



Alcoholics Anonymous

A Message for Professionals

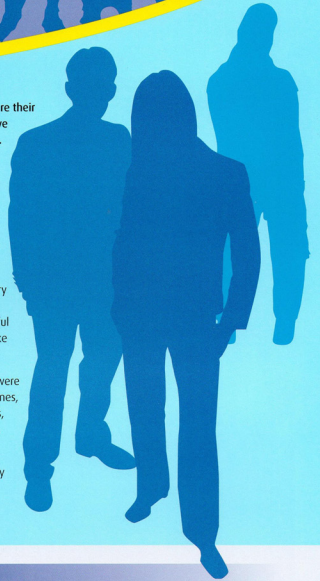
Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

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, organisation 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.

Long before Alcoholics Anonymous came into existence in this country in 1947, doctors, hospitals, churches and other organisations and individuals were helping alcoholics. We of AA are profoundly grateful for the unselfish dedication of people like these – that is, people like you – to the welfare of people like us.

Our founder members were influenced and helped by people who were not alcoholics: most famous of these were Carl Jung and William James, but there were and are many others, not least the family members, friends and professionals who often rescue and befriend alcoholics.

Obviously it is not true that only an alcoholic can help an alcoholic. Our individual histories clearly show us that non-alcoholics do many things for alcoholics that AA does not do.



Is AA a religious organisation?

AA is not allied with any religious group, formal or otherwise, nor does it tell its members what to believe, what is right or wrong or claim to know any religious "truth".

The 12 Steps of recovery suggest belief in a "Higher Power", something more than the individual. The form that this Higher Power takes is entirely up to the individual concerned.

"God as we understand Him" replaces the power alcohol had on their lives. Some members have religious beliefs and many never had any form of religious belief. Members find the AA programme works whether they are agnostic or atheist.

AA began in the USA and the founding members recognised that not every alcoholic would necessarily identify with, or even wish to associate with, a Christian belief system. Hence the phrase "Higher Power". Today AA's membership includes people of all religious beliefs, atheists and agnostics.

The 12 Steps are a spiritual programme and spirituality in AA is not necessarily religious, more a process of awakening to an inner source of guidance, strength and wisdom which, when drawn upon, can help recovering alcoholics' lives take on new meaning.

Is AA a professional organisation?

Since all AA members have "been there", their collective wealth of knowledge about alcoholism is unique.

Some people come to AA with more problems than alcoholism. AA does not claim to have the skills or knowledge to deal with these problems but would always advise the individual concerned to seek professional help from an appropriate source, and to continue going to AA for his or her alcoholism.

How to find out more about AA

Going to AA open meetings is the best possible way to get a feel for the form and dynamics of AA. There are many of these types of meetings where the non-alcoholic is welcome to attend and observe. If you have any questions someone will be pleased to answer them after the meeting.

Nationally, the General Service Office in York, the Northern Service Office in Glasgow or the Southern Service Office in London will be able to provide details of open meetings or put you in touch with the relevant local Liaison Officer who can give you more details on other facilities available in the area, e.g. visiting speakers or availability of AA literature.

Our web site, www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk, is another way of establishing answers to any questions you may have.

AA General Service Office

PO Box 1, Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ
National Office: 01904 644026

AA Southern Service Office

Jacob House, 2nd Floor, 3 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF
London Office: 020 7833 0022

AA Northern Service Office

Baltic Chambers, 4th Floor, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6JH
Glasgow Office: 0141 226 2214

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Our aim

Our aim is to inform you about Alcoholics Anonymous and how our 12-Step programme can help problem drinkers recover from alcoholism. AA in Great Britain has more than 50 years of experience involving tens of thousands of alcoholics. This mass of intensive first-hand experience with all kinds of problem drinkers in all phases of active alcoholism and recovery is available free.

AA as a service

This personal, subjective experience of alcoholism is something only an alcoholic can share with another alcoholic. This is why our service is totally confidential and our membership remains anonymous. Traditionally, this reminds us always to place principles before personalities. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous have found that trying to

help other alcoholics in their unique but often effective way is good for them, whether or not the alcoholic they are trying to help chooses to use what is on offer. AA groups attempt to concentrate on an informal person-to-person approach with anyone for whom alcohol is causing problems.

National Office: 01904 644026

Southern Office: 020 7833 0022

Northern Office: 0141 226 2214

Who runs Alcoholics Anonymous?

The organisational structure of AA is quite different from other agencies. Members themselves, without payment, with the exception of a few paid staff in the three administrative offices, perform all the services voluntarily. There are no rules, no regulations, and no official procedures or official governing authority. Instead, AA is a fellowship of peers, relying on tradition, suggestion and example.

The principal operating unit of AA is the local group. Each group is autonomous, and instead of a promotion ladder of authority, groups rotate leadership and jobs that need to be done to make the meetings friendly and run as smoothly as possible.

Interesting statistics

Government-assisted agencies estimate that one person in 13 is dependent on alcohol in Britain – twice as many as are hooked on all other forms of drugs.

- 60% of employers say they experience problems due to employees drinking.
- 45% of remand prisoners have significant problems with alcohol.
- Between 60-70% of men who assault their partners do so under the influence of alcohol.
- Some 920,000 children in the UK are living in a home where one or both parents misuse alcohol.
- Child Care and Social Work teams estimate that at least 50% (and some teams up to 90%) of parents on their caseload have either alcohol or drug and mental health problems.
- There is double the risk of divorce in marriages where one or both of the partners drink heavily.

These statistics, drawn from various agencies which deal with alcohol and related issues, are just a small sample of the problems associated with dependent drinkers, impacting on themselves, their families, society, and on the professionals and agencies dealing with health, education and other social issues – probably people like yourselves.

Many of you will regularly see the consequences of alcoholism and alcohol abuse in your work. If you work in the Health Service or Criminal Justice system you will probably see familiar faces returning time after time – seemingly hopeless cases. Many current sober members of AA were thought to be just as hopeless at one time. Today, however, many are sober, responsible members of society through attending AA meetings and practising our 12-Step programme of recovery and, helping others to recover from alcoholism.

How can we help the professionals?

AA has a number of service functions that you can tap into at no financial cost, which have been created to work with professional organisations.

Health – AA works with GPs, hospitals, and treatment centre staff. We offer a variety of services from talks with medical staff to individual contact for patients with a drinking problem.

Prison – arranges for AA members to visit prisons and hold AA meetings for inmates.

Probation / Social Services has a team of AA members who are willing to meet with people on probation and introduce them to AA meetings.

Employers – AA offers a variety of services from talks with employers to individual contact. This could be to a group of managers, human resource teams, or any other group that may benefit from a better understanding of alcoholism.

Public Information co-operates with national and local media and meets with a wide range of organisations to explain how AA works.

Telephone Helplines – This service is available to anyone requiring help or information, and provides initial contact between the problem drinker and Alcoholics Anonymous.

What does AA cost?

AA is FREE. It costs you and the taxpayer nothing. Each AA group is a self-supporting entity and AA's only income is derived by members making voluntary contributions and by small profits made from the sale of AA publications.

AA does not accept contributions from any outside sources.

After the cost of running meetings and AA's three service offices, surplus money is used to inform the general public about AA and to carry our message to the active alcoholic directly and indirectly through people and organisations such as yourselves.

What is a typical alcoholic?

In AA's experience there is no such thing as a typical alcoholic. Alcoholism crosses all boundaries – race, religion, age, gender and social background. If you visit an open meeting you will see a cross-section of people. Locally, the meetings will reflect the particular make-up of the area but there is no fundamental difference in the practice of AA from one place to the next. It is suggested to newcomers that they look beyond surface differences and listen to similarities in the vocal sharing that takes place.

Patterns of drinking differ from person to person. Alcoholism can include all types of problem drinking and affects people from all sorts of backgrounds. Alcoholics are adept at denying they have a problem. In the beginning almost all think they do not belong and are unsuitable for membership of AA. It is not until they find themselves attending meetings and hearing other people sharing their experience that they realise how similar they are to their own.

Recovering alcoholics regularly share that their drinking was always, to some extent, abnormal and alcohol was used to boost confidence, change feelings and expel fears. Some people drank for years before the problem became obvious and others for a much shorter time while putting considerable effort into disguising their drink problem.

AA availability

There are Alcoholics Anonymous meetings every day and night of the week in all areas throughout the UK and information about these can be obtained by telephoning the General Service Office in York 01904 644026, the Northern Service Office in Glasgow 0141 226 2214 or the Southern Service Office in London 020 7833 0022.

Professionals who regularly make use of AA often first do so by getting to know local AA members personally and then possibly by attending open meetings, where visitors are welcome.

Is AA 100% successful?

No, not in our experience. To get some data on what percentage of us do maintain sobriety a recent survey of AA membership revealed the following information:

40% of the members who responded had not had a drink for between two and ten years and

73% had not had a drink for at least a year.

In AA the belief, based on experience, is that it is never safe for an alcoholic to drink again. However, rather than make a life pledge, it is suggested that a newcomer stops drinking "one day at a time". This makes the prospect of stopping, and staying stopped, easier.

Many recovering alcoholics who tried all sorts of ways to stop drinking eventually found a contented solution in AA.

What happens at an AA meeting?

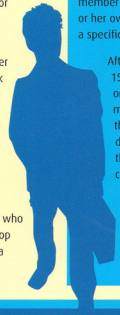
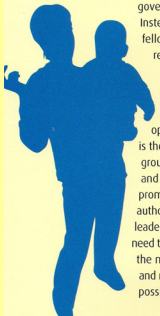
No two AA meetings are the same but most follow a similar pattern. A typical meeting in the UK will have between 10 and 40 people attending and last for about 90 minutes. There are closed meetings for members only and open meetings, which anyone can attend.

A chairperson or secretary who asks for a moment's silence usually opens the meeting. Then the AA preamble is read out. A reading often follows from the book "Alcoholics Anonymous".

The chairperson will then introduce a speaker for the evening, someone who is a member of the group or a visitor from another group. The speaker will share his or her own experiences, as both an active and a recovering alcoholic, or talk about a specific topic related to recovery, or maybe one of AA's 12 Steps.

After the speaker has finished sharing, which might last for anything between 15 and 30 minutes, the chairperson responds, picking out similarities in his or her own story and then opens the meeting for anybody to share. People may relate to the speaker or share a specific problem they need to get off their chest. No one diagnoses anyone else as an alcoholic in AA. Self-diagnosis is left to the individual after he or she has heard others sharing their experiences. Before the meeting closes the collection pot is passed – contributions are optional, and are limited to AA members only.

Meetings take place in church halls, schools, hospitals, village halls, prisons, treatment centres and any other place where rooms are available for rent on a regular basis. At the present time there are more than 3,500 AA meetings taking place each week in the UK.



"God as we understand Him" replaces the power alcohol had on their lives. Some members have religious beliefs; many never had any. Members find the AA programme works whether they are agnostic or atheist.

AA began in the USA and the founding members recognised that not every alcoholic would necessarily identify with, or even wish to associate with, a Christian belief system, hence the phrase "Higher Power". Today AA's membership includes people of all religious beliefs, atheists and agnostics.

How to find out more about AA

Going to an open AA meeting is possibly the best way to find out how AA works. There are many of these types of meetings every day and night of the week in all areas throughout the UK where the non-alcoholic is welcome to attend, and observe how AA works. If you should have any questions someone would be glad to answer them before or after the meeting.

We would welcome the opportunity to present Public Information meetings that would better describe the AA programme of recovery to anyone in your organisation who may be in need of our help to stop drinking, at the same time as co-operating with anyone you may designate in order to work out ways in which AA can be of assistance.

There are AA meetings every day and night of the week in all areas of the UK. Information about these and more details on other facilities available including visiting speakers and availability of AA literature can be obtained by telephoning one of the Service Offices mentioned below who will put you in touch with the relevant local Liaison Officer.

You can call the General Service Office in York on **01904 644026**, the Northern Service Office in Glasgow on **0141 226 2214** or the Southern Service Office in London on **020 7833 0022**.



National Helpline Number: 0845 769 7555

This service pamphlet is available from GSO

PO BOX 1
10 Toft Green York YO1 7NJ
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

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AA as a Resource for Employers

For further information call: 01904 644026
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Our aim

This pamphlet aims to provide information about Alcoholics Anonymous and presents AA as a resource which employers can utilise members of staff with alcohol

What is AA?

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, organisation 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.

How AA views alcoholism

AA members view alcoholism as a progressive illness with a combination of spiritual, emotional (or mental) and physical components. We see our problem as being a physical addiction to, and a mental obsession with, alcohol. The alcoholics we know have lost the power to control their drinking.

The rate of growth of AA shows that an increasing number of alcoholics are recovering from this disease. There are over 97,000 AA groups in more than 150 countries with a worldwide membership of more than 2,000,000. Women today constitute half of the Fellowship and young people (30 years and under) about 10 per cent. Three-quarters of members are under the age of 45. AA members sober more than a year have a very high likelihood of continuing their successful process of recovery.

Co-operation with others

AA in Great Britain has over 60 years of experience involving tens of thousands of alcoholics. This mass of intensive firsthand experience with all kinds of problem

drinkers in all phases of active alcoholism and recovery is available free.

Many members have come to AA as a result of contact with a well informed non-alcoholic. We seek to co-operate with employers and others in our attempts to reach those with our problem.

Many of us have witnessed the difficulties that problem drinkers create for their employers – declining standards of work, lower output, absenteeism and high levels of sick leave, strained relationships and, of course, the health and safety risks they pose for themselves and others.

The problem often lies in trying to identify the person with a drink problem, especially as the alcoholic is usually the last person to admit that alcohol is causing them problems. The alcoholic's resistance to help can be frustrating. Alcoholics tend to be evasive when questioned about their drinking. They may resist any suggestion that alcoholism is involved and be equally resistant to the suggestion of AA.

Nationally, the General Service Office in York, the Northern Service Office in Glasgow or the Southern Service Office in London will be able to provide details of open meetings or put you in touch with the relevant local

Liaison Officer who can give you more details on other facilities available in the area, e.g. visiting speakers or availability of AA literature.

AA Service and Structure

The subjective experience of alcoholism is something only an alcoholic can share with another alcoholic. This is why our service is totally confidential and our membership remains anonymous.

Traditionally, this reminds us always to place principles before personalities. Members of AA have found that trying to help other alcoholics in their unique but often effective way is good for them, whether or not the alcoholic they are trying to help chooses to use what is on offer.

AA groups attempt to concentrate on an informal person-to-person approach with anyone for whom alcohol is causing problems.

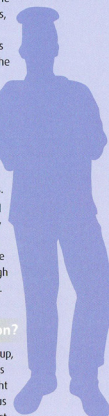
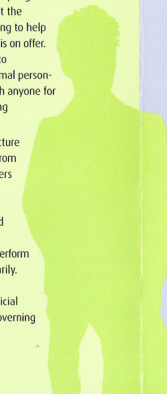
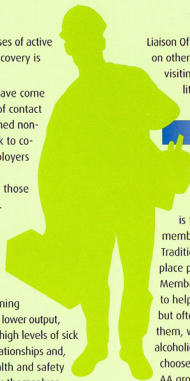
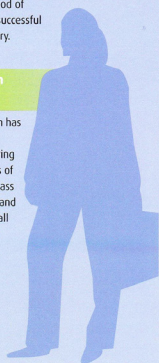
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authority. Instead, AA is a fellowship of peers, relying on tradition, suggestion and example.

The principal operating unit of AA is the local group. Each group is autonomous, with leadership roles being rotated. Members accept responsibility for jobs that need to be carried out to make the meetings friendly and run as smoothly as possible. Each AA group is a self-supporting entity and AA's only income is derived by members making voluntary contributions and by small profits made from the sale of AA publications. AA does not accept contributions from any outside sources. After the cost of running meetings and AA's three service offices, surplus money is used to inform the public about AA and to carry our message to the active alcoholic directly and indirectly through people and organisations such as you.

Is AA a religious organisation?

AA is not allied with any religious group, formal or otherwise, nor does it tell its members what to believe, what is right or wrong or claim to know any religious "truth". The 12 Steps of recovery suggest belief in a "Higher Power", something more than the individual. The form that this Higher Power takes is entirely up to the individual concerned.



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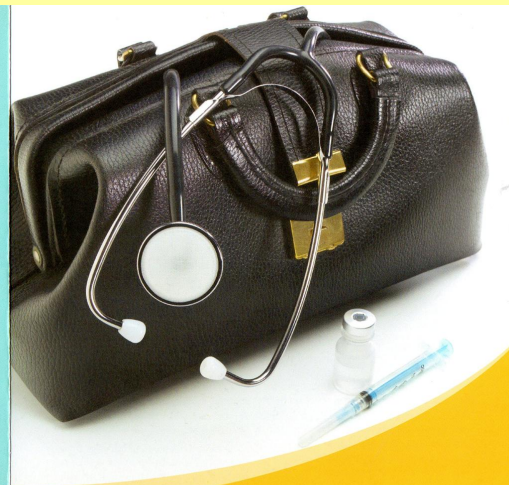
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Mail Address: AA General Service Office, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ



AA as a Resource for the Medical Profession

For further information call 01904 644 026
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

National Helpline Number: 0845 769 7555

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Our aim

This pamphlet aims to provide information about Alcoholics Anonymous and presents AA as a resource for the medical profession and patients with alcohol problems.

A first step can be a call to the National Helpline number 0845 769 7555 and this can enable a patient to attend a nearby AA meeting on the same day or shortly thereafter.

What is AA?

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groups in more than 150 countries with a worldwide membership of more than 2,000,000. Women today constitute half of the Fellowship and young people (30 years and under) about 11 per cent. Three-quarters of members are under the age of 45. AA members sober more than a year have a very high likelihood of continuing their successful process of recovery.

Co-operation with others

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Many members have come to AA as a consequence of contact with a well informed non-alcoholic. We seek to co-operate with members of the medical profession and others in our attempts to reach those with our problem. Obviously it is not true that only an alcoholic can help an alcoholic. Our individual histories clearly show us that non-alcoholics do many things for alcoholics that AA does not do.

Some people come to AA with more problems than alcoholism. AA does not claim to have the skills or knowledge to deal with these problems but would always advise the individual concerned to seek professional help from an appropriate source, and to

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AA Service & Structure

The subjective experience of alcoholism is something only an alcoholic can share with another alcoholic. This is why our service is totally confidential and our membership remains anonymous. Traditionally, this reminds us always to place principles before personalities. Members of AA have found that trying to help other alcoholics in their unique but often effective way is good for them, whether or not the alcoholic they are trying to help chooses to use what is on offer. AA groups attempt to concentrate on an informal person-to-person approach with anyone for whom alcohol is causing problems.

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After the cost of running meetings and AA's three service offices, surplus money is used to inform the general public about AA and to carry our message to the active alcoholic directly and indirectly through people and organisations such as you.

The alcoholic's resistance to help can be frustrating

In our experience denial of the problem is symptomatic of alcoholism. Alcoholic patients tend to be evasive when questioned about their drinking. Patients may resist any suggestion that alcoholism is involved and be equally resistant to the suggestion of AA as a last recourse.

Few doctors have had the experience of having their diagnosis rejected. Few have been told, "I certainly am not a diabetic." Yet when the doctor makes a diagnosis of alcoholism, an alcoholic will often respond, "I don't drink that much," or will offer excuses for his or her drinking. Doctors can expect and anticipate this.

Rationalisation and denial are part of the alcoholic's illness. Initial rejection of AA is part of the denial mechanism. AA members, having broken through

their denial and faced the harm in their drinking, are particularly suited to helping others break through their denial.

'Open' AA Meetings

Going to AA 'open' meetings is the best possible way to get a feel for the form and dynamics of AA. Try several: no two are exactly alike. The late Dr Max Glatt, MD, FRCPsych, MRCP, DPM, who was an eminent consultant and Vice-Chairman of the Medical Council of Alcoholism, wrote in his book *The Alcoholic and the Help He Needs*:

'Recovered alcoholics, who are prepared to talk freely and to answer questions put to them relating to their own past experiences,

provide vivid demonstration of the fact that many alcoholics can recover. Such discussions with recovered alcoholics seem very often to provide an eye opener, a lesson which the professional participant is not likely to forget in a hurry, and which thereby may prove very helpful to him and even more so to the alcoholic patients he may meet in the future.' Having a patient attend the first AA meeting with a member is desirable, although not a must. Most newcomers have many questions. The older member can answer these and reassure the newcomer that others have experienced the same reluctance and fear in taking a first step toward recovery. Sharing experience as peers is the unique service AA offers.

