinion of the speaker, and does not reflect the AA opinion, since no one person speaks for AA.'

Beginners' Meetings are usually smaller, more intimate question-and-answer sessions to help newcomers.

Step Meetings Since the Steps are the basis of our recovery, many groups devote regular meetings to a study of each Step in rotation, perhaps two or three at a time.

'Big Book' Study Meetings Since the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* - commonly known as the 'Big Book' - contains the basic text of the AA recovery programme, many meetings focus on reading the book and discussing in detail its suggestions and experience as they affect individual members' recovery and sobriety.

The Multi-Meeting Group is an AA Group that accepts responsibility for providing more than one meeting per week. The General Service Conference has recommended the establishment of such groups where favourable circumstances exist and the Group conscience approves. Examples of such circumstances are where:

- premises are already shared by Groups or where a number of Groups meet in the same area
- Group conscience has decided that the Group has developed to a point where further weekly meetings are needed and could be maintained
- there is a shortage of Group officers - e.g. in rural areas with a number of small groups. Because multi-meeting groups require a fewer total number of officers they are also an effective means of freeing members to become involved in other service activities.

The meetings that constitute the multi-meeting Group are assisted in fulfilling the needs of the Group by a Steering Committee comprising Group Officers and representatives from the meetings belonging to the Group. These Steering Committee Officers - Chair, Treasurer, Literature Sec. etc. as set out in 1.2 *Group Officers* below - are elected from members of the Group's meetings at a Group Conscience meeting attended by members or representatives of all the meetings in the Group.

To protect the unity of the multi-meeting Group and to ensure that each constituent meeting of the Group accepts and implements decisions made at the Group Conscience/ Business assemblies, it is vital that all of the constituent meetings be represented at these assemblies.

It has been found that there is unity in multi-meeting Groups providing that the application of the principle of rotation of steering-committee officers is observed in order to avoid personalities becoming established at the expense of the Groups' welfare: also, that regular Conscience and Business Meetings are held.

Disadvantages have been found when Group Conscience has permitted personalities to compromise Unity or where geographical location has compromised close liaison.

The Group Conscience and Business Meetings are sometimes overlooked but they play an important part in our Group progress.

The Group Conscience meeting normally takes the form of a group inventory. An informed group conscience implies that all relevant information has been carefully studied and that the views of all members who wish to contribute to the discussion have been heard before the Group makes its decision.

Some Groups schedule these meetings several times a year: whatever their frequency, it is important that they are held regularly. Depending on the wishes of the members, they may precede or follow the normal meeting or separate sessions may be arranged.

In order to achieve true representation of Group Conscience, it is suggested that participation is limited to those members who attend regularly or who regard that group as their Home Group.

Business meetings provide an opportunity for Group officers to report on such matters as progress, to seek group guidance (see *Tradition Two*) for the future, Intergroup matters and the financial position. The Group may also take this occasion as an opportunity to appoint its officers and to conduct a Group Conscience meeting.

The Home Group Meeting is the group for meetings in which members feel most at home. In such Groups they accept service responsibilities, sustain friendships and celebrate anniversaries.

The Public Meeting places emphasis on informing the general public about AA. These are speaker-type meetings. Invitations are issued to persons who may have a specific interest, such as doctors, social workers, spiritual leaders and others who may have cause to refer to AA in the course of their daily work. As well as the Group members, often a guest – usually a friend of AA, whose professional work involves them in the field of alcoholism, or an AI-Anon member - is invited to speak. The *Service Manual of AA Great Britain* gives excellent suggestions for arranging such a meeting. Such a meeting is an excellent way to celebrate group anniversaries.

The Shared Platform Meeting is an AA meeting where non-AA speakers are involved and should be chaired by an AA member. Tickets and programmes should include a statement as to whether AI-Anon/ Alateen speakers are involved.

THE ANONYMITY TRADITION

At open, public and shared platform meetings, it is considered advisable to stress the importance of AA's *Tradition 11* on Anonymity as a precaution, should any members of the press or other communication media be present.

AA members remain anonymous in public for two reasons:

- our promise of privacy to the still-suffering alcoholic and to the family
- a spiritual reason summed up in *Tradition 12* or in the word "humility".

PARTICIPATION

The sole purpose of an AA Group is to carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic offering sobriety through the teachings and practice of the Twelve Steps. To help achieve this aim as many members as possible who wish to take part in the discussions and service should be encouraged to do so.

The meeting most likely to attract and keep members is the one which starts on time, which has its stock of literature well displayed, where the seating is ready and where members of an unofficial “welcoming committee” are ready to help pass the message, each in their own way. There will be a warm welcome for all comers and in particular for the newcomer, ensuring that the newcomer is made aware of the possibilities and promises contained in the programme. Ultimately, the strength of any meeting depends on the support and involvement of the entire Group.

WHERE TO FIND AA

Where to Find AA is the national meeting directory for Great Britain and the Continental European Region and as such is an invaluable source of information for the new member and the travelling member. In order to ensure that it remains accurate, Group secretaries are requested to keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in the address of the meeting place, the starting time of the meeting or the telephone contact numbers for the meeting.

Members whose names appear in the *Where to Find* should be prepared to take full responsibility as contacts and delegate where necessary. This implies that such a telephone number will be freely available within the Fellowship and that the contact is prepared at any time to:

- accept a call for help
- give information to a professional e.g. a GSO number
- guide a family member to the right source for help e.g. to Al-Anon
- speak to members of the Fellowship enquiring about meetings.

Where to Find may also be found on the AA website, where names and personal numbers are not shown.

On local, Intergroup or Regional *Where to Find* listings, the following statement may be useful: "Alcoholics or those who think they might have a problem with alcohol may go to any of the meetings listed. 'Open Group Meetings' are for friends, family and other interested people, with the consent of the group."

OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE AND PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL

Tradition 5 (Long Form) quotes Bill W's words "Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having but one primary purpose* - that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Where problems arise from the attendance of non-alcoholics at AA meetings, it is suggested that the above words are remembered and the following extract from the AA pamphlet *Problems other than Alcohol* is read out and, if appropriate, printed copies are distributed: "Now there are certain things that A.A. cannot do for anybody regardless of what our several desires or sympathies may be. Our first duty as a society is to ensure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multi-purpose activity. An A.A. Group as such cannot take on all the personal problems of its members let alone the problems of the whole world. Sobriety - freedom from alcohol - through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an A.A. Group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make non-alcoholics into A.A. members.

We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our A.A. Groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse, and if we collapse, we cannot help anyone."

Although these words were written by Bill W. in 1958 they continue to offer sound guidance on this difficult subject.

1:2 Group Officers

This Guidance is based on the pamphlet *The AA Group* which shows for new officers, new members and other interested AAs many of the good and proved-by-experience ways other members have used in their Groups to fulfil our primary purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”.

All sorts of jobs have to be done to service an AA Group and to keep it going; this is why we need officers. *Tradition 9* states that “A.A. as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.” The officers or trusted servants needed within the Group are usually chosen by the Group members for limited terms of service. The jobs they do may have titles but titles in AA do not bring authority or honour; they describe services and responsibilities. These are ways of *carrying the message*. They are forms of Twelfth Step work an AA member willingly undertakes, primarily to help personal recovery. Many AA members have found Group duties an excellent way to strengthen their sobriety.

The various jobs or services requiring to be done to run a Group successfully can be allocated over the responsibilities of Group officers as set out and outlined below: two or more services may be combined under a single officer when the Group is a small one. For example, a Group may have the following officers:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Speaker Secretary
- Treasurer
- Literature Secretary
- *SHARE / Roundabout* Representative
- Refreshment Helpers
- Group Service Representative

Each Group, being autonomous, selects the officers its members feel are necessary for the smooth running of the Group. Group officers usually serve for a year, since the principle of rotation of officers is important in order that each member should be given an opportunity to serve should they be willing. Each nominee is usually approached by other members in the Group and, if he or she agrees, that name is put forward at a business/service meeting, so letting the Group conscience decide the election.

Qualifications for Group Officers

Most Groups make sure that their officers have had a known period of continuous sobriety, at least one year, and have shown themselves willing and available to give dependable service through regular attendance at meetings. It has generally been found that giving a member a job solely to help that member stay sober does not work. The Group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers and in this sense, a mention of *Traditions 1 and 2* is helpful at election times as is also an appreciation that familiarity with the *12 Steps, Traditions* and *Concepts for World Service* helps officers to do a better job.

Chair

Some Groups have no Chair because the Secretary serves as the Group's principal officer. In practice, it doesn't seem to matter which Group officer does which job as long as they all get done without confusion or conflict. It is however very important for everybody to understand who does what.

While one year's continuous sobriety may be sufficient to undertake some other duties, the Group's principal officer, i.e. Chair or Secretary should have at least two years' continuous sobriety and have had other group experience.

- Co-ordinates Group activities, preventing confusion or misunderstanding in Group affairs
- Opens all regular Group meetings then turns them over to a speaker who is leader for that session only
- Has final responsibility for the smooth functioning of the Group and also conducts Group Conscience and Business Meetings.

Secretary

- Arrives some time before a meeting is due to start in order to arrange the room, usually with the help of other members and the refreshment helpers
- Encourages the meeting to start punctually
- Makes any AA announcements at the end of the meeting (e.g. news of conventions, new meetings, new literature)
- Practises *Tradition 7* by passing the pot and then asking the speaker or Chair to close the meeting with the *Serenity Prayer*
- Keeps a confidential list of those members willing to do Twelfth Step work and passes on any calls for help
- Ensures, with the Treasurer's help, that the rent is paid
- Helps the Treasurer to count and keep a record of the Group's collections
- Informs the Intergroup Secretary and GSO of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Group officers, together with up-to-date Group telephone contacts and of any changes in these or in the Group's venue. In this way the correct information is always available for inclusion in *Where to Find AA*
- Provides safe keeping for such Group records and correspondence that exist, thus preserving anonymity at all times. In addition, the Secretary, as well as other Group officers, has a special responsibility for seeing that newcomers get help, are made welcome on arrival and receive a starter pack on departure

Speaker Secretary

- Finds suitable speakers for each meeting who have a known period of sobriety, books them well in advance and informs them of the time, date and address of the meeting
- Explains to the speaker the usual format of the Group, e.g. length of the share or discussion and what time the meeting ends
- Tries to visit other Groups in order to book ahead a variety of speakers who are able to present a good cross-section of AA recovery

Treasurer

- Collects the money obtained from passing the pot at Group meetings, counts this with a responsible member's help and enters the amount into a cash book or balance sheet in the Group accounts book

- Makes regular reports to the Group showing how money has been used. After paying the approved expenses, e.g. rent, refreshments and literature and retaining a prudent reserve of one month's running expenses, any surplus should be sent to the Intergroup Treasurer – preferably by cheque and without delay. Blank signed cheques should never be issued. This is a recommended precautionary measure taken on behalf of both the group and the Treasurer and applies to cheque payments at all levels.
- In effect, covers the cost of all legitimate Group expenses from Group funds, but does not use funds to reimburse members' expenses in relation to direct Twelfth Step work. The Treasurer should keep the Group's funds in a separate Group bank account, which requires two signatures on each cheque. AA experience clearly shows that it is *not* a good idea for a Group to accumulate large funds in excess of what is needed for monthly rent and bills. It is strongly recommended that, apart from a prudent reserve, all surplus money be sent promptly to GSO via the local Intergroup Treasurer.

Literature Secretary

- Ensures that the Group has available its own copy of the *Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous)*. Orders and keeps the Group supplied with books and pamphlets published by AA and available from GSO
- Puts together selected packs of literature for newcomers and makes sure stocks are replenished
- Ensures that literature is on display and available to members at Group meetings, encouraging members to buy from the collection
- Makes available the current edition of *The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain*, especially at business meetings
- Passes any accounts for payment of literature to the Treasurer
- Helps the Secretary to circulate *AA Service News*, convention flyers, notices from GSO, etc.

SHARE /Roundabout Representative

- Is responsible for promoting *SHARE/Roundabout*, by ordering sufficient copies for the Group members. Displays and sells copies as they arrive and encourages members to submit articles for inclusion in future issues

Refreshment helpers

- Many AA members have reported they get almost as much good out of coffee and conversation before or after a meeting as they do out of the meeting itself. AA members consider sharing over coffee at these times a vital part of AA routine
- Often AA members say they first felt they belonged when they began helping with the chairs, tidying the room, making the coffee and tea or doing washing up. Some newcomers find such activity helps them to talk to other members. For many of us this experience is our first contribution to AA service
- Any expenses for refreshments may be reclaimed from the Group Treasurer
- After each meeting the room should be left clean, tidy and in proper order

Group Service Representative (GSR)

The GSR's responsibilities are fully explained in 1:3 below. Bill W said "The strength of our whole structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative that the Group elects. By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR a Group helps its own future and the future of A.A. as a whole." To be chosen to represent a Group is to be given the opportunity to take part in AAs Third Legacy, that of service, and to have the chance to become a trusted servant. The GSR should have at least two years' continuous sobriety and should serve for a minimum of two years.

The Traditions

While the above sets out how an ideal Group may operate, the conscience of each Group decides for itself how much it will do and the best way of getting it done. There are many

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ways of living up to *Tradition 5*, which says “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

Tradition 2 reminds us that “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

1:3 Group Service Representative (GSR)

Bill W said, “the strength of our whole structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative (GSR) that the Group elects”. Working via the Intergroup the GSR is the Groups` link with the General Service Conference, through which groups share experiences and voice AA’s collective conscience.

More from Bill W..... “The GSR – as the general service representative is known – has the job of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the groups’ wishes to the committee member and to the delegate, who passes them on to the Conference and to the movement.

For this, GSRs need the confidence of the group. They also need a good ear for listening. We all realize whatever “authority” there is in A.A. resides in the group conscience. Because of this, a GSR can determine exactly what a group needs, what a group thinks about a situation, and can pass this information along to where it will be most useful in policy-making. This is a two-way street, allowing the GSR to bring back to the group the problems and remedies that affect A.A. unity, health, and growth. To the extent that a GSR keeps the group informed, and then expresses the group conscience, only to that extent can the Conference feel it is acting for A.A. as a whole”. (From *The AA Service Manual*)

Responsibilities

The suggested responsibilities are:-

- Share with their Group all Fellowship mail, communication and news items.
- Keep members informed about local service activities.
- They may be contacts for referral to carry the AA message.
- GSRs can also help their Group solve problems by drawing upon the facilities of the General Service Office in York where the staff is ready to relay helpful AA experience from all over the World.
- They can help see that up-to-date group information for the AA directory is sent promptly to GSO.
- The GSR is the vital link in the chain of two-way communication between the Group and Intergroup. Each represents his or her Group at Intergroup service assemblies, sharing experiences with neighbouring GSRs in workshops and sharing sessions.
- Prior to attending Intergroup Meetings, fully discuss agenda items with the Group.
- Represent and express the Group’s conscience at all Intergroup Meetings. The GSR should faithfully express the Group’s opinions whatever his or her feelings may be, thus putting principles before personalities.
- Following Intergroup report back to the Group.
- The GSR has a responsibility to attend all such meetings and, if this is impossible, to brief thoroughly an alternate, chosen by the Group to stand in.
- Encourage observers to attend Intergroup in order to foster their interest in the Fellowship and sponsor other members into Service.
- Only GSRs and members of the Intergroup Committee are entitled to vote at Intergroup meetings.
- It is the GSR’s responsibility to know the Group so well that should unexpected matters come before the Intergroup meeting he or she will have a fair idea of Group’s conscience.

Qualifications

Groups should take due care in electing their GSR, giving particular regard to the following:

- It is suggested that the GSR should have at least two or three years' continuous sobriety and preferably not hold any other Group office. (It should be remembered that the GSR may be eligible for candidature as a Regional representative or as a Conference delegate).
- The GSR should have a working knowledge of the AA publications referred to in the introduction
- The GSR should have a good knowledge of the structure of AA.
- The GSR should be a regular weekly attender at his or her own Group and therefore be able, should necessity arise, to stand in for any other officer of the Group who is unable to be present.
- The GSR should be prepared to serve for a minimum of two years.

1:4 Group money

The job of Group Treasurer is one which requires honesty and reliability. As with any other trusted service, the task should be carefully specified and its measure of authority and responsibility made clear and well understood. Responsibility and a reasonable period of continuous sobriety (preferably at least one year) are important. The Treasurer's term of service is generally one year.

- Treasurers should keep good, simple records, which should be open to inspection, should report on the Group finances at least once a month and encourage the Group to talk about financial matters.
- Collects the money obtained from passing the pot at Group meetings, counts this with a responsible member's help and enters the amount into a cash book or balance sheet in the Group accounts book
- Makes regular reports to the Group showing how money has been used. After paying the approved expenses, e.g. rent, refreshments and literature and retaining a prudent reserve of one month's running expenses, any surplus should be sent to the Intergroup Treasurer – preferably by cheque and without delay.
- Blank signed cheques should never be issued. This is a recommended precautionary measure taken on behalf of both the group and the Treasurer and applies to cheque payments at all levels.
- In effect, covers the cost of all legitimate Group expenses from Group funds, but does not use funds to reimburse members' expenses in relation to direct Twelfth Step work
- The Treasurer should keep the Group's funds in a separate Group bank account, which requires 2 signatures (2 out of 3 duly authorised) on each cheque. AA experience clearly shows that it is *not* a good idea for a Group to accumulate large funds in excess of what is needed for monthly rent and bills. It is strongly recommended that, apart from a prudent reserve, all surplus money be sent promptly to GSO via the local Intergroup Treasurer.
- For those groups who do not hold a bank account, it is recommended that a paying in book is used to deposit funds directly into their local Intergroup account.

- Expenses do not include the use of Group funds for social purposes such as dances, bus trips and birthday cakes. Accumulation of large funds is inefficient, wasteful and a denial of *Tradition 7*.

(All the above have been taken from current *Guidelines Nos 2 & 12*)

1:5 Personal conduct and violence

Violence

Conference 2000 determined that: "Violence in any form is not acceptable at any level of the structure; our members have the right to feel secure and safe in meetings and whilst going about AA service/business."

"For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as he may express himself in our Group Conscience." (*Tradition 2* long form)

"Each Alcoholics Anonymous Group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary Purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers" (*Tradition 5* long form)

The aim of this Guidance is to provide a framework for AA groups seeking to tackle incidents of violence, including all forms of harassment, within meetings. People may be harassed in various ways, for example because of their ethnic origin, nationality, age, stature, appearance etc. It is important to note that one need not be the direct object of such behaviour to feel harassed. A person witnessing such an event may deem it necessary to take appropriate action to stop such behaviour.

What can be done?

Some groups through their Consciences have found it helpful to agree contingency plans to deal with violence, including harassment. In dealing with any incidents the response must be measured and reasonable, given all the circumstances. Members should not place themselves in danger physically, nor open to legal repercussions. If an incident cannot be defused quickly and safely, members and groups should consider involving appropriate agencies – e.g. police.

Personal conduct matters

Introduction

The final report of the General Service Conference 1979 (Committee 1, Attraction by the Individual) contained the following statement:

"The importance of the individual member in drawing the suffering alcoholic to the way of recovery was stressed. By guarding his/her own behaviour, morals, dress, ethics, tolerance, sympathy, compassion and understanding of all human beings [a member] carries the message or leaves a slur on the name of AA."

In recent decades, society has become progressively more concerned with the rights of the individual. The awareness that that concern has generated has been reflected in recent changes in the law. The Protection against Harassment Act, 1997 and the Human Rights

Act, 1998 are specific examples. Some say that we are moving towards a "litigation culture". The potential damage to AA's unity and reputation arising from the wrongful/ criminal acts of individual members and, of course, the associated publicity is of natural concern to the Fellowship.

History and background

A continuing function of the General Service Board as custodian of the Traditions is to inform and guide the Fellowship as a whole.

Every AA Group makes an open invitation to any member of the public having a desire to stop drinking to attend its meetings. In terms of AA tradition, it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the carrying of the message, whether to prospective or new or vulnerable or established members, is done honestly and decently. We also understand that our Twelve Traditions including that of Group autonomy does not place Groups or members above the law, and that when individuals act injuriously to others they are legally accountable. This will, of course, be generally understood in that our First Tradition reminds us that all members and Groups have a responsibility in respect to the common welfare and protection of the individual member.

Every AA Group needs to recognise and accept responsibility for dealing with bad behaviour and thereby protect the overall good name of AA as a respected Fellowship.

AA and society

While Alcoholics Anonymous seeks to maintain its singleness of purpose, and its simple principles, society is growing increasingly diverse and complex. Indeed, AA can sometimes seem like a refuge, set apart from the harsh realities of 21st century living.

The healthy AA Group is largely self-regulating, operating within the Twelve Traditions and the unity of all our AA principles that are founded in love, with our Steps, Traditions, Concepts and Legacies underpinning our recovery. By regular examination of Group Conscience, the healthy Group enjoys good behaviour at both individual and Group level.

About Behaviour

Bullying, harassment and offensive behaviour are negative and unacceptable forms of discrimination that are in conflict with the AA Traditions and our way of life in recovery. Any such behaviour needs to be taken seriously, and sober AA members must deal with it as it arises. Whether or not the behaviour is intended to be hurtful is irrelevant, the important point is that it is offensive. AA members, within their Groups, need to recognise the power of their behaviour in their relationships with other members of the Fellowship and with potential newcomers. Members in recovery will understand that the behaviour we choose to adopt influences others. Recognising that we can control our behaviour, we have a responsibility to set a good example.

Members have a right to expect that they will be reasonably safe at a Group meeting. It is the responsibility of the Group holding the meeting, through its members and leaders, to ensure that no member or visitor is subjected to or experiences bullying, harassment or offensive behaviour of any kind.

What can be done about unacceptable behaviour?

1 Personal action

- a. It is often sufficient for the recipient to raise the difficulty with the person creating the problem by pointing out that his/her conduct is offensive. Anyone has the right to challenge unacceptable behaviour of any other members of AA at any stage, and request that the behaviour stop.
- b. Support and help – it should be possible for the recipient to prepare for this conversation with the help of his/her sponsor or another member if she/he wishes. Should the recipient find it too difficult or embarrassing to raise the issue with the person creating the problem, it may be appropriate for the recipient to have the conversation with his/her sponsor or another member present.

2 Group action

- a. When a personal approach fails or the recipient feels that this method is inappropriate, the recipient should approach the Group Chairperson, or other trusted servant for help and advice feeling secure in the belief that any complaint of bullying or harassment will be considered as a serious matter.
- b. The alleged offender should be told of the complaint as soon as possible
- c. If the situation is sufficiently serious or complex, it may be necessary to involve members from outside the Group.

3 At Group Meetings

- a. Members should be encouraged to choose a Home Group in which true bonds of Fellowship will lessen the need to fear behaviour they might find offensive.
- b. Group Conscience meetings should be held regularly (many Groups hold them every 3 months at, say, the first meeting in March, June, September and December) plus additional conscience meetings as they become necessary.
- c. Where unacceptable behaviour (verbal abuse, discriminatory jokes, disparaging remarks etc) occurs in a Group situation, members in recovery have a responsibility to ask for the offending behaviour to stop.
- d. An explanation of the dangers of unacceptable behaviour in AA should be given at the time, or at the end of the meeting.
- e. Offensive behaviour should not be condoned. Failure to challenge and stop inappropriate behaviour gives the offender permission to repeat the offensive behaviour and encourages others to follow suit.

Suggestions at a personal level

- Treat other people with respect and dignity
- Recognise that newcomers to the Fellowship may be severely damaged 'victims'
- Don't travel alone with newcomers of the opposite sex
- As a newcomer, don't travel alone with an existing member of the opposite sex.
- Don't Twelfth Step or home visit newcomers or potential new comers alone.
- When making home visits, leave details of where you are going with a trusted friend or relative. Make sure this person knows when to expect you to return.
- Be aware of the dangers of opposite gender sponsorship: man to man and woman to woman sponsorship is strongly recommended.
- Never respond to offensive behaviour in a like manner.
- Should someone speak to you about your unacceptable behaviour, listen to his or her criticism, think about what they have said and react appropriately. You may even at a later stage wish to thank them for pointing it out to you.

Suggestions at Group level

- Your Group may wish to discuss and agree, at a Group Conscience meeting, upon a 'clear statement' to display, for example:

This Group does not tolerate:
Bullying
Harassment
Discriminatory behaviour

Personal Conduct Matters!

Bad Language often offends....
But its absence never does

CHAPTER TWO: THE INTERGROUP

1. Intergroup
2. Intergroup Officers
3. Group Service Representative
4. Intergroup Money
5. Conventions

2:1 Intergroups

The first Intergroup in Great Britain was formed in 1957, some ten years after Alcoholics Anonymous came to London, and incidentally in the same year that the General Service Board was incorporated in the British Isles. These landmarks in our AA history were the initial steps towards the formation of a sound Service structure, which has over the years evolved and grown to help us meet our ever increasing responsibilities. The Fifth and Tenth General Service Conferences reviewed the purpose and work of Intergroups and from time to time committees at other Conferences have suggested activities which should be undertaken at Intergroup level. This *Guidance* gathers together these recommendations.

Aims

The aims of an Intergroup are to aid the constituent Groups in their common purpose of carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic and, by using their combined strength and unity, to improve and maintain good relations with all organisations in the community.

Areas

When exercising their voluntary choice to cooperate within the AA service structure, Groups take into account that service activities are made more difficult where Health Service and local government boundaries do not coincide with Intergroup boundaries and that their ability to play their part in Intergroup will be affected by this and by the proximity of other Groups. Practice has shown that boundaries evolve without the overlapping of neighbouring areas. Where two or more Intergroups fall within a local authority area their liaison officers cooperate in trying to carry the message (e.g. prisons, hospitals etc.)

Meetings

Intergroup meetings should be held regularly, wherever possible six times a year. It should be remembered that these are business meetings and should therefore be conducted in a businesslike fashion having particular regard to the guidance in the *Traditions* and the *Twelve Concepts*.

One meeting in the year should be set aside for the Annual General Meeting at which the year's accounts are reviewed and approved, and upon which date the rotation of officers should come into effect. A suitable agenda prepared by Intergroup officers should be sent to all Groups in good time so that the Group can discuss the subjects to be raised and make known their views to their GSR. Observers are welcome at Intergroup meetings but may not vote and it is suggested may only express their views at the invitation of the Chairperson.

Group Service Representative

By choosing as GSR one of the Group's most qualified individuals the Group helps its own future and the future of AA as a whole. It is suggested that Groups should also elect an alternate representative who would attend meetings should the need arise. The GSR is the first vital link in the communications chain between Group, Intergroup, Region and the General Service Board, carrying the Group conscience to Intergroup and the Intergroup conscience to the Group. Groups should take care in electing their GSR's. It is suggested that the GSR should have at least two years' continuous sobriety, as a GSR may be elected

to Intergroup office. The GSR needs to be familiar with the *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* and be prepared to uphold them, as well as being conversant with the following books: *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *AA Comes of Age*, the latest edition of *The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain*, *The AA Service Manual*, and the pamphlet *The AA Group*.

2:2 Intergroup Officers

An Intergroup should appoint a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and members with other responsibilities as its officers. 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. Careful consideration should be given to staggered rotation so that in the interest of continuity all the officers do not terminate their service at the same time. In the event of a vacancy occurring among the officers before the expiry of their term of office a member may be co-opted for a limited period of time until the next Intergroup meeting. At this meeting the member co-opted, along with any others, could be recognised for formal nomination and possible election to this post. The officers can co-opt a member or members, either from GSRs or from Groups to perform a specific service such as organising a convention or convening a public meeting. The Intergroup may establish sub-committees for specific purposes.

Duties of Officers

The **Chair** has the responsibility of convening and conducting the meetings, and approving the agenda and minutes before they are published.

The **Vice Chair** has the responsibility of conducting the meeting in the absence of the Chair.

The **Secretary** has the responsibility with the Chair for preparing the agenda and minutes of meetings and for distributing these documents to the Groups well before meetings so that there is ample time to discuss the contents. The Secretary deals with all correspondence, passing for example requests for speakers to outside organisations to the Public Information Officer or a suitable member. The Secretary keeps in touch with the General Service Office making sure that it promptly has a copy of the minutes and notice of any change of officer.

The **Treasurer** has the responsibility for keeping a proper account of all Intergroup finances and ensuring that funds are available for its essential current requirements. An annual budget exercise should be carried out to ensure that appropriate prudent reserves are maintained. The Treasurer reports to Intergroup against the budget. Surplus funds should always be transferred promptly to GSO, ideally via the Region Treasurer. The accounts should be open for inspection and presented to Intergroup at each meeting. Group contributions should be clearly listed so that GSR's can confirm their group's contributions have been received. This is a fundamental part of the audit trail. Having been audited or independently checked, annual accounts should be presented by the Treasurer to Intergroup for approval at the AGM.

The Chair will carry the executive authority of Intergroup but should account for any action taken at the next meeting.

Other Responsibilities

It is suggested that Liaison Officers work together through a service committee structure.

A Prison Liaison Officer should gather and collate all information about the prison Groups in their area (including open prisons, Young Offenders Institutions etc.) and forward the information to their Regions and to GSO. He or she should also keep informed via their Region and GSO on Home Office and Conference policy with regard to special subjects, such as parole, the use of AA tapes and other AA published material, to help prison sponsors with any problems which may arise in the area.

The General Service Office and General Service Board maintain excellent contact with the Prison Department of the Home Office, and Intergroups should communicate with GSO regarding any problems which may arise.

- A Public Information Officer is responsible for ensuring that information about the AA message and programme of recovery is conveyed to outside organisations to the best possible advantage. The provision of a panel of members to comply with requests for speakers is an important part of this activity. *(See Chapter One Draft Service Manual)*
- The Health Liaison Officer is responsible for establishing links with health professionals and co-ordinating all aspects of carrying the message within the healthcare system *(See Chapter 6 Draft Service Manual)*
- An Employment Liaison Officer assumes responsibility for liaising with all sectors of commerce and industry. *(See Chapter 5 Draft Service Manual)*
- A Probation Liaison Officer/Social Services AA Liaison Officer is responsible for establishing links with the probation services in England and Wales. In Scotland, Social Services are responsible for probation services. *(See Chapter 9 Draft Service Manual)*
- *SHARE/Roundabout* Liaison Officers provide the essential contacts between members, Groups and the editorial teams. They actively encourage the contribution of articles and letters and the promotion of the magazines
- The Telephone Liaison Officer co-ordinates the working of the Telephone Service as recommended in *Chapter 10 Draft Service Manual*.

2:3 GSR

Regional Representatives and alternates should be elected by their Intergroup as carefully as Group Service Representatives. They should be chosen as a general rule from amongst serving GSRs but any member, who has the necessary qualifications, even if not at the time serving as a GSR, may be elected. Such a representative will attend all Intergroup meetings to report from the Region and to hear from the Intergroup their wishes to be expressed at the next Regional Meeting.

Qualifications

It is suggested that at least three years' continuous sobriety are necessary since it is hardly possible for a person to gain enough Intergroup and Group service in less time than that to be of real use to the Region.

- They should have a good working knowledge of the AA publications referred to above.
- They should have good knowledge of the structure of AA.
- The Regional Representative would, in the interest of continuity, serve for three years, after which he or she must retire and cannot be re-elected for at least one year.
- It is suggested that three Representatives per Intergroup be elected to the Region since this would give proper continuity.

2:4 Intergroup money

- The Intergroup Treasurer should ideally have a minimum of 2 years' continuous sobriety and serve for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 3 years.
- The Treasurer has the responsibility for keeping a proper account of all Intergroup finances and ensuring that funds are available for its essential current requirements.
- A current bank account in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Intergroup is recommended for running the Intergroups finances. All cheques should be secured by two signatures – any two from three duly authorised. Normally these would be the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. In the interest of safety blank cheques should never be signed.
- The Treasurer should produce a statement of accounts in writing including a list of all contributions, at least quarterly with copies available for all GSRs in the Intergroup and for all Groups not represented at Intergroup.
- Intergroup Treasurers, by means of workshops, discussions on sound AA financial practice, patience and tolerance, should encourage all component groups to contribute to Intergroup on a regular basis. Intergroup Treasurers should not be reluctant to approach non-contributing Groups.
- Experience shows that the Treasurer when making any payments, whenever practical, should do so by cheque. Receipts should be received for all cash payments and retained.
- It is suggested that a prudent reserve for an Intergroup is three months' running expenses.
- Intergroups should bear in mind that regularity and evenness in the flow of cash to the General Service Office, ideally via their Region, is essential for GSO to meet its day-to-day obligations and operate in an efficient and economical manner.
- An annual budget exercise should be carried out to ensure that appropriate prudent reserves are maintained. The Treasurer reports to Intergroup against the budget. Surplus funds should always be transferred promptly to GSO, ideally via the Region Treasurer.
- The accounts should be open for inspection and presented to Intergroup at each meeting. Group contributions should be clearly listed so that GSRs can confirm their group's contributions have been received. This is a fundamental part of the audit trail. Having been audited or independently checked, annual accounts should be presented by the Treasurer to Intergroup for approval at the AGM.

(All the above has been taken from current Guidelines Numbers 4 & 12)

2:5 Conventions

(Draft for review at Conference 2011)

A Convention offers the opportunity for a number of members to gather and share their experience, strength and hope.

“Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers” (Tradition 5)

Separate social events may add to the enjoyment of a Convention.

The following guidance suggests the basis for all Conventions with contains a planning checklist in Annex A.

Organisation

The decision to hold a Convention ought to be made by the group conscience of the appropriate Intergroup or Region (the sponsoring body). A committee should be elected for the purpose of planning, organising and running the event. The Convention Committee should have overall responsibility and be accountable to the sponsoring body for financial and all other matters. It should bear in mind the need for Conventions to be self-supporting.

Intergroups and Regions are advised to appoint a chairperson or convenor. At national level the Convention Committee elects its own chair or convenor from experienced members. A local General Service Board (GSB) member serves in an ex-officio capacity on the committee of each National Convention, i.e. Northern, Scottish, Southern and Welsh. (GSB suggests that Trustees attend at least two meetings as agreed with the committee.)

The normal principle of rotation should apply to all trusted servants on Convention Committees.

Children and babies: Conference recommends that accompanied children should not be excluded from Conventions. Organisers must therefore be mindful of relevant health and safety issues.

Finance

In all financial matters Tradition 7 should be adhered to: “Every A.A. Group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions,”

Where it is felt necessary to charge a registration fee, the organising committee should have the final decision. At the planning stage it is sensible to cover all projected costs through the registration fee, remembering that the “Pot” is traditionally AA money.

Funding of the Convention: The sponsoring body should provide the committee with sufficient funds to start the Convention organisation. Registration fee income should be used thereafter. If excess funds are generated, the sponsoring body may wish to consider retaining a prudent reserve to fund the next Convention.

Chair and speakers

Usually Conventions invite the chair and speakers to participate well in advance. When planning the programme, Committees may wish to consider the various types of AA meetings outlined in Chapter One above (Group Meetings) and consider shared platforms thus inviting speakers from our sister organisations Al-Anon and Alateen.

The Chair should bring Tradition 11 to the attention of the audience at all meetings by reading the AA anonymity announcement for meetings open to the public: "There may be some here who are not familiar with our tradition of personal anonymity at the public level: 'Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press radio and films.' Thus, we respectfully ask that no AA speaker -- or any AA member -- is identified by full name and that no photograph is published or broadcast in reports or our meetings. The assurance of anonymity is essential in our effort to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us. And our Tradition of anonymity reminds us that AA principles come before personalities."

Literature

Literature stalls should be attractive and well stocked with AA published literature. The sponsoring body is responsible for ordering and for payment.

It is advised the practices and procedures relating to sale or return from GSO are followed. Ideally, orders should be received at GSO at least one calendar month before the event. Final payment should be made within the same period after the event, after which the return element in the arrangement will be considered null and void. Stock returned damaged or any surplus not returned will be charged for.

When considering the sale of literature, the sponsoring body should be aware of the importance to AA finances of revenue from the sale of Conference-approved publications. If non-AA material is to be sold, separate facilities should be provided for its display: AA money should not be used to purchase this material

Audio tapes at Conventions

The sponsoring body and the organising committee should decide whether to tape the Convention; they should consider legal and financial issues and bear in mind that recording can be a difficult, expensive and time-consuming task; a high level of expertise is required. No videotaping should take place.

Advance publicity should indicate the Convention will be taped and chairs, speakers and reserves should be advised individually of the taping well in advance of the Convention. A thorough briefing of each speaker is vital to ensure that no inadvertent breach of anyone's anonymity occurs.

The sponsoring body and the organising committee have the right to edit tapes.

Health and Safety

It is strongly recommended that all applicable health and safety regulations are adhered to.

Catering arrangements

Convention organisers should elect an individual and form a sub-committee to deal with catering.

Where food or drinks are supplied, costing should be obtained and prices displayed.

Where outside caterers are used, it would be prudent to establish provisional costs. Some Conventions invite participants to bring their own lunch.

Annex A - Check list for Convention Committees

The following list is not comprehensive but it is intended to be an aid to cover all conventions from mini one day to National:

- Validate all decisions against the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of AA.
- Gain support of the sponsoring body and establish a regular system for reporting.
- Define broad principles, venue, cost and theme.
- Investigate the facilities available at the venue.
- Set target dates for task completion and try to stick to them.
- Set budget business plan and theme.
- Transport details.
- Publicity.
- Agree a detailed plan on:
 1. AA meetings and workshops
 2. Entertainment
 3. Al-Anon and Alateen participation
 4. Printing and publicity fliers, possible to include a location map
 5. Convention details to *SHARE* and/or *Roundabout*
 6. Health and safety implications, fire precautions
 7. The security of POT, literature money and books overnight
 8. Raffle tickets in accordance with the gaming laws
 9. Convention design: banners, top table arrangements
 10. Registration area
 11. Accommodation and refreshments
 12. How and when POT is to be passed.
 13. Literature stands
 14. Archives and security
 15. Raffle ticket sales and display of prices with security
 16. Information stand
 17. Technical systems: communication, light and sound systems
 18. Access and facilities for the disabled

ANNEX B

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONVENTION COMMITTEES

Convention committees are formed by Intergroups and Regions to plan and execute conventions in accordance with the recommendations of the General Service Conference. The following terms of reference may be adapted for use by all Convention Committees.

1. Convention Committees comprise delegates elected from the Regions or Intergroups that sponsor the Convention. Their objective is to prepare and provide for a Convention to promote our primary purpose within an agreed budget and according to Tradition 7.
2. These committees are accountable to the sponsoring Intergroups and Regions, which exercise their responsibility for the Convention by the provision of elected delegates for the committee and through the regular reporting back of these, at their assemblies.
3. An appropriate number of members are elected as delegates to serve for three years on the Convention Committee. The committee elects its officers from these delegates to serve for a suitable term, ensuring the principle of rotation.
4. Committee officers rotating out of service are ineligible for re-election during the next three years. Other delegates rotating out are ineligible for re-election during the next twelve months.
5. Delegates who miss two consecutive meetings without adequate explanation, or who miss three consecutive meetings, are deemed to have resigned.
6. The frequency and location of committee meetings is at the discretion of the Committee, but costs and cost-effectiveness should be borne in mind. All expenses should be approved.
7. Dates proposed for Conventions by the Committee ought to be checked for possible clashes with other significant AA events.
8. All meetings should be reported, and copies of minutes sent to the secretaries of the sponsoring bodies and to GSO.
9. All Conventions should be run in accordance with this Guideline.

Chapter Three: The Region

1. Region
2. Regional Officers
3. Conference Delegates
4. Regional money
5. Regional Forums
6. Maps of Great Britain and Continental Europe

3:1 Regions

In October 1965 an exploratory meeting was held to discuss if there was a need for a General Service Conference in the United Kingdom. A formal conclusion included this statement: "The Conference would hope to further the aims and ideals, namely Recovery, Unity and Service, and ensure the healthy growth of an expanding Fellowship by fostering closer ties and greater co-operation throughout these Isles". This *Guidance* on Regions is one further step on the road of growth, development and co-operation.

The Fifteenth General Service Conference in 1980 approved and established Regionalisation throughout Great Britain. Following further Conference recommendations in 1981, 1987, 1988 and 2004 we have seen the establishment of 16 regions in Great Britain and Continental Europe.

The growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain has been sure and steady, and this growth has always been accompanied by a service structure that has evolved to meet the need. A brief history of the growth in AA in this country can be found in the introduction to *The Structure Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain*. The General Service Conference in 1975 made a recommendation that Intergroups should consider the formation of Regions – an assembly of neighbouring Intergroups - to prevent fragmentation which could follow Group growth and the formation of more Intergroups. This has created the opportunity for the maximum amount of participation involving more and more active and experienced members, and has strengthened our lines of communication as they have grown.

Aims

- To promote communication and cooperation between neighbouring Intergroups, thus implementing our tradition of Unity and creating service boards or committees where needed
- To ensure that the Region recognise areas that are sparsely served by the Fellowship do not remain isolated but become part of that Region's responsibility
- To share Intergroup experience in the field of co-operation with outside agencies, prisons, health services, schools, social services, alcohol abuse agencies, churches, courts, Probation Service (Social Work Department, in Scotland), industry, and any other appropriate institutions and areas of society
- To increase opportunity for members to participate in our Third Legacy of Service
- To enable members with particular experience to serve a wider area

Composition

It is suggested that a Region should comprise a convenient number of Intergroups in a convenient geographical location with common internal and external interests (Committee 4, 1975). It is therefore likely that some Regions will be large territorially but not large in terms of population, while some will be relatively small territorially in densely populated areas.

Finance

The Regional budget is financed by member Intergroup contributions. The Treasurer should present an annual budget based on activities that Region has elected to fund during the coming year. These activities must include sufficient funds to pay conference delegates' expenses and previously agreed service commitments. The cost of officers attending national meetings should also be included.

Having been audited or independently checked, annual accounts should be presented to and accepted by the Regional Assembly. Intergroup contributions should be clearly listed in the accounts so that Region Representatives can confirm their Intergroups contributions have been received. This is a fundamental part of the audit trail. Any money surplus to a prudent reserve should be forwarded promptly to GSO.

Money should be kept in a bank convenient for the Treasurer and payments made by cheque signed by two of the three signatories authorised by the assembly. Telephone or Internet banking should only be used where payments and transfers still require authorisation by two signatories.

Workshops

The following suggestions have been prepared to assist those planning workshops. Finance workshops are an excellent method of emphasising that carrying the message incurs costs by all parts of the service structure.

- Workshops should be well structured with a commitment to planning.
- One format, which appears to work well, is using multiple speakers sharing on the topic, breaking into discussion groups, and reconvening for a report-back session with everyone.
- They should be publicised well in advance utilising flyers and service representatives to promote them.
- To maintain interest, they should be regular, using experienced speakers from outside the immediate Intergroup/ Region area. Consider using PI Committees to organise them.
- Workshops might be considered for part of a convention/mini convention.
- Consider publicising "discussion meeting" rather than "workshop".
- Intergroup/Region officers should lead by example, by attending workshops and by offering transport to those who might not otherwise be able to attend.
- Time permitting; Regional Assemblies should hold workshops and these should be minuted as an agenda item. Experience shows that morning workshops lead to a better attendance.
- Those attending should be welcomed and encouraged to get involved in the discussions. Make it clear that everyone has a right to be heard.
- Workshops should be fun as well as informative.
- It is suggested that reports on Region workshops should be submitted to AA. *Service News* whenever possible. A summary should be given of any workshop and circulated to all those attending.
- Service representatives should try to make reports interesting and informative and, if necessary, ask for more time to give their report.

This *Guidance* has been produced as the result of experience to date, but possibly in time modifications may become necessary. "When we get into questions of action by groups, by areas, by A.A. as a whole, we find that we must to some extent organize to carry the message or else face total chaos. And chaos is not simplicity." Bill W. (Letter 1966)

3:2 The Regional Officers

It is suggested that a Regional Assembly should comprise up to three Regional Representatives from each participating Intergroup, who should be prepared to serve for a term of three years. Provision should be made for rotation to preserve continuity. It is recommended that Regional Representatives should have at least three years' continuous sobriety and sufficient Intergroup experience.

An important factor is the availability of elected members to devote time to the work without adversely affecting their family or careers. The Regional Representatives should elect their officers from members of the Assembly. These should consist of:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

In addition, members should be elected, taking into consideration their experience or interest, to the following positions:

- Prison Liaison Officer
- Health Liaison Officer
- Public Information Liaison Officer
- Probation Liaison Officer/Social Services AA Liaison Officer (Scotland)
- Telephone Liaison Officer
- Employment Liaison Officer
- *SHARE / Roundabout* Liaison Officer
- Electronic Communication Liaison Officer.

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

The Regional Assembly may also co-opt a member of the Region, not necessarily a Regional Representative, to carry out a specific task as a non-voting member of the Assembly for the duration of the work involved (e.g. Convention Convenor, Archivist). Having served three years a Regional Representative should retire by rotation, thus providing a place for another to gain Regional experience and so enrich experience of service in the Fellowship. He or she could then be eligible for re-election after a minimum period of one year. When the Regional Representatives of an Intergroup are depleted due to the fact that one of their number has been elected to serve as an officer, then another suitable member may be elected by the Intergroup concerned to take their place.

Only Regional Representatives and Officers may vote. Observers and visitors are welcome, but may not participate unless invited by the Chair to do so. It is suggested that the Assembly should meet 4 times annually. The meeting should be called in a proper manner with a settled agenda, and minutes should be circulated after the meeting with copies to interested persons such as GSO, the Board and neighbouring Regions for information as an additional means of sharing experience.

It is suggested that when time permits and business is completed a sharing session on some specific subject be held in which observers may participate, the object being to forward our primary purpose and improve services in the Region.

Service structure

The formation of committees along the lines proposed by the Board: Finance and General Purposes / Internal Communications / External Communications should be encouraged in the Region wherever appropriate, but there should be named liaison or contact officers for specific areas of service at all levels.

3:3 Conference Delegates

Qualifications

Delegates to the Conference should have a reasonable period of sobriety and at least five years as active members of the Fellowship. The final decision about the suitability of any delegate rests with the Region group conscience.

Rotation of Delegates

Delegates are elected by Regions to serve a maximum period of three consecutive years. If a delegate is unable to attend any Conference during the period of appointment, the place may be taken by an eligible alternate delegate appointed for that purpose. The eligibility of an alternate delegate to attend a Conference subsequently as a full delegate will not be affected by previous attendance as a substitute. Any attendance by an alternate delegate will count as part of the three year term of the delegate whose place is taken, and may not have the effect of extending the term of the delegate originally elected.

When a delegate has completed the three year term, he or she may not at any future time be elected for a further term as a delegate or appointed as an alternate delegate for the electing Region or for any other Region. He or she may however attend Conference as a member of the General Service Board, if so elected.

How Delegates should prepare themselves

Each delegate shall conscientiously prepare for the responsibility by:

- Becoming thoroughly familiar with the publications referred to in the introduction
- Studying the agenda for the Conference in the light of his or her understanding of AA principles, and making sure that he or she thoroughly understands what the agenda is about.
- Discussing the agenda in the Group, Intergroup, Region and among individual AA friends so that he or she comes to the Conference prepared to represent the views of the Fellowship as a whole as well as his or her own personal views on the matters that will be discussed.
- Getting to know how the Conference works and who the other members are, for example by discussing these matters with another delegate who is familiar with Conference arrangements.
- Going to the Conference with a firm conviction that he or she will be there for the purpose of more effectively carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic and helping the sober alcoholic retain sobriety.

Delegates on their return are expected to report the conclusions of the Conference to the Region which elected them. They should also make oral reports on the main conclusions of the Conference to as many of the Groups and Intergroups in their area as they can conveniently reach. Delegates should ensure that written reports are delivered to all Groups and Intergroups in their area which cannot be readily reached at an early date after the Conference. Delegates must remain active in pursuing the aims of the Conferences they have attended during the periods between Conferences.

It would indeed be premature to imagine that, having served in all or most of the capacities listed in this *Guidance*, the end of the AA road has been reached. For the road of AA Service is one that has no end. One day at a time, the future will unfold in a way that today we cannot

imagine. Let us therefore be ready at all times, as we have been each day during our period of sobriety, to remain a trusted servant, in whatever capacity is asked of us.

In conclusion, Regions, Intergroups and Groups should always bear in mind the value of keeping the experienced members in view for further service or as a backup in consultation on service matters, ever being mindful of the principle of rotation. At both Intergroup and Regional level, use should be made of service committees which should contain a blend of members of varying degrees of experience and newcomers to service, whilst being careful not to deny the newcomer service opportunities.

The experienced member should be given the opportunity to talk at workshops designed to introduce the newcomer to service, encouraged to share from the top table and to write to *SHARE* and *Roundabout* magazines about the benefit of service, and for a period work in tandem with their successor. Many such members would be delighted to assist in service so the direct approach is often the best. Ask them!

3:4 Region money

For the important position of trust as a Regional Treasurer it is recommended that candidates have had previous experience of a Treasurer's role at Group and Intergroup level.

- The Regional budget is financed by member Intergroup contributions.
- It is recommended that Region Treasurers should serve a maximum of three years and be confirmed annually.
- An annual budget should be prepared and presented so that Intergroups may have awareness of the contribution they are suggested to make to their respective Regions.
- To facilitate the running of Region finances, a current bank account in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous and the name of the Region is recommended (see Chapter 5.7 of this Handbook).
- The accounts should be open to inspection and be audited or independently checked once a year. Annual accounts should be presented to and accepted by the Regional Assembly. Intergroup contributions should be clearly listed in the accounts so that Regional Representatives can confirm their Intergroups contributions have been received. This is a fundamental part of the audit trail.
- The Region Treasurer should also seriously consider, for personal protection as well as the safeguarding of AA money, the prudence of not sending or issuing blank signed cheques.
- An important item in any Region accounts is the expense incurred in sending Delegates to Conference. This should reach GSO by 31 December for the forthcoming year. Another item of significance is the cost of sending a variety of Region trusted servants to national meetings in York concerned with a range of service activities.
- At the Thirty Third General Service Conference, it was agreed that the recommended system for funding the national telephone number would be for Groups to continue to fund Intergroups, Intergroups to fund Regions, and for Regions to take the responsibility for payment of the telephone accounts.
- Regions should bear in mind that regularity and evenness in the flow of cash to GSO is essential for it to meet its day-to-day obligations, and operate in an efficient and economical manner.

(All the above includes sections from current Guidelines Nos 5 & 12)

3:5 Regional Forums

“Regional Forums assist in furthering AA’s Legacy of Service.”

Regional Forums originated in 1975, and they are basically sharing sessions designed to improve communication and to encourage direct communication and personal contact between members in service including current Board members and those who may wish to become involved in service. All services in AA have one purpose and that is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

A Forum in no way affects the role of the annual General Service Conference which remains the decision making body within AA. Forums provide a unique opportunity to share valuable experience, ask questions and to encourage members to participate in service work within the Fellowship. It may also be of assistance to a Region to discuss any problems concerning the development of services, internal and external communications, Conference, finance, archives and other matters relating to sponsoring into service.

Provision is made to hold five forums per year and this means that it would be possible for a Region to hold a Regional Forum every three years. The location and agenda for a Regional Forum are decided by the Region and it is suggested that the agenda is flexible enough to be adjusted to any needs that may arise during the meetings/workshops. It is suggested that the Regional Board member may be in a position to help and to offer guidance.

Requests to hold a Forum should be forwarded to GSO for consideration by the General Service Board well in advance of the planned date in order to avoid clashing of dates with other planned events. It is recommended that a number of suitable dates be submitted for consideration by the Board to give the Board time to consider each request and to advise the availability of Board members who may be invited to attend. A maximum of two Board trustees should be invited to attend with consideration being given to the topics to be covered at the Forum.

There is not normally a registration fee for a Regional Forums although some thought should be given to a budget covering any expected expenditure. This is best determined by the Region concerned. The General Service Board will cover all expenses in relation to the attendance of Board members and Staff. The arrangements regarding the venue, hotel accommodation and programme for the Forum are the responsibility of the Region or organising committee.

The most common format for a forum is workshops (2 or 3) to discuss/share on particular matters/topics which are relevant within the Region. Forums are intended to be one day events but in special circumstances Forums have been held over a two day period at the request of a Region. It is recommended that these should be agreed well in advance in consultation with the trustees of the General Service Board. It is suggested that the most appropriate times to hold a Forum would be around May, June or November. The planning of Forums and dates is essential to avoid disappointments in a very busy calendar of scheduled events throughout the AA year.

Suggested Format for a Forum (one day): Forum co-ordinator or committee to liaise with the Regional trustee regarding the format, venue, programme and approximately how many members are expected to attend and to outline the most relevant topics for discussion at each workshop and to agree the proposed timetable for the Forum.

Opening session to last approximately one hour (10 minutes for each of the guest speakers) for introductions and opening remarks. The body splits up into two-three workshops (allocating members to workshops) which could be colour coded for easy identification. Each workshop to have a Chairperson/Secretary and experience suggests that it is best that the speakers rotate and address each workshop in turn, answering questions for one hour and

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then move on to the next workshop. In this way the skills and service experience of the Board members and GSO staff can be utilised and everyone would have had the opportunity to share and/or to ask questions. The Chairperson and secretary prepare a summary report for their workshop and present a report to the Body of the Forum. Time permitting further talks could be given and/or further discussion of the selected topics.

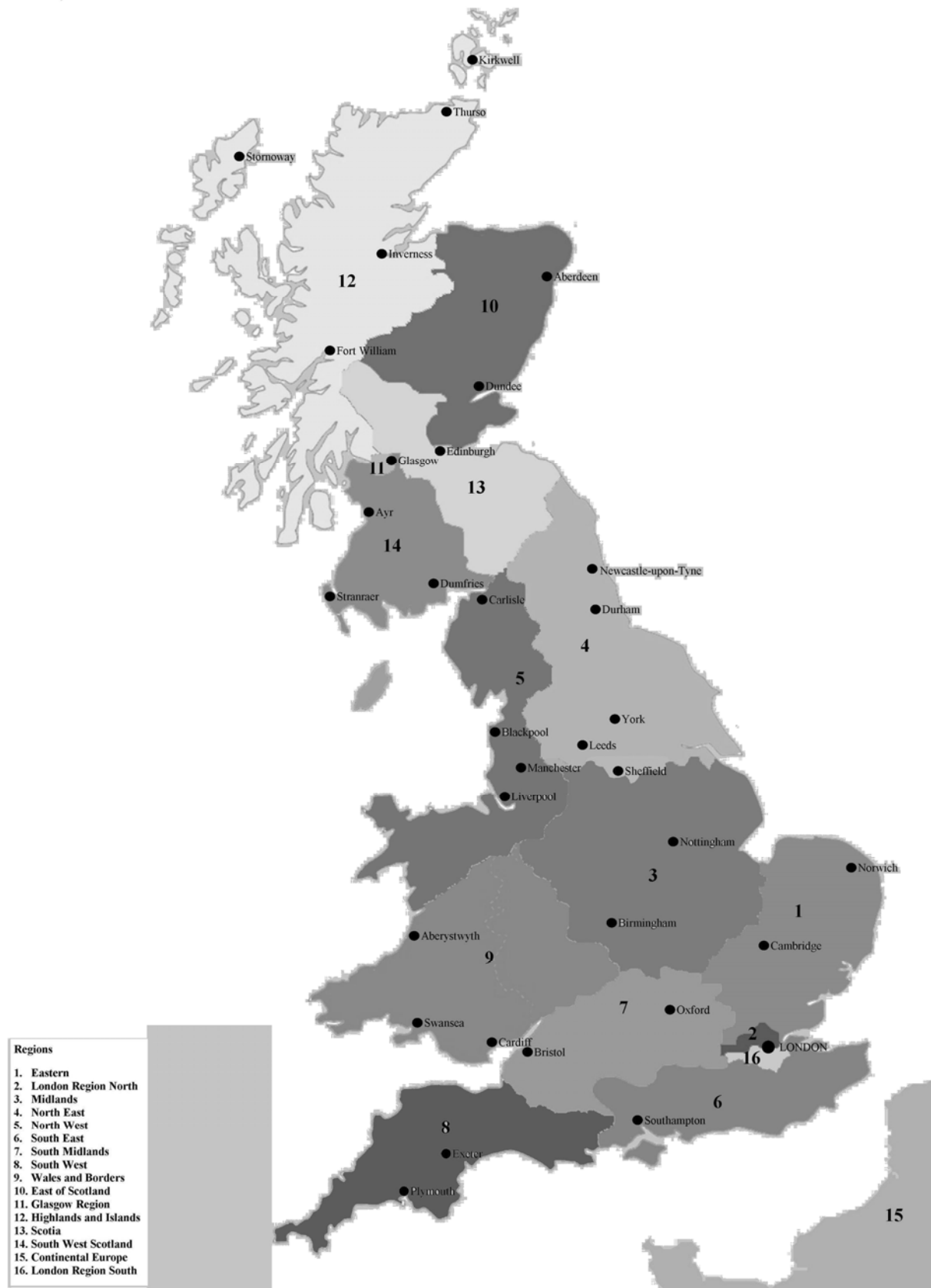
A final report should be prepared for circulation to Intergroups and one copy sent to the General Service Office. It is not necessary to report all discussions - only the subject and the "sense of the workshop" need be reported.

Suggested Topics to cover all service disciplines and principles

1. AA Service News
2. Concepts
3. Electronic Communications
4. Employment
5. Health
6. Prisons
7. Public Information
8. Telephone Communications
9. Telephone Service
10. Traditions
11. Warranties
12. Young People.

In the past workshops have been held to discuss particular subjects e.g. Traditions, Concepts, finance and archives and in some instances have been incorrectly described as Regional Forums. It is important to identify the major difference between a forum and a workshop and it may be useful to describe a forum as a series of structured workshops to discuss mutually agreed service topics to meet the needs of members in the groups, Intergroups and/or region.

3:6 Map of Great Britain and Continental Europe



CHAPTER FOUR: THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

1. General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain
2. Conference Steering Committee
3. The Conference Charter – Great Britain
4. Conference Report

Parts 4:1 and 4:2 being reviewed by Conference 2011 (previously Section 10 of AA Service Handbook GB)

4:1 General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain

The exploratory Conference held in Manchester in October 1965 concluded that the time had come when the responsibility for safeguarding the continuance and growth of AA within the Twelve Traditions should be spread more broadly. It was therefore agreed that a General Service Conference, representative of AA throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland, should be set up.

This brought together the General Service Board and the Intergroups and Groups throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and provided a means of sharing experience and ideas. In this way the Conference hoped to further the Three Legacies, namely Recovery, Unity and Service, and ensure the healthy growth of an expanding Fellowship by creating closer ties and greater co-operation throughout these Isles.

Tradition Two states that the only authority in AA is that which expresses itself through the Group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants who do not govern. This Tradition is the basic authority for all AA services, whether for Groups, Intergroups, Regions or for the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Conference therefore begins with the Group conscience. It also leads back to the Group, since the Group has final responsibility not just for initiating, but for implementing the decisions agreed upon by Conference. The General Service Conference is the practical means by which the Group conscience in Britain can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole. The existence of Conference is moreover a guarantee that the Fellowship will be able to function under all conditions. It is, in effect, the successor to the founders of AA, ensuring the continuity of the work within the framework of the Twelve Traditions.

As its name implies, the Conference is primarily a service body, not a government for AA in Great Britain. Its decisions therefore relate to the services provided by AA, particularly those administered from the centre, and they are addressed in the first place to the General Service Board as the body responsible for any action that may be required as a result of resolutions approved by Conference. A simple majority vote by Conference is a recommendation to the Board to take any necessary action; a proposal which is carried by a two-thirds majority of those voting at Conference is binding on the Board, provided that in each case the Board is legally competent to act. In this sense only, Conference acts as the legislative body of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain. For the rest, Conference can only make suggestions to the Fellowship. Any suggestion by Conference is an expression of the national Group conscience and must therefore carry considerable weight. Conference has itself adopted the following procedures (points 1-8 below) for the conduct of its affairs.

The Fifteenth Conference in 1980 approved the establishment of 14 Regions, 9 in England and Wales and 5 in Scotland (Ireland left the General Service Conference in 1980). The

Twenty Third Conference in 1988 approved the establishment of a fifteenth Region – AA Europe: English Speaking – which Conference 1995 agreed would be renamed Continental European Region. At Conference 2004 a second London Region was approved, bringing the number of Regions up to 16.

1. Conference elements

There are three essential parts to a General Service Conference:

- Firstly, there is a comprehensive report on the previous year's activities dealing particularly with the major policy decisions that were taken by the previous Conference. The principle of accountability to the Fellowship by its servants is of great importance: therefore the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) allocates time for the careful consideration of reports by the General Service Board.
- Secondly, part of each Conference is spent in the consideration of a major subject (or subjects) of importance affecting the Fellowship in the widest possible way. Any subject that is chosen for review should not be looked at in an abstract way, but as a matter of vital importance affecting our primary purpose to stay sober ourselves and carry the message of sobriety to the still-suffering alcoholic.
- Thirdly, Conference draws together in its Final Report the decisions it has reached in the form of clear directions to the servants of the Fellowship so that they may be quite sure about the action they have to take over the coming year. Conference must give accurate guidance to those who will carry out its wishes and then check whether its proposals are being put into effect.

2. Location of the Conference

The Conference shall continue to be held in York.

3. Composition of Conference

- a. Each Region shall be represented by six delegates, regardless of the number of Intergroups in the Region.
- b. It shall be for Regions to select their own delegates to the Conference, bearing in mind such considerations as the need to ensure continuity of representation from year to year and the desirability of ensuring that one of the officers of the Region is given the opportunity to attend, if possible.
- c. Members of the General Service Board shall be counted as full members of the Conference.
- d. The *SHARE* and *Roundabout* Committees shall each be represented by one of their members.

4. Election of Conference Chair

- a. Each Annual Conference shall elect from among its third-year delegate members, a Chair for the following year's Conference. Also eligible for election will be those delegates who came to Conference as alternates and are attending their third Conference. This procedure keeps the spirit of rotation. The Conference Chair shall be closely involved in drawing up the agenda from the beginning.
- b. Nominations for the Chair of the following year's Conference shall be put forward at the Friday evening session of each Conference, and the list of nominations then

closed. A period should be set aside during the opening of Conference (Friday) for nominees to give a summary of their experience in AA service. The election of next year's Chair shall be held during the Sunday morning (or final) session of the Conference.

5. Delegates

a. Qualifications

Quality of sobriety and service record should be the guiding principles when electing delegates. It is recommended that delegates have a minimum of five years continuous sobriety, and that before electing a delegate, a Region satisfy itself that the member has demonstrated a commitment through service to the Fellowship. Potential delegates should be made aware, before election, of the commitment this post entails. In order to be elected as a delegate, a member need not be a serving member of their Region at the time of their election, but an elected delegate becomes a full member of Region. These recommendations apply equally to Conference delegates and alternates.

b. Rotation

1. Delegates shall be elected by Regions to serve for a maximum period of three consecutive years. If a delegate is unable to attend any Conference during the period of appointment, the place may be taken for that Conference by an eligible alternate delegate. A delegate may serve as an alternate once only, but the eligibility of an alternate delegate to attend later Conferences as a full delegate will not be affected by previous attendance as an alternate.
2. Any attendance by an alternate delegate will count as part of the three-year term of the delegate whose place is taken and may not have the effect of extending the term of the delegate originally elected.
3. When a delegate has completed the three-year term, he or she may not at any future time be elected for a further term as a delegate or appointed as an alternate delegate, either for the Region which elected him or her or for any other Region. He or she may however attend Conference as a member of the General Service Board, if so elected.

c. Preparation

Each delegate shall prepare for these responsibilities by:

- 1) becoming thoroughly familiar with such basic AA literature as the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *AA Comes of Age*, *The AA Service Manual (US)* and *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, the *Structure Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain* (being reviewed by Conference 2011) and the *Service Manual of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain* (due for review by Conference 2012), if necessary by reading them again;
- 2) studying the proposed agenda for the Conference in the light of his or her understanding of AA principles, and making sure that he or she thoroughly understands what the agenda is about;
- 3) discussing the agenda in the Group, Intergroup, Region and among individual AA friends in order to come to the Conference prepared to represent the views of the Fellowship as a whole as well as his or her own personal views on the matters that will be discussed;
- 4) getting to know how the Conference works by discussing these matters with another delegate who is familiar with Conference arrangements;
- 5) going to the Conference with a clear understanding that he or she will be there for the primary purpose of making it easier to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, and to help the sober alcoholic maintain sobriety.

c. Reporting Back

- 1) Delegates shall, on their return, report the conclusions of the Conference to the Region which elected them.

- 2) Delegates shall also make available reports on the main conclusions of the Conference to the Intergroups and Groups in their area.
- 3) Delegates shall remain active in pursuing the aims of the Conferences they have attended during the periods between Conferences.

6. Observers from abroad

A warm invitation shall be extended to all countries in which AA is established to send observers from their respective Fellowships to attend the Conference at their expense; and invitations to this effect shall be addressed, as the case may be, to the Chair or Manager of each national service organisation by the General Secretary in York. (These invitations should be sent out as soon as the dates for the Conference are decided.)

7. Conference finances

The expenses arising from Conference shall be charged to the General Service Board other than hotel and travelling expenses of delegates which Regions will pay.

8. Implementation of recommendations

- a. The General Service Board shall be responsible for taking any action that may be required arising from the resolutions adopted by the Conference, and a report on such action shall be presented to the General Service Conference the following year.
- b. The Fellowship shall be informed of action that may have been taken by means of publication in *AA Service News*.
- c. The CSC should monitor progress of Conference recommendations rather than delegate responsibility to General Service Board (General Service Conference 1997, Committee 5, Question 4).

4:2 Conference Steering Committee

Conference 2001 adopted the recommendation that the Fellowship be served by a revised Conference Steering Committee (CSC) comprising as follows:

Structure

- a. The annually elected Conference Chairperson, acting as Chair.
- b. All the annually elected Committee Chairs (6)
- c. Two Board Members for guidance, support and continuity
- d. General Secretary (non-voting)
- e. Conference co-ordinator (non-voting)

The CSC will continue to rely on the General Service Board, the General Service Office, the General Secretary and Conference Co-ordinator for support, advice and assistance with the development of the Conference programme. This ensures continuity and is necessary for the success of the Conference Steering Committee's remit.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference are reviewed annually by the CSC, being mindful always to observe our Traditions, Concepts and Warranties. They are distributed to the Fellowship with *AA Service News* and published on the AA GB website.

Topics / Questions (referred to as items below) for Conference

All items received by 31 August will be reviewed fully by the CSC. In assessing their suitability for Conference, the Committee will be guided by the criteria set out in the Conference elements above, - "a major subject or subjects of topical importance affecting the Fellowship in the widest possible way..." together with criteria established through Conference recommendations.

In making a decision on an item, the CSC will place it in one of the categories laid out in the annually revised Terms of Reference.

Any items generated during their discussions and considered as suitable for Conference, if not already submitted, may be submitted by the Committee members. The Committee will do its best to obtain relevant background information to the prospective item, whenever possible, to ensure the spirit of it is understood. The Committee will, before non-acceptance of any item under the 'three year rule' that had a Conference recommendation for Board action, check through its Board members that action was taken or is planned. The Committee will submit comprehensive reasons for the non-acceptance of any Conference item to the sender. Receipt of all Conference items will be acknowledged by the General Service Office.

- All items for each year's Conference should be sent to the General Service Office as soon as possible and no later than the 31 August to allow the CSC sufficient time to consider the submissions and to respond accordingly.
- All items to be addressed to Conference Co-ordinator at GSO with the sender's name and address on the item itself.
- If acknowledgement hasn't been received within 14 days, phone or write to Conference Co-ordinator at GSO.
- All items are passed to the CSC with no information about who sent them in.

Final Draft prepared for General Service Conference 2011 – 10.12.2010

- Items from an individual member or Group/Intergroup/Region are treated the same.
- All items received by 31 August from individuals, Groups, Intergroups or Regions are dealt with according to the current Terms of Reference. Special consideration will be given by the Committee to any matters of major importance that have remained unresolved from previous Conferences or have been referred for further deliberation by a Conference.

Items which are accepted together with support material and background information will be distributed by the end of December to:

- Conference Delegates
- Regional Chairs and Secretaries
- Intergroup Secretaries
- Trustees

The accepted topics/questions will be published in *AA Service News* and on the AA GB website.

The Conference Programme is part of the remit of the CSC and will be reviewed annually. Any further resolutions from individuals, Groups, Intergroups or Regions must be submitted to the Board at least two months before the Conference for possible inclusion in the final agenda.

4:3 The Conference Charter - Great Britain

Adopted by the General Service Conference, Great Britain, 1995

Article 1. Purpose

The General Service Conference (Great Britain) of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of the services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of AA in Great Britain. The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Article 2. Composition

The Conference (Great Britain) shall be composed of six delegates from each Region, the Trustees / directors of the General Service Board ex officio and one delegate each from the committees of *SHARE* and *Roundabout*. Conference may invite from time to time non-voting foreign observers.

Article 3. Conference relation to AA

The Conference will act for AA in Great Britain in the perpetuation and guidance of its services and it will also be the vehicle by which AA in Great Britain can express its views on all matters of vital AA policy and all hazardous deviations from AA Tradition. Delegates should be free to vote as their conscience dictates; they should also be free to decide what questions should be taken to Group or Intergroup level, whether for information, discussion, or their own direct instruction. But no change in Article 12 of the Charter or in the Twelve Traditions of AA or the Twelve Steps of AA may be made with less than the written consent of three quarters of all registered AA Groups worldwide.

Article 4. Conference relation to the General Service Board and its corporate services

Since 1966 Conference has been for all practical purposes the voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain. A quorum of Conference shall consist of two thirds of all the Conference members registered. Conference decisions will be addressed by the General Service Board as the body responsible for any action that may be required as a result of resolutions approved by Conference.

To give effect to this purpose, and as a matter of tradition, it will be understood that a simple majority vote by Conference constitutes a recommendation to the General Service Board to take any necessary action; and that a two-thirds vote of the Conference shall be considered binding upon the General Service Board (provided that in each case the total vote cast constitutes at least a Conference quorum) except where this shall conflict with the General Service Board's legal obligations as a charitable company; and no such vote ought to impair the legal rights of the General Service Board and the service entities to conduct routine business and make ordinary contracts.

It will be further understood, regardless of the legal prerogative of the General Service Board, as a matter of tradition, that a three-quarters vote of all Conference members may bring about a reorganisation of the General Service Board and the directors and staff members of its service entities if or when such reorganisation is deemed essential. Under such a proceeding the Conference may request resignations, may nominate new trustees, and may make all other necessary arrangements regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board.

Article 5. Regional Assemblies, composition of Assemblies, designated as Regional Assemblies, consist of the elected representatives from a workable number of Intergroups in a convenient geographical location and with common internal and external interests.

Consequently some regions may be large territorially but relatively small in terms of AA population and vice versa. It is suggested that a Regional Assembly should comprise up to three regional representatives from each of its constituent Intergroups, together with its elected officers and the Trustee. The aforementioned are the sole holders of voting rights. Regional Assemblies may co-opt a member, or members, of the Fellowship to carry out specific tasks.

Article 6. Regional Assemblies, purpose of Regionalisation throughout Great Britain was established in 1980 following the approval of the Fifteenth General Service Conference.

Regional Assemblies are a link in the chain of communication between Groups, Intergroups, Conference and the General Service Board. Their primary function is to help their member Intergroups by offering co-operative co-ordination of service activity in Great Britain. Each Regional Assembly may elect six delegates to the General Service Conference of Great Britain irrespective of the number of its member Intergroups.

Article 7. Regional Assemblies, methods of electing Officers and Conference Delegates
Whenever practicable, Regional officers and Conference delegates are elected by written ballot from the current membership of the Assembly.

Variants of, or approximations to, the Third Legacy procedure, as provided in "The AA Service Manual", have been employed from time to time for such elections.

Article 8. Regional Assemblies, terms of office for officers and Conference delegates unless otherwise directed by Conference, tenure of office shall be for a three year period.

Article 9. The General Service Conference meetings.

The Conference will meet yearly in the City of York, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

Article 10. The General Service Board: Composition, jurisdiction, responsibilities.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital and is a registered charity composed of alcoholic and non-alcoholic trustees who appoint their own successors, subject to approval by Conference, from nominees presented by the Regional Assemblies. According to its Memorandum and Articles of Association the number of members with which the company proposes to be registered is unlimited. In practice, the number of alcoholic members is determined on the basis of one per Region and the number of non-alcoholic members by the requirements of the Fellowship at a particular time. The General Service Board is the chief service arm of Conference and is essentially custodial in character.

Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance or AA tradition liable to seriously affect AA as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the AA service entities in Great Britain and may name suitable committees and elect members to its subsidiary service entities in pursuance of this purpose. The General Service Board is primarily responsible for the financial and policy integrity of its subsidiary services and for such other service entities as the Conference may decide to form.

Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever to take any action liable to greatly affect AA as a whole, without first consulting the Conference. It is nevertheless understood that the Board shall at all times reserve the right to decide which of its actions or decisions may require the approval of the Conference.

Article 11.

The General Service Conference, its general procedures.

The Conference will receive an annual report from the General Service Board on policy and finance including the accounts for the previous financial year. The Conference will advise on all matters affecting AA as a whole, engage in discussion and debate and make recommendations for the advice or direction of the General Service Board and its related services.

Article 12. General Warranties of the Conference.

In all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself shall always remain democratic in thought and action

4:4 Conference report

This Section is not Conference Approved and the following text is the current 'best practice' described by GSO/GSB for Conference to consider at Conference 2011 - Literature Committee

This report is a record of the current year's Conference and consists of:

- A record of delegates attending, which includes Conference Chair, members of the General Service Board, General Service Office staff, representatives from *SHARE* and *Roundabout* and the Regional Delegates who make up the six Committees
- Chairperson's opening and closing remarks
- Trustee presentations of Service Board Reports
- National Conventions Update
- Report of the Open Forum
- Conference Steering Committee Report
- Committee responses to Conference Topics/Questions, and the results of voting on the outcome of these and proposals brought to Conference
- Election of next year's chair
- Names of next year's Committee Secretaries and Chairs
- Ratification of Board Members-Elect

At the conclusion of the committee proceedings the Committee Chairs submit responses to the topics/questions submitted to them by the Fellowship to the Conference Convener and the General Service Office Staff present. From the responses, and to enable the delegates to consider them, a preliminary report is compiled and given to delegates at the close of the Saturday evening plenary session.

The six committees' recommendations are presented to Conference during the final plenary session; they are discussed, voted on and a final decision reached. The outcome forms part of the General Service Conference Report which is distributed to the delegates, Groups, Intergroups and Regions. The reports are also posted on the AA Website. The previous ten years reports may also be found in the Document File on the website.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD

1. The General Service Board
2. GSB Members
3. Non-alcoholic Board Members
4. Sub-Committees
5. The Development Fund
6. Governance
7. Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain

5:1 The General Service Board

The General Service Board, whose full title is “The General Service Board of Alcoholics, Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited” consists of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic members. The Board is responsible to the General Service Conference for carrying into effect the decisions taken by the Conference on service matters and is required to give an account of its stewardship to the Conference annually.

The General Service Board is the custodian of the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain. As such, it has a responsibility to ensure that the Traditions are preserved intact and that the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain acts in accordance with the Traditions.

Specific services carried out by the General Service Board and for which it is responsible to Conference include:

1. The administration and operation of the General Service Office in York, which serves Great Britain and English-speaking AA Groups throughout Europe (Continental European Region) and the Northern and Southern Service Offices.
2. The printing and publishing of AA books and pamphlets (AA published and Conference approved), where applicable under copyright and licence agreements with AA World Services Inc.
3. The distribution of books and pamphlets in Great Britain, and English-speaking AA Groups throughout Europe (Continental European Region).
4. Appointment of a Trustee to National Convention Committees in order to ensure that the Convention programme is in conformity with the spirit and the Traditions of AA and to oversee all financial accounting. (All surpluses from National Conventions are to be paid over to the General Service Office.)
5. On their appointment to the General Service Board, alcoholic members simultaneously become full members of the Regional Assemblies which nominated them and, as trustees of the General Service Board, are expected to attend such Assemblies.
6. Co-operation and guidance in Conference arrangements and Agenda.
7. Sharing and liaison with AA in the United States and in other countries throughout the world; collaboration, representation and active participation in World Service Meetings; the production and publication of *SHARE* and of *Roundabout* and the production and publication of ‘*AA Service News*’.
8. Liaison with outside agencies in the field of alcoholism at national level and the provision of speakers. There are many such agencies, and those with which we currently co-operate most intimately include the Medical Council on Alcoholism, the Society of Occupational Medicine and Alcohol Concern, as well as prisons and hospitals. Maintaining relations with the news media – the press, the television and radio authorities; and providing speakers for these and other appropriate bodies.

The General Service Board operates through two standing committees:

- 1) Finance
- 2) Nominations

The Trustees with specifically designated service areas serve on the appropriate committees and sub-committees. Their reports are presented to full Board meeting for consideration.

The Board of trustees shall have all the powers provided for in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and as are vested in a Board of Trustees (Directors) under the laws of England and Wales. All powers of the Company shall be exercisable by the Company in general meeting. The Board of trustees may by general resolution delegate to committees or to officers of the General Service Board such powers as they deem appropriate in the service of the purposes to which the General Service Board is dedicated.

1) Finance Committee

This Section is not Conference Approved and the following text is the current 'best practice' described by GSO/GSB for Conference to consider at Conference 2011 - Literature Committee

At Conference 1995 a question tabled at Committee 1, was:

In the light of the many AA activities that have cost implications which have been added on an ad-hoc basis over the years, would Conference recommend that a thorough review of expenditure be undertaken at all levels and clearly detailed so that the membership can understand the need for further increases in contributions.

In response, the Committee considered that a one off review would not be the most effective way of achieving the intentions behind the question.

The Finance Committee must be charged with and held accountable for the continuous review of expenditure, bearing in mind the need to keep Conference aware of the cost implications of existing projects and future recommendations for development.

Structure of the Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is structured with the above Conference recommendations in mind so as to efficiently and economically carry out its tasks.

The Finance Committee will be chaired by the Treasurer of the Board. The General Service Board will select five Trustees, including one non-alcoholic Trustee. The General Secretary and the Financial Controller are permanent members of the Finance Committee.

Purpose and Aims

The Finance Committee has, as it's main aim, to ensure that financial budgets and expenditures (outside those relating directly to the operation of the General Service Office) within the framework of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Ltd are planned and managed in the most efficient manner.

Procedures

1. Recommendations from Conference, the General Service Board, and from the General Service Office for major expenditure by the Fellowship will be evaluated within the Finance Committee.

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2. Recommendations which can be treated as a project, i.e. a unique task, designed to achieve a specific result in a stated time and requiring a variety of resources, will be formulated within the Sub Committees and brought to the Finance Committee.
3. Projects will be submitted to the Finance Committee with completed budget and risk assessment forms, and where possible, be given some form of initial priority ranking both within the originating committee and Finance Committee.
4. All sub committees of the General Service Board will submit annual budget forms along with any special projects and risk assessments forms the committees may be involved in during the financial year.
5. The Treasurer will submit to the General Service Board at their September meeting a detailed breakdown of sub committee expenditure and projects for the coming financial year that have been approved and recommended by the Finance Committee.
6. The agreed proposals and associated costs will be presented to our auditors and to the sixteen Regional Treasurers at their Annual Treasurer's Meeting held in December.
7. The Annual Treasurers Meeting is an integral part of the Fellowship's financial structure and the vehicle for reporting back to the Fellowship those projects recommended by the Finance Committee to the General Service Board for implementation. With the completion of the above procedures a full circle has been connected which utilises the Finance Committee and the Regional Treasurers, to ensure that, ultimately via the General Service Conference, the Fellowship's consensus can be sought regarding the financial recommendations being made on its behalf.
8. The Finance Committee will meet in July and February, and prior to the General Service Conference. The agenda will be drawn up by the Treasurer in consultation with the General Secretary and the Financial Controller. It will annually review the following.
 - Pre-audit and audit dates for the Fellowship's accounts.
 - Donations to be made from the Development Fund
 - Conference delegate fees
 - Mileage rate paid to Board Trustees
 - Meetings with our Investment Bankers and their quarterly updates
 - Gratitude Week
 - Cost of publications

The Finance Committee in common with all other groups of Trusted Servants depend upon the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Concepts for World Service and the charter of the General Service Conference, to guide its policies.

2) Nominations Committee

The following items outline the basic criteria necessary for the effective running of this Committee.

Committee Aims

Following a review and identification of the Boards needs, the Committee's role is to support (GSB) of Alcoholics Anonymous. Using an interview/selection process, designed to ensure that the best person for the job is selected, taking account of candidate experience and matching with current GSB skill needs.

- Meeting to be chaired by a Trustee
- Meet up to five times annually
- All meetings to take place in York
- Members of the Executive and the GSB can attend the Nominations Committee as non voting members following invitation from the chair.
- Minutes of meetings to be made available to the GSB for distribution to all GSB members, as soon as possible after each meeting
- Vacancies should be identified by each committee chair/GSO and suitable candidates sought in line with GSB Strategy and Management policy.
- Membership is determined by the relevant GSB service, prior to joining the Nominations Committee.
- An annual budget to be prepared for GSB approval to reflect the expenses of those attending York for nominations interviews
- Projects to be detailed, including risk assessments and presented to the GSB for approval

Committee Composition

The Committee will comprise of the General Secretary, a minimum of four (quorum) and a maximum of eight. It is considered that a good balance of trustees would include at least one non alcoholic trustee.

5:2 GSB Members

Qualifications for alcoholic Trustees

a) Background and experience

Many Trustees have brought extensive business or professional experience to the Board, which has been of the greatest value in shaping the structure of the affairs of the General Service Board itself, of Conference and of the administration of the General Services of AA. In particular, it is difficult to imagine how Conference could have been brought into being and developed so quickly into its present strength and sense of high responsibility without such members. Equally, the assumption by the Board of responsibility for the services followed by the rapid and progressive broadening of their range of activities, their sphere of influence outside the Fellowship and the preparation and establishment of a structure designed not only for the present but also for future growth, would not have been feasible without their trained and experienced services. It is therefore important if we are to provide for a future of growing service to a growing Fellowship that we look for the following qualities in our Trustees.

b) Leadership

In AA this includes qualities of enabling a member to help his or her Group or city or area to grow with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good feeling.

c) Grasp of AA structure

Some members of our Fellowship have a special aptitude for the AA structure and are thoroughly familiar with all of its elements, from Group to General Service Board and Conference. They are usually good 'students' of the movement, familiar with its history and the trends that affect its future. A Trustee with these attributes can bring useful perspective to Board discussions.

In addition, there are basic considerations which experience has shown to be important to all Trustees.

One is maturity along with ten years continuous sobriety and previous AA Service experience. Full term or about to complete, as a delegate to the General Service Conference is essential.

Another basic is resoluteness – having the courage of one's convictions. The chosen candidate should bring to Board Meetings good judgement, objectivity and the courage to express him or herself.

Another important basic is availability. How much time does the candidate have to devote to the work of the Board without hurting family or career? Is he or she available for meetings nationally, to attend Conference and to give extra time in his or her own area when necessary?

Composition of the General Service Board

The Articles of Association of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited state: "The number of members with which the Company proposes to be registered is unlimited." In practice, the number of alcoholic members of the General Service Board is determined by the requirements of the Fellowship at a particular time, the availability

of suitable members with the qualifications described above, and the number of regions in Great Britain.

As a condition of election as a member and election as a trustee of the General Service Board, each person shall before qualifying to serve as a member and trustee, execute appropriate instruments addressed to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, stating that he or she has no bar to becoming a trustee and agrees to comply with and be bound by all the terms and provisions of the Articles of Association.

Appointment of new members of the General Service Board

Alcoholic members of the General Service Board are appointed on the basis of one from each of the 16 Regions.

In addition, a Region whose Trustee is elected to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer of the Board shall be entitled to submit new nominations for another Trustee to take the place of the member elected to serve in one of these offices. Trustees appointed under this provision shall serve a full term of membership.

At least six months before the retirement of an alcoholic member, the Secretary of the Board will notify the Region which the retiring member represents, and invite the Region to submit the names of suitable candidates for consideration by the Board. This invitation will be accompanied by nomination forms and reference copies of *The Good Trustee Guide* and *Introduction to the Board*.

Regions are requested to nominate at least two candidates in order to afford the Board the opportunity to select the candidate whose personal qualities are most needed at a particular time. This may mean that an excellent candidate whose experience and aptitudes are already matched in the existing membership may be less suitable than another candidate who could make a unique contribution to the work of the Board.

In considering who to nominate, Regions should bear in mind the service of former office-bearers who may no longer be active but whose experience would make them especially suitable for Board membership. Regions will wish to give careful consideration to the suggested qualifications for Board membership outlined in previous paragraphs.

The Nominations Committee will make its recommendations to the General Service Board which is empowered to make an appointment to the Board or to decline any or all of the nominations. The appointment of an alcoholic member will be submitted to the next General Service Conference for confirmation and will take effect immediately after such confirmation. Ideally, nominations of new alcoholic members should be approved by the General Service Board at the meeting immediately prior to the General Service Conference.

New members of the General Service Board are required to attend a formal 'Introduction to the Board' at which they receive copies of the Introduction to the Board, Good Trustees Guide, Charity Leaflet CC3 and GSB policy documents explaining their responsibilities as trustees.

When an alcoholic member moves away from the Region which nominated him or her as a Trustee, the Region and the Trustee concerned should consider whether he or she should resign from the Board. Vacancies resulting from such resignations, or from resignations for other reasons, will be filled by the procedure described above.

Rotation

Alcoholic Trustees are elected for a term of four years upon expiry of which they cease to be members and are not eligible for re-election at any future time. Non-Alcoholic trustees serve for four years with an option of a second four-year term, by mutual agreement, in order to ensure a greater continuity of Board structure.

Officers of the General Service Board

The Officers (Executive Committee) of the General Service Board are:

The Chair

The Vice-Chair

The Treasurer and

The Secretary (also General Secretary of the General Service Office)

The Chair is elected by the members of the General Service Board from among their own number and the appointment is for a period of four years from the date of election. On the expiry of that time he or she ceases to be Chair of the General Service Board and also, if he or she is an alcoholic member, ceases to be a member thereof and is not eligible for re-election at any future time.

The General Service Board may elect as their Chair either an alcoholic or a non-alcoholic member. On expiry of the four-year term of a non-alcoholic Chair he or she ceases to be Chair and is not eligible for re-election as Chair but may continue as a member of the General Service Board.

The Vice-Chair is elected by the members of the General Service Board from among their own number to act in the absence of the Chair for any reason. If an alcoholic, the Vice-Chair ceases to hold this appointment at the expiry of his or her four-year term of Board membership. The Vice - Chair does not have the automatic right of succession to the Chair.

The Treasurer is elected by the Trustees from among their own number. If an alcoholic, the Treasurer ceases to hold this appointment at the expiry of his or her four-year term of Board membership.

The Secretary to the General Service Board is also General Secretary of the General Service Office. The holder of this joint appointment is the principal paid official for the Fellowship and is responsible to the General Service Board for the day-to-day management of the General Service Office and of the Regional Service Offices. The Secretary is appointed and employed by the General Service Board under a formal contract of employment.

Role of the Executive Committee

- 1) Any Trustee, employee or other person may be requested by the Executive Committee to attend a meeting, or part of a meeting, of the Executive Committee if this is considered necessary by the Executive Committee to facilitate the discharge of their responsibilities. Any Trustee or employee may submit a request to bring matters before the Executive Committee through its agenda or in person if appropriate.
1. Function
 - a) To monitor and co-ordinate on-going Board projects
 - b) To act on behalf of the Board when matters arise and must be dealt with between meetings of the Board

- c) To act as liaison between the Board and its General Service Office through the General Secretary and
- d) To carry out specific delegated tasks set by the Board. By law, authorisation of such projects must be recorded in the Board minutes.

2. Reporting

It is required by law that business delegated to individuals or working groups be reported to the Board. To this end the Executive Committee should take notes or minutes of their business and a report of relevant items from these notes or minutes given as a standing part of the agenda at all Board meetings. The report should preferably be given by the Vice-Chair of the Board. The Executive Committee is strictly a facilitating committee of the Board and makes reports only to the General Service Board

The term of service of GSB Officers

In order to maintain a high standard of officer service, particularly with reference to continuity and effectiveness, the tradition of sponsorship needs to be employed with officers-elect.

To ensure that this will be possible, an adjustment was made in May 2001 to the maximum length of Trusteeship for executive officers: Chair to be reduced (from the potential of eight years) to a maximum of six years, Vice-Chair and Treasurer to be extended to a maximum of six years.

This allows the GSB to consider Trustees for appointment to the executive in their third and fourth years, and this provides the retiring officers an opportunity to give a structured introduction and sponsorship to officers-elect. As before, no Trustee can serve more than four years on the Executive Committee.

5:3 Non-alcoholic Members

Non-alcoholic Trustees are appointed to the General Service Board for the special contributions they are able to make by virtue of their personal experience and background.

Such appointments are made by the General Service Board, through the Nominations Committee and are subject to confirmation by the General Service Conference.

The Fellowship of AA owes a deep debt of gratitude to our non-alcoholic Trustees who have helped us very greatly over the years by opening many doors which might otherwise remain closed to the message of AA. They come from many different walks of life and gladly and voluntarily share in the work of spreading the AA message.

5:4 Sub-Committees

Sub-Committees are accountable to the GSB. The Committees are chaired by a Board Trustee and are supported by a minimum of four and a maximum of eight committee members.

Each Sub-Committee serves the Fellowship by addressing the needs of its service area including the implementation of Conference Recommendations.

Details of any identified projects are presented to the Board for approval.

Some of meetings are held in York, whilst others may be held by telephone conference calling. Members of the Executive Committee may attend any meeting, as may Trustees from other disciplines subject to invitation and GSB approval.

Minutes of all meetings are made available to GSO for distribution to all GSB members. Sub-Committee developments are reported to the full Board.

Sub-Committee vacancies are identified by each committee chair and advertised in AA Service News.

Nominations are processed through the Nominations Committee and brought to the GSB for approval.

The term of service is usually four years.

Nominees must have five years continuous sobriety, and previous AA service experience at Intergroup and or Region.

Currently the Sub-Committees are as listed.

- 1) AA Service News
- 2) Archives
- 3) Armed Services
- 4) Electronic Communications
- 5) Health
- 6) Literature
- 7) Prisons
- 8) Probation
- 9) Public Information
- 10) Roundabout
- 11) Share
- 12) Telephones

5:5 Development Fund

After Bill W's visit to Great Britain in 1950 the Trustees sent a gift of 1,500 Big Books from America to Great Britain. Bill W. waived his royalties on the Big Book, with the proviso that the money be used for the development of AA.

A Royalties Fund was set up and at the first General Service Conference in 1966 it was noted that some of this money was used to finance the exploratory meeting held the previous year to discuss the possibility of holding a General Service Conference and to finance Bob's (Secretary) attendance at the Toronto Convention. Bill W. had stipulated that the royalties be used for special purposes and not for ordinary expenditure.

Since 1983 the Royalties Fund (now Development Fund) has been used to help support the European Service Meeting. Following advice from our auditors in March 1994 the Board approved the recommendation of the Finance Committee that the name of the Royalties Fund be changed to the Development Fund and that the setting aside of 8% of the selling price of the following books *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* and *As Bill Sees It* should continue.

The Development Fund has continued to be used to help and support the establishment of the Fellowship abroad. An example of this is where AA in Great Britain has paid for translations of the Big Book into other languages, with the countries concerned then selling their own translated Big Books which contributes to them becoming self-supporting. In this way we also seek to ensure that the spiritual message in the translation maintains the integrity of that message.

(Extract from *Fifty Years of AA in Great Britain*)

5:6 Governance

Adopted by the General Service Conference, Great Britain, 1995

Relationships between the Board and its supporters and consultation mechanism.

The Conference Charter (Great Britain) was adopted at the 1995 General Service Conference in order that the charitable company, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Ltd. may properly describe the governance (i.e. the relationship between the Board and its supporters, and consultation mechanisms) of AA in terms appropriate to the law of England and Wales where the company is registered.

The Board is a limited company regulated by its Memorandum and Articles of Association as laid down in the Companies Acts. This instrument is a legal document which has a bearing only on the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited.

The Board is the servant of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and in common with other groups of trusted servants depends upon the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Twelve Concepts for Service and the Charter of the General Service Conference to guide its policies. Because the Board is a charitable company registered in England and Wales these instruments must be appropriate to their application in Great Britain and written in language which makes it clear that the Board recognises its responsibilities under the law of England and Wales.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

AA members meet as Groups which form elected, representative service bodies, Intergroups and Regions whose purpose is to facilitate the carrying of the AA message by the Groups to the still-suffering alcoholic. This service structure nominates persons for election to the General Service Board. The General Service Board serves the Fellowship by providing central services of various types and is a registered charity. The Groups, Intergroups and Regions are recognised by the Charity Commissioners as informal, autonomous “affiliated groups” which have no independent constitution. As such, these bodies are not held to be accountable to the General Service Board or to the Charity Commission but have the right to submit nominations of persons to serve as trustees on that Board.

The governance of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain is based on the voluntary instruments: the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Concepts for Service and the Charter of the General Service Conference. Consultation between the main charity, the General Service Board (GSB), and its supporters (the Groups, Intergroups and Regions of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain) takes place on a regular basis through service forums and workshops and annual General Service Conference comprising elected delegates from each of the Regions in Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) and the Trustees of the Board.

The Charity Commissioners and their lawyers have agreed that the Groups, Intergroups and Regions of Alcoholics Anonymous will be regarded as “affiliated groups” which are autonomous, informal bodies having the right to submit nominations of persons to serve as trustees of the main Board. Provided that Groups, Intergroups and Regions are not formally established by constitution and do not seek funding from outside agencies they will be

ignored by the Charity Commissioners In the above we have a position which allows us to maintain our Traditions and our Guidelines. In other words we are being allowed to continue, more or less, as before the new legislation. In order for this special treatment to continue, the Groups, Intergroups and Regions must:

1. ensure that they do not have a constitution (*see below) which identifies them as an independent body
2. not hold themselves out to be a charity in their own right and must not use the Board's charity registration number for any purpose (this is already the case) and
3. if funds are kept in a bank account, ensure that the account is in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous.

* Constitution. Our advisors tell us that the setting up of a document describing how the Group, Intergroup or Region is set up e.g. how committees are elected is acceptable but any such document must not contain objects which are the same as the main charity or set themselves up as stand-alone bodies independent of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain). The advice also suggests that it might be safer to drop the term "constitution" and give the document some other title.

5:7 Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain

The Long Form of the Concepts is adapted with the permission of AA World Services Inc. In granting permission to adapt, AA World Services did not undertake to evaluate the contents of the adaptation and expresses no opinion regarding the adaptation.

The text following should be regarded as an appendix to, but in no way a substitute for, Bill W's Twelve Concepts for World Service as printed on the preceding pages. The appendix has been drawn up in order that the charitable company The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited may properly describe the governance of AA in terms appropriate to the law of England and Wales, and was so adopted by the General Service Conference 1995.

Concept 1

The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for British AA services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship in Great Britain.

Concept 2

When, in 1995, the British AA groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our services and thereby made the Conference - excepting for any change in the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter – the actual voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain.

Concept 3

As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship between the groups, the Conference, the General Service Board and its General Service Office, and of thus ensuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested we endow each of these elements of service with a traditional "Right of Decision"

Concept 4

Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation", taking care that each classification or group of our servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

Concept 5

Throughout our service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

Concept 6

On behalf of AA, in Great Britain, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognises that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain).

Concept 7

The Conference recognises that the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the General Service Board (Great Britain) are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the British service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the AA purse for its final effectiveness.

Concept 8

The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities. (a) With respect to the larger matters of overall policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to the executive services provided by the General Service Office, the relation of the trustees is mainly that of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to appoint staff who are charged with carrying out their policies.

Concept 9

Good service leaders, with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.

Concept 10

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority - the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, by appropriate charters or by legal instruments.

Concept 11

While the Trustees, acting together as the General Service Board (Great Britain) hold final responsibility for AA's service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible committees, service executives, staffs and consultants. Therefore the composition of committees and service assemblies, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

Concept 12

General Warranties of Conference: in all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

CHAPTER SIX: THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

1. The General Service Office
2. European Service Meeting
3. World Service Meeting
4. General Service Office Money
5. Gift Aid
6. Gratitude Week

6:1 The General Service Office

This Section is not Conference Approved and the following text is the current 'best practice' described by GSO/GSB for Conference to consider at Conference 2011 - Literature Committee

10 Toft Green, York, has been the home of the General Service Office since early 2007 and houses the main administration and distribution centre for AA information in Great Britain and English speaking Continental Europe. It is the registered office of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited. Visitors are always welcome and most weekends see one or more national service meetings taking place.

The GSO serves as the central point for co-ordinating, storing and passing on the wealth of AA experience that has been gathered over the years and provides a wide variety of services to the Fellowship. It is from GSO that Conference approved literature is published and distributed, where the resources of AA are managed and the national Archives of AA in Great Britain are housed. The Annual Report of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain is legally required and is produced and distributed by GSO. The main functions centred in the GSO are the publication and distribution of literature, financial controls, Group registry, production of *SHARE* and *Roundabout*, co-ordination of national events, professional exhibitions and conferences, the co-ordination of AA's national Conference, maintaining service databases, for example the prison sponsor listing, supporting and organising the work of the General Service Board. All these functions are based on sound business principles.

GSO is the centre of communication for over 4,000 Groups, 133 Intergroups, including 7 in Continental European Region and 16 Regions in Great Britain and Continental Europe (as at autumn 2010).

The GSO serves as the European Information Centre and as such communicates on a regular basis with other General Service Offices in most of Europe and organises the biennial European Service Meeting which brings together representatives from those countries to share service experience to help carry the message within the growing Fellowship in Europe.

Communication with the AA service structures throughout the world is also regularly maintained.

Northern and Southern Service Offices

The two satellite offices of the General Service Office – The Northern Service Office (NSO) and the Southern Service Office (SSO), which were set up in 1998 - provide a more localised service to the Fellowship and serve to smooth the flow of information from and to the Groups, Intergroups, Regions, GSO and the General Service Board.

The NSO is situated in Glasgow and one of the areas of work in the NSO is that of supporting the Roundabout Team. The staff also provides information to the public and professionals, particularly in Scotland, and answer queries from members of AA and the public.

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The SSO, in London, also serves to pass on and gather information from the AA structure in the South. The office itself provides a space for the London Telephone Service and the staff supports the Responder Teams in their service work.

The GSO, NSO and SSO are not in any way an authority in Alcoholics Anonymous. The small team of staff, whether members of the Fellowship or not, have a common understanding of the primary purpose of AA and every activity in the three offices is directed to this end. Each staff member is conscious of their responsibility to the individual member as well as to the Fellowship as a whole. They are always ready to pass on the vast amount of experience gathered over the years in response to the queries that are posed by members of the Fellowship.

The services provided by all three offices cannot be fully described here but members who do request information, who want help with a problem, any professional who wants information on AA, any member of the public who may be worried about a relative or friend will be given the care and consideration that is a major element of Alcoholics Anonymous.

6:2 European Service Meeting

The Fifth World Service Meeting (WSM), held in 1978 in Finland, recommended the setting up of a European Service Meeting (ESM). Concern was expressed that many countries that might most benefit from AA experience could not send delegates to the WSM, and it was therefore suggested that countries with less developed structures be invited to the ESM. The first such meeting was held in Frankfurt in October 1981.

Delegates are elected by, and answerable to, the Fellowship of AA in their respective countries. Only elected delegates are allowed to attend the ESM, and it should be possible to adhere to these principles even where a formal AA structure has not yet evolved. No delegates should pay their own expenses. Those countries which can afford to pay in full should do so, and those countries which can afford to pay only a portion should pay that portion. The ESM encourages the growth of our self-support tradition. The ESM, and in the longer term the European Information Centre (established 1978), should be fully supported by voluntary contributions from the various countries in Europe. The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) agreed to administer the ESM Fund as a restricted fund designated for the ESM and associated AA service activities in Europe controlled by the Trustees of the General Service Board through the Executive Committee. This Fund exists to cover any shortfall experienced by the ESM as well as any ongoing AA services provided.

Bill W. suggests we should "...enlarge those overseas services. To eliminate the distressing garble that has plagued many distant AA groups for years, we shall need to furnish far more and better translations of our basic literature. Sheer lack of an understanding of AA's Twelve Traditions has routinely created chaotic conditions in many a land." (*AA Grapevine* 1960.)

The ESM acts as a forum and encourages the widest possible sharing of experience and co-operation between countries, in particular working with and sponsorship of the new and developing structures, and assisting in the planning of sound structures suited to the needs and capabilities of the various countries throughout Europe. The ESM can also represent an expression of the group conscience of the Fellowship in Europe. This is achieved through the sharing of experience, the ongoing work of the three standing committees, and general sharing in three workshops. Themes, topics and questions for discussion at the three workshops are considered and determined by the delegates. An Agenda Committee was formed in 1990 comprising the elected Chair for the next ESM, three delegates and the Secretary of the ESM. The structure of the ESM complements that of the WSM and the continuity is facilitated by the three standing committees, as follows:

- 1) Agenda, Policy, Admissions and Finance
- 2) Working with other countries and
- 3) Literature.

The primary purpose of the ESM is the same as that of all AA activity - to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever they may be, whatever language they speak, and the exploration of expanding AA services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication and co-operation with other countries.

6:3 World Service Meeting

The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting (WSM) is the same as that of all AA activity - to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world he or she may be, whatever the language spoken. The WSM seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world. (Currently Great Britain sends two delegates.) It can also represent the conscience of the Fellowship worldwide.

Experience teaches us that developing a sound structure enables us to deliver our services more effectively. The WSM encourages the planning of sound service structures suited to the needs and capabilities of the various countries and the exploration of expanding AA services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication, literature distribution, sponsorship, public information, community relations and work with institutions.

6:4 General Service Office Money

- 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 review:
- The Financial Controller at GSO is central to the day-to-day financial operations, and also participates fully in the policy discussions and recommendations of the Regional Treasurers' meetings, the Finance Committee and its working groups. Computerised accounts (based on cost centres), and financial statements are prepared monthly following the recommended practices for charitable organisations. Annual accounts and a balance sheet are audited by registered auditors and a simplified version, together with diagrammatic presentations, are included in the Annual Report of the Board.
- The emphasis in all financial accountability is simplicity, realism and openness with no more demand on resources than is required to do the job well including a prudent reserve equivalent to the budget expenditure for the forthcoming year.

(All the above has been taken from current Guideline No. 12)

6:5 Gift Aid

Many AA members wish to give an “extra” gift to the Fellowship on top of what they put into the “pot” and for some it is a replacement for Gratitude Week, which can sometimes be a bit awkward. There is not usually any difficulty in finding a relatively small sum monthly, but when it comes to a larger amount annually we sometimes find it hard to put that extra bit in the pot.

If you are a UK taxpayer, Gift Aid is a very efficient way of giving to the Charity Alcoholics Anonymous as the Government repays to AA all the tax paid on the gift. In this way, if you give £10 each month, the government repays a further 28% which works out at an extra £33.60 for the year direct to AA – a considerable sum to help carry the message.

The terms of this donation are strictly confidential and the details you supply for tax purposes remain at the General Service Office. However, if the Inland Revenue should demand those details we are obliged to disclose your name and address, that you are a UK taxpayer and that you give money to the Charity Alcoholics Anonymous. The bank mandate has, of course, no mention of AA or Alcoholics anonymous and entirely protects the donor's anonymity.

A form can be obtained from the Alcoholics Anonymous Website or through the General Service Office. In order to be able to accept contributions through Gift Aid and comply with our Seventh Tradition, with reference to not accepting contributions from outside the Fellowship, members are requested to confirm their membership of the Fellowship in writing.

(Adapted from the Alcoholics Anonymous GB Website February 2008)

6:6 Gratitude Week

The idea of Gratitude Week (or Sobriety Week, as it was known originally in 1984) is commonly attributed to some of the GSRs in the Chiltern & Thames Intergroup. The main motive was to help restore the financial wellbeing of the Fellowship in Great Britain.

At the General Service Conference in 1988 (Committee 2: Finance) it was generally agreed, notwithstanding some failures of communication, *Sobriety* weeks had been successful in terms of increased contributions. It was agreed that the Fellowship recognise our anniversary on 10 June by holding annually a Gratitude/Sobriety week. Publicity was given to this by way of *AA News* and a letter from the General Service Board to Intergroup Treasurers.

The name changed to Gratitude Week in 1988, as a reminder of the spiritual value inherent in the practical expression of gratitude. The general idea was that those who wish to and can afford it would make a special contribution to a separate 'pot' at their home group meeting during the week of the 10 June. All separate group collections for Gratitude Week to be sent to the local Intergroup which will send them all together to GSO.

(Chiltern & Thames Intergroup Minutes April 1985 & April 1986 and General Service Conference 1988 Committee No. 2)

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE AA PUBLICATIONS

1. *Where to Find*
2. *SHARE*
3. *Roundabout*
4. *AA Service News*
5. Literature Committee
6. Copyright/Logo
7. AA GB Website

7:1 *Where to Find*

Where to Find AA is the national meeting directory for Great Britain and the Continental European Region and as such is an invaluable source of information for the new member and the travelling member. In order to ensure that it remains accurate, Group secretaries are requested to keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in the address of the meeting place, the starting time of the meeting or the telephone contact numbers for the meeting.

Members whose names appear in the *Where to Find* should be prepared to take full responsibility as contacts and delegate where necessary. This implies that such a telephone number will be freely available within the Fellowship and that the contact is prepared at any time to:

- accept a call for help
- give information to a professional e.g. a GSO number
- guide a family member to the right source for help e.g. to AI-Anon
- speak to members of the Fellowship enquiring about meetings.

Where to Find may also be found on the AA website, where names and personal numbers are not shown.

7:2 *SHARE*

SHARE is the magazine published monthly by the General Service Board (GSB) of AA in Britain.

It is comprised of the following:

Chairperson - *SHARE* Board Trustee, who is the link between the team and the GSB

Editor

Assistant Editor/Proof Reader

SHARE News newsletter Editor

Circulation Manager

Secretary

Two National Liaison Officers (one north, one south)

Three Editorial Readers (who receive and submit work electronically and are invited to the Annual National *SHARE* Liaison Meeting).

One Conference delegate is selected from the team.

The purpose of the *SHARE* team is to produce a monthly publication in the form of a magazine. The magazine carries the message of AA. Information carried in a central diary and calendar pages includes information about groups starting and closing, changes of meeting times or contact details. The magazine also publicises Conventions and the annual *SHARE* diary and calendar. Each issue includes a subscription order form

The team meets quarterly in York, and also convenes an annual national *SHARE* Liaison Officers Meeting. The day to day business of the team is carried out electronically.

Receipt of mail, accounting, invoicing and distribution are handled by staff members of GSO York.

The Team and the Editor are accountable to the GSB, which has overall authority over *SHARE*.

7:3 Roundabout

This Section is not Conference Approved and the following text is the current 'best practice' described by GSO/GSB for Conference to consider at Conference 2011 - Literature Committee

Composition of the Roundabout team:

- Editor
- Assistant editor
- Proof Reader
- Secretary
- General Service Board Member
- Conference Delegate (elected from the team)
- Team member

Editor

Carries out the wishes of the Editorial Team and sees that all *Roundabout* deadlines are kept.

The Editor has final responsibility for the content of *Roundabout*, he or she delegates work throughout the team, highlights any issues to the General Service Board Member and works with the Northern Service Office and General Service Office on *Roundabout* issues.

Assistant Editor

- Works closely with the Editor
- Carries out such tasks as delegated by the Editor
- In an emergency would be able to assume full editorial responsibilities

Proof Reader

Scrutinises page proofs in accordance with *Roundabout* Guide Readers.

Secretary

- Records and types the minutes of team meetings
- Maintains a file of minutes, correspondence, and any other *Roundabout* documents
- Maintains an up to date list of team members' addresses and telephone numbers, distributing the list to the team members, and the General Service Office

General Service Board Member

Serves as a link between the General Service Board (ensuring that the Twelve Traditions are followed), and is responsible for the Annual Report and for reporting to the General Service Conference.

Conference Delegate (elected from team)

Before Conference, obtain the teams conscience on the Conference Agenda, and after Conference prepare and present a written report.

Team Member

Carries out tasks as directed by the team including contact with Liaison Officers and representing *Roundabout* as required.

Roundabout's day to day business such as, receipt of mail, accounting, invoicing are handled by staff members of the General Service Office. Staff distributes each issue of *Roundabout*

Final Draft prepared for General Service Conference 2011 – 10.12.2010

as soon as possible after its receipt from the printers, with a view to mailing the magazine by the 26th of the month. Sales figures and a detailed breakdown of costs are sent o the Editor.

7:4 AA Service News

- *AA Service News* is the principle vehicle for the communication of service matters within the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain
- Articles within it should give particular emphasis to matters affecting our primary purpose – which is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety
- These articles should provide a shared experience of service at all levels within the Fellowship ranging from group through to GSB and Conference level
- *AA Service News* is published quarterly in spring, summer, autumn and winter

Purpose and aim of *AA Service News*

- Share service experience at all levels within the Fellowship
- Keep members informed of new developments and future events
- Encourage observance of the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts
- Carry to members the questions being put to Conference

Source of articles for *AA Service News*

- Convenors of GSB committees are encouraged to produce – whenever possible – quarterly reports for their service area
- Board members having service liaison responsibilities are similarly encouraged to submit accounts of activities within their areas and to hand these to the editor at Board Meetings
- Delegates to European and World Service meetings are encouraged to provide GSO with accounts of the same
- Members of the Fellowship are warmly encouraged to submit articles – in so far as they relate to service matters – either directly or via their Intergroup or Region to the Editor
- The Editor is assisted and supported by two proof readers, who are selected by nominations from Regions to the Nominations Committee, and a GSO staff member providing systems support.

Distribution

- A team of volunteers from the North East Region led by staff at GSO are tasked with the packaging of *AA Service News*
- A total of approximately five thousand envelopes go out every quarter
- Three copies are sent to every registered group in Great Britain
- One copy goes to all Intergroup Officers
- One copy to ex-Board Members

What you can always find in *AA Service News*

- Diary of events
- Financial contributions to GSO from Regions
- Donations in memory of
- Questions for Conference (winter edition)
- Conference recommendations (summer edition)
- Vacancies on sub-committees

7:5 Literature Committee

The terms of reference for the Literature Committee are 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 and to consider need for new literature.

Objectives

- Review all printed material on a selective basis
- Improve text, design and appearance
- Assess need for new literature
- Reduce production costs where possible
- Make literature revisions as requested by Conference Committees and General Service Board
- Make regular progress reports to the General Service Board for presentation to Conference

7:6 Copyright

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain is granted permission under licence to publish and distribute AA Published and Conference Approved literature. The AAWS and General Service Board of the US/Canada delegates direct responsibility for copyright protection to the General Service Board and General Service Conference of Great Britain. Conference Great Britain 1996 recommended that no literature be reproduced by individuals, Groups, Intergroups or Regions for either internal or external use and that non-AA literature should not be reproduced for internal and external use.

AA Published and Conference Approved literature is so called because it reflects the overall AA thinking on a given subject, rather than individual or group opinion. The Fellowship is reminded that copyrighted material must not be copied by any means [including electronic scanning], as this would be in violation of the copyright. Many local internal publications quote from AA literature such as the Big Book, the "Twelve and Twelve", *The AA Service Manual* and Conference-approved pamphlets. When this occurs, please include the proper credit line in order to ensure that the copyrights of AA literature are protected.

Logo

Two logos have been registered by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain and these are: The logo with the words Recovery, Unity and Service may be used as follows:

- Documents, correspondence, pamphlets, etc from the General Service Board and General Service Office
- Minutes and reports prepared by Regions and their elected officer.
- Minutes and reports prepared by Intergroups and their elected officers.
- Convention, forum and workshop announcements sponsored by Intergroups or Regions.
- Communications by Service Liaison Officer with outside professional bodies to assist our primary purpose.
- *SHARE* and *Roundabout*.

NB Permission for any other use can only be granted, in writing, by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain.

The logo with the words 'General Service Conference' can only be used by Conference. This logo is used in relation to Conference approved material. The logos, as they appear above, are the only ones recognised by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain. They are not intended to be used for commercial or private purposes.

(Revised April 1998)

7:7 AA GB Website

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous GB was tasked by Conference 1998, Committee 6, to provide and maintain a presence on the Internet on behalf of the Fellowship of Great Britain.

The national AAGB website is located at www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk, and is administered on behalf of the Fellowship by the General Service Board via the Electronic Communications Sub-Committee (ECSC) and by the General Service Office (GSO) of Great Britain.

In addition to the ECSC and GSO staff, the website services are supported by the Fellowship service workers of the web team. This comprises members recruited at local level – Online Responders, Forum Moderators and Web Assistants. In the event of necessity, technical support work may be outsourced at the discretion of the General Service Board.

Alcoholics-Anonymous.org.uk is a multi-function site with dedicated areas allocated to fulfilling our Primary Purpose and to providing services to the Fellowship.

In accordance with Conference 2008 decision, the AAGB website does not link to any site not owned and controlled by AAGB.

(From Electronic Communications Guidance Conference 2010)

AA Tomorrow by Bill W.

Our co-Founder sums up after twenty five years of AA and looks into the future we are now living. The following excerpts are reprinted with permission from the book *AA Today* published by *The AA Grapevine*, 1960.

“This book has given us some wonderful glimpses of the panorama of AA at work in the twenty-fifth year of its founding.

Now comes the question: Where do we go from here and what is our responsibility for today and for tomorrow?

Clearly our first duty to AA's future is to maintain in full strength what we now have. Only the most vigilant caretaking can assure this. Never should we be lulled into complacent self-satisfaction by the wide acclaim and success that is everywhere ours. This is the subtle temptation which could stagnate us today, perchance disintegrate us tomorrow. We have always rallied to meet and transcend failure and crisis. Problems have been our stimulants. How well, though, shall we be able to meet the problems of success?

During the last twenty-five years, it is quite certain that twenty-five million men and women throughout the world have suffered from alcoholism. Nearly all of these are now sick, mad, or dead. AA has brought recovery to something like two hundred and fifty thousand.

The rest are still out of reach or else gone beyond recall. An even larger generation of drunks is right now in the making. Facing the enormity of this situation, shall any of us sit comfortable and say, “Well, people here we are. We hope you hear about us and come around. Then maybe we can give you a hand?”

Of course, we shall do nothing of the sort. We know that we are going to open wider and wider, every conceivable means and channel through which these kinfolk of ours may be reached. We shall remember Dr. Bob and his marvellous co-worker, Sister Ignatia - how they worked at Akron. We shall remember the many years of Dr. Silkworth's unstinted labour for us. Ten thousand AAs still around will remember how they literally owe their lives to these three people. Each of us will remember his own sponsor, the one who cared enough. As the inheritors of such a tradition of service, how many could ever say, “Let George do that Twelfth Step job; he likes to work with drunks anyhow. Besides, I'm busy.” Surely there could not be many! Complacency would be impossible.

Our next great area of the future responsibility may be this one: I'm thinking about the total problem of alcohol and about those who still suffer the appalling consequences of alcoholism. Their number is astronomical.

While we appreciate that AA itself cannot very well get into alcohol education or into any of the related activities that touch the total problem, we do know that, as peculiarly well-informed citizens, there is plenty we can and should do in these fields.

Enterprises of this sort - governmental, state and private - have been springing up everywhere in recognition of the fact that alcoholism is a top-priority problem of health.

Nevertheless, I gather the impression that many of us are so intent on their few errors, especially the errors of those AAs associated with them, that we often fail to give these dedicated people the encouragement they much need. Now that we AAs have so amazingly unified around our "single purpose" and Twelve Traditions, the risk that we could be much hurt by anything done in these outside ventures is virtually nonexistent.

Could not still more friendly and widespread cooperation with "outside agencies" finally lead us to countless alcoholics who will otherwise be lost? Maybe we are beginning to stand in our own light. Perhaps we are blocking a communication that has a tremendous potential. Shouldn't we therefore have a fresh look at this?

Nearly all of us, when we think about it, agree that we are a long, long way from being anywhere near grown-up, from almost any point of view. We can clearly see that our job as individuals and as a Fellowship is to keep right on growing by the constant use of our Twelve Steps.

Our Fellowship has been permitted to achieve - though still in miniature - the "one world" dream of philosophers. Ours is a world in which we can hotly differ, yet never think of schism or conflict as a solution.

For so long as we remain sure that our "one world of AA" is God's gift rather than any virtue earned or created by ourselves; and for so long as our "one world" continues to be ever more inclusive of those in need; and for so long as we speak and try to perfect the language of love - for just so long may we count upon making whatever rendezvous with destiny that God would have us."