

# 58th GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024



**12 - 14 April 2024**

***Theme: Maximum Helpfulness To Others***

## **Final Report 2024**

**General Service Office of AA  
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# FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

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# DIGEST OF AGENDA

## Friday 12 April 2024

Opening Session

Committee Meetings Commence

Nominations - Conference Chair 2025

Presentation of  
General Service Board Reports:  
(Session 1)

Finance Presentation  
Literature Presentation  
PI & E Comms Presentation

## Saturday 13 April 2024

Committee Meetings Continue

Presentation of  
General Service Board Reports:  
(Session 2)

Health  
Telephones/First Response Online Service Presentation

Open Forum

## Sunday 14 April 2024

Presentation of Committee Reports

Election of Chair for the Fifty-Ninth General Service  
Conference 2025

Confirmation of  
Board Members Elect

Closing Address

# FRIDAY 12 APRIL

The Fifty-Eighth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain convened in person on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 2.45p.m. Held at the Radisson Hotel (formerly the Park Inn Hotel), North Street, York – situated in the heart of the City of York and only a few minutes’ walk from the Railway Station and the General Service Office. All full sessions were held in the Henley Suite.

After lunch, registration and distribution of folders commenced at around 1 pm and was followed by a reception which, as usual, provided an ideal opportunity for delegates to familiarise themselves with the venue, to renew friendships and to share with those delegates and observers attending for the first time. After the opening session, Committee proceedings commenced at 4.00pm including welcome and introduction to Committees.

The Conference comprised 87 delegates from sixteen Regions; 23 members of the General Service Board; Sean M - Conference Chair (Glasgow Region), Ranjan B, the General Secretary and 7 members of staff from the General Service Office attended. Also in attendance were 8 Observers from the following countries:

Czech Republic	1
Denmark	1
Ireland	3
Latvia	1
Poland	1
Portugal	1

Total in attendance 127.

## **Opening of Conference by Sean M (Conference Chair 2024)**

Good afternoon, Conference, it is great to see you all gathered here today. My name is Sean and I am an alcoholic. It is my pleasure to welcome you all, on behalf of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, to the 58th General Service Conference.

Before we begin our formal proceedings, I ask that we take a moment of silence to reflect on our primary purpose and to remember the still suffering alcoholic yet to reach our life saving rooms.

### **The preamble of Alcoholics Anonymous:**

“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”.

It is a tremendous honour to be entrusted with the position of Conference Chair and I thank you for the privilege of doing so.

Firstly, a warm and special welcome to those delegates attending their first Conference. You are affectionately known as red dotters, as indicated by the sticker on your name badge in red. Please take comfort in knowing that everyone gathered here today was at one point a red dotter and that the sticker signifies to those who are returning here as second or third year delegates to take good care of you, to answer any questions you may have and to provide you with any support you may need throughout your first Conference. It is also important to note that although this may be your first year at Conference, when your committee proceedings begin you will have an equal voice within your group. You are charged by your regions on behalf of the groups you represent to carry the conscience of those groups and you are as important as everyone here today.

To those returning for a second or third year, we welcome you back once again. Thank you for your continued service as delegates to the groups you serve. Welcome too, to the General Service Board Trustees and the members of the General Service Office who too provide such valuable service to the Fellowship both at Conference but throughout the year also.

Finally, a warm welcome to our Overseas observers. Like our newcomer red dotters you too have a sticker on your badges in green, to remind us that like the red dotters you will be looked out for and after by those of us who are returning here for a second or third year. If you have any questions or need help throughout your time, please make sure to ask.

**I will now invite Ranjan B, the General Secretary of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to read the 12 Traditions.**

### **Keynote Address: Maximum Helpfulness to Others**

My name is Sean and I am an alcoholic for life. My home group is Cambuslang Wednesday morning Big Book, in the South Side of Glasgow. When I was asked to write a speech for my keynote address, I initially thought it would be an easy thing to do, for I may not be much but I am all that I think about! It however dawned on me that I have been afforded an opportunity that only 57 other people in the history of AA in Great Britain have had, to stand as the Chair of our wonderful service conference.

My sobriety date is the 25th of February 2016, the date I know now, my life began to change. I had been an attender at AA for 22 months prior but all I had done was go to meetings and try not to drink. Ignorantly unaware that my own willpower was never going to be strong enough to beat my powerlessness over alcohol. I thought my life was unmanageable because I couldn't stop drinking. I know today that because my life was unmanageable, alcohol was always going to be my solution. I sought peace, caused carnage and chaos and settled for oblivion. I was at death's door, both physically and psychologically, having tried two serious attempts on my life and sadly almost accepting I was going to die slowly through my abuse of alcohol.

But AA has done for me what I could not do for myself. Our literature says that "rarely have we seen a person fail, who has thoroughly followed our path". The day that I sobered up I made a decision that thoroughly following my own path had failed utterly, and with the desperation of a drowning man I became willing to do anything necessary to get and remain sober. Sadly, my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer when I reached 3 weeks sober and devastatingly, she passed away in my 11th week of sobriety.

However, I believe that I got sober when I needed it most and with the help of my friends in AA I was able to be the responsible, caring and loving son she had brought into this world. I was broken emotionally but was able to care for her with a smile and laughter and then go to meetings and break my heart around people who listened and propped me up. It was other alcoholics who gave me the

strength. Something that I have never forgotten. Other people were of maximum helpfulness to me in my time of need and while no one has ever asked this of me, I feel it has been my duty as a sober man in Alcoholics Anonymous to be of maximum helpfulness to those I come into contact with.

I am a product of an environment that, as a child, was very uncertain, with domestic violence, shouting, running away contributing to me becoming a very anxious child. I learned to mask my feelings at a very young age and sought to get out of my own thinking out of my own head through reading. Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton wrote stories within which my little mind could find solace and safety. As I grew older this seeking, this fear of being scared, drew me into gang fighting in the area I lived, as the gang was a twisted dysfunctional fellowship of sorts. I then found a party scene in which other substances were commonplace and again allowed me to mask my true emotions by getting out of my head. I then found alcohol at around 14. I didn't know that this elusive liquid was going to change my life, but what I did know was that when I drank I always wanted more. If I had two mouths I couldn't have got enough of the stuff in me. It promised me much, but was insidious, sleekit the word we use in Glasgow, and the faux confidence it gave me in the beginning, it very slowly leaked back out of me over the years.

Bill talks in Bill's Story about having an I have arrived moment. I have always identified with this. I wanted to show the world that I could be someone. Driven by feelings of insignificance, of never being heard, of never feeling good enough I set out on the journey of life to make my mark on society. I secured a good job, met someone, bought a house at 22 and all the while with my good friend alcohol soothing my depression and giving me false relief. In hindsight I was drinking alcoholically from my teens but excusing it at every turn. If you had my childhood, my father, my stressful job, my nagging missus you would drink too. It had already got me.

When both my children were born I made solemn vows that I would stop drinking for them. The two most precious beautiful things in my life and alcohol won out on almost every occasion. Even the love, the deep primal attachment to these tiny parts of me was not powerful enough to stop my drinking. I felt an immense amount of shame about that, but the shame too was not enough to stop me. I was asked to leave the family home and for the last 3 years of my drinking I slowly brought everything I loved down and tore it apart. I resigned from my high flying job in a blackout after drinking a bottle of vodka before a meeting with my boss, and subsequently lost a 15 year career with one of Europe's biggest banks in 45 minutes. I threw my ex out of what used to be our home along with my children and they had to move in with my in-laws. I had become a selfish tornado roaring through the lives of those who cared for me. For the final year of my drinking I was a raging ball of resentment, jealousy, self pity, false pride but in some twisted way I believed I deserved to die. My last spree ended with a message from the kids' mum who told me that although she knew I loved them she would never allow me to let them down again and that she was taking them away forever.

I know not why, but this day, something inside me changed. I have come to believe that God opened the window of opportunity for me, some call it a moment of clarity, but was I prepared to take it? For the first time in my life I stood outside the hospital, 24 hours out of the DT's, bandaged and medicated to stop me fitting. I was never to see my beautiful babies again, in a mass of emotional turmoil, and at the bus terminus, "I stood at the turning point, I asked his care and direction with complete abandon" I cried out for help. I knew I would never be able to fix myself. I also knew that it was more than not drinking, as every time I lifted the first drink I was sober. I was maladjusted to sobriety and it was my life that would need to become in some way manageable if I was to survive.

With the help of AA I stayed sober for the first year of my recovery but it was flimsy sobriety run on grief, 4 shot coffees, energy drinks and a bullish determination never to feel the way I did on my sobriety date ever again.

But at a year sober I knew in my soul it was not enough. For the first time in my life, I asked a man for help and he guided me through our wonderful 12 step program. He also encouraged me to be of service to other alcoholics and to make myself available whenever the opportunity arose. I know today he was showing me the importance of being of maximum helpfulness to others. The nature of this disease lives in selfish and self-centred behaviour, rooted in a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion and self-pity. I had a gold medal in all of these disciplines! Life was now to be about practising the opposites.

I had joined a home group quickly and in every group I have been in I have been the greeter. In Glasgow greeting also means crying and by God I'd done plenty of that! But now I get to be the first person someone sees at their first meeting. I was taught to show up unconditionally. I got involved in service via the telephone helpline and quickly became the TLO for South Glasgow. At 3 years I moved to Glasgow Region as Regional TLO and when the telephone service in Scotland amalgamated I ended up as vice chair about a year in. I was nominated by Glasgow Region as an alternate delegate to Conference 2021 for the first, and hopefully only, Zoom event.

But the following year I got to experience my first in person Conference in 2022. I was elected as Chair of Committee 5 for last year and in a massive surprise to me was nominated for the Chair role for this year.

In each of the "official" service positions throughout my time to date, I have tried to bring the motto of being of "maximum helpfulness to others". The service structure is an integral mechanism to keep the Fellowship thriving and blossoming, but on a personal level it has been a wonderful asset to teaching me the importance of patience, tolerance, listening to and accepting others views, lowering my opinions on my own self importance. A lovely friend uses the phrase "never miss an opportunity to keep your mouth shut" and this too has served me well. People do not get well by opinion but by example. With fantastic guidance and sponsorship and a host of amazing examples that is all I have tried to do myself.

On page 77 of the Big Book it says "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us".

My illness made me believe my own fear and pain was the most important thing for me to contend with. My recovery, my working of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and my attempts to give back through 12th step work along with service work, allows me to be in a more selfless and giving way, which incredibly allows someone who was as wounded as I was, the opportunity to be of maximum helpfulness to others.

As I come to a close, I also want to reference that my theme for this year's Conference was borne not just out of what we can do for other alcoholics but what we can do for others full stop. This illness took away my employment, my home, my children, my family's peace, my self-respect and my dignity. Recovering through Alcoholics Anonymous has given me most of these things back, but in a much more healthy and peaceful way. I have devoted the last 7 years to raising my children, who AA got me back, in a sober, safe and peaceful home. I am a good dad today. I have been gifted sight of my brother coming to AA 4 years ago and remaining sober. I am in a loving relationship with no secrets and no lies. I am a free man. And that freedom came at a cost. It cost me my old life. And thank God and AA for that.

This is my last year at Conference as I have served my maximum 3 years as a delegate and a final year as Chair. As sad as I will be that I do not get to return, it gives me the opportunity to go back to my most important role in AA, as a greeter at the door of my AA Group. As a nod to one of the people instrumental in the beginnings of our wonderful Fellowship, I have taken a small section from a poem by Sam Shoemaker, who was a spiritual advisor to Bill Wilson. The full poem is called "I Stand by the Door" but the end reads as a reflection on how I feel at most use in AA:



*Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door  
But would like to run away. So for them too,  
I stand by the door.*

*I admire the people who go way in.  
But I wish they would not forget how it was  
Before they got in. Then they would be able to help  
The people who have not yet even found the door.  
Or the people who want to run away again from God.  
You can go in too deeply and stay in too long  
And forget the people outside the door.  
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,  
Near enough to God to hear Him and know He is there,  
But not so far from men as not to hear them,  
And remember they are there too.*

*Where? Outside the door -  
Thousands of them. Millions of them.  
But - more important for me -  
One of them, two of them, ten of them.  
Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.  
So I shall stand by the door and wait  
For those who seek it.*

*'I had rather be a door-keeper  
So I stand by the door.*

Thank you, Conference.

### **Introduction of Committee Chairs**

Now to introduce our Committee Chairs for this year's Conference:

- Committee 1: Pete N – North West Region
- Committee 2: Alan F – South Midlands Region
- Committee 3: Jim M – Eastern Region
- Committee 4: Jane C – North East Region
- Committee 5: Gordon M – Scotia Region
- Committee 6: Vikki C – Wales and Borders Region

### **Conference Steering Committee Report**

Good afternoon. My name is Jim and I'm an alcoholic. It is a great pleasure to be here and a great pleasure to have this opportunity.

In October 2009, after many attempts at getting dry and returning to drink again, I woke up in a Bedford City police cell with a deep down, inside decision that I could not do this anymore. I had decided to quit. On October 24th 2009, having admitted I was powerless over alcohol, I went back to Alcoholics Anonymous for the 4th time in my life with a willingness to do whatever was asked of me and with absolutely no belief in the programme of recovery.

I walked into a meeting I had attended a number of years prior and immediately saw some familiar faces. The man who was to become my sponsor asked me where I had been. I responded that I had been out drinking. He asked, "How was it?" I said it was absolutely "horrible, worse than ever before." He said, "Thank God for that". I asked why he said that and he responded, "I've been sitting in these meetings for a number of years thinking you found the answer, I am really glad it was horrible for you". Thus started my journey of recovery.

I worked the Steps to the best of my ability and still do every day. With guidance from my sponsor I found the way this programme works for me. There were no demands, just suggestions. I could do them or not. When it came to making amends, it was suggested to me that the phrase "except when to do so would injure them or others" included me. That I was also "them."

14 years ago, I had no idea what AAGB was or that Conference existed. If anyone has suggested in those early days that I would be involved with or associated with Conference I would have laughed at them. Yet here I am, having practiced these principles each day in all my affairs, One Day At A Time volunteering for service.

My first service at Intergroup was telephone responder. I volunteered for the Friday night 22:30 to Saturday morning 08:00 shift. I was 1 year sober and had a home group. I remember my first night. I had my book out and was ready for any suffering alcoholic to call. I was surprised that not one person called. When I spoke to my sponsor about being ready for any suffering alcoholic and no-one called, he told me "God looks after the suffering alcoholic as well." I have continued that service to this day and now fully understand exactly what my sponsor meant.

I attended Intergroup as a visitor just to see and hear what was accomplished and ended up volunteering for service which led to service at Region, where I was elected to be an alternate Conference delegate and three years later I attended my first conference as a delegate. I have also served on the Armed Services Sub-Committee and am presently Chair of Committee 3 as the result of volunteering to do service whenever the opportunity arose. I was told early on "Service Keeps You Sober" and I can tell you for me that is absolutely true. We have to give it away to keep it as I have experienced most recently. There has been a bit of emotional turmoil in my family this year to say the least. When in emotional turmoil if we turn our thoughts to others we are able to move forward maintaining our sobriety which is our primary purpose. Giving our time and effort to the organisation of AA at all levels from Group to GSO keeps the Fellowship alive for those who come after us.

Our Conference Steering Committee (CSC) met for the first time on 19th May online. Sean (as Conference Chair) took the chair. The Chairs of the various committees for Conference 2024 were all members: Peter N (Committee 1) Alan F (Committee 2), myself, Jim M (Committee 3), Jane C (Committee 4), Jeremy M (Committee 5) and Vikki C (Committee 6). Hamish McS and Tim B (Trustees), Ranjan B (General Secretary) and Sharon Smyth (Conference organiser) were present to assist us. Our first order of business was to consider the option of having one or two Trustees on the committee. After a bit of discussion, we voted to keep two Trustees on the committee and to give them voting rights; Ranjan and Sharon were non-voting members. I was elected as Alternate Conference Chair, and Vikki C as minute taker.

Ranjan briefed us on the history of the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) and talked us through the guidance notes which place emphasis on the need for clarity and accuracy of the questions, and the factual nature of the background material. We were reminded by Sean of the Conference Charter Sections 8, 9 and 10 were reviewed. It was stressed that the proceedings of the CSC had to be confidential to ensure that undue pressure was not placed on its members during proceedings. That also means that all members of the Fellowship get access to the Conference Questions at the same time in

December. We reviewed the Terms of Reference which govern the proceedings of the CSC and the matrix for Conference 2023 which sets out the recommendations of Conference 2024 and noted that all the tasks arising had been assigned.

We reviewed feedback from Conference 2023 and discussed how best to address those concerns.

Our second meeting spanned two days in September and took place at GSO in York. The main business of this meeting was to consider the 50 questions which had been submitted by members of the Fellowship by the stated deadline of August 31. All of the questions were anonymised for obvious reasons. We reviewed them all, applying the Terms of Reference which are circulated at the same time as AA Service News. Anyone who had prior involvement in a question declared their interest and opted out of discussion of that question. Some of the questions covered similar topics and where this was the case, we either selected the one which encapsulated the topic best, or combined two or more. By the end of that meeting we had three piles: 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe'.

The Committee met again in York over two days in October where the questions for Conference 2024 were selected. We made the decision that each committee would be given two questions and a literature question to discuss. This decision is a direct response to the experience at Conference 2023 with three questions and a literature question taking discussion into the very early hours of Sunday morning.

We ensured that sufficient background was provided which was accurate and did not tell people how they must decide the question. The chosen questions were then allocated to the six committees - two per committee. To these were added literature items to amend arising from previous Conference decisions. We also considered the Conference matrix, which sets out the action taken by the General Service Board in relation to recommendations of the previous Conference. We concluded that each of the decisions had either been implemented, or that progress was being made in implementation. Finally, rejected questions were allocated to members of the committee to provide reasons for the decision to those who had submitted questions.

Groups, Intergroups and Regions discussed the allocated questions to ensure delegates are carrying the views of the Fellowship forward to Conference.

In February the Conference Steering Committee met again to deal with any final decisions as to the running of Conference. We were given a presentation by Hamish from a working group who looked at creating guidelines for submitting questions to Conference with a suggested template for the question.

We reviewed our own work, including the application of the Terms of Reference and any recommendations to be conveyed to our successors.

I am honoured to have been elected Chair of Committee 3 and therefore a member of the Conference Steering Committee as well as Alternate Conference Chair. I am grateful for this opportunity of service and in so doing, achieving my primary purpose of staying sober and helping others to achieve sobriety.

Alternate Conference Chair  
Jim M

### **Explanation of Voting Procedures**

In previous years tellers in their second year at Conference were selected to count and present the votes of those voting members in Conference. Those of us who were here last year will recall some

quite time consuming and frustrating difficulties in trying to count the votes in the quadrants in which you sit.

A suggestion was put to the Conference Steering Committee with regards to an option for electronic voting and we looked into this further in the months leading up to Conference this year. We have decided, as a trial for this year's Conference, to use the electronic keypads which you will find at your seats. This facility is only rented this year as a trial, however, should you find this is a successful and more efficient way to carry out our voting there is an option to purchase for use at Conference and elsewhere in the Fellowship where needed.

You will have the option when prompted to select three options, yes, no or abstain. These votes will then be counted and presented on the graphic behind the stage. GSO staff members will then record these.

The abstentions will be acknowledged but not included in the final outcome.

A quorum of Conference shall consist of **two thirds** of all the Conference members registered. The staff member will then calculate any majority or otherwise and pass the result to the Chair of Conference, who will then announce the result.

A simple majority is a **recommendation** to the Board to take any necessary action and a proposal that carries a two thirds majority of the vote is **binding** on the Board.

### **Explanation of Open Forum - (Non-Voting Session)**

As you will see from the agenda this is due to take place tomorrow night between 9 and 10 o'clock and it is your opportunity to ask any questions that you may have, particularly if you don't think they are going to be covered anywhere else throughout the weekend.

So please, take some time to think, you have an hour tomorrow night and it really is just an open session giving you an opportunity to ask anything that is on your mind. As many questions as can be fit into the hour will be taken.

### **Saturday 10pm and 11pm sessions explanation**

The Conference Steering Committee is charged with the process and running of Conference itself. Due to difficulties last year, we took the decision to remove the 10pm and 11pm sessions from this year's calendar. I wrote to each Region's Chair in advance of your last Question for Conference Briefing, to explain our rationale for this, but in the interests of full transparency I will also share this on behalf of the Conference Steering Committee with you now.

With regard to the 10 pm Region regroup and 11pm Committee reconvene removal from the official programme, the gathering of Region delegates is of course still open for each set of delegates to convene should they wish to do so. However, the committee has decided to revert to previous Conference schedules that finished with the plenary session, and not formally set aside time for the committees to meet again at 11pm.

The discussion of each committee's answer will be discussed by Conference as a whole on Sunday where any amendments, changes or deletions can be made. The Steering Committee feels that having given delegates the draft responses on Saturday evening, the final responses will be all the better from debate and discussion after a good rest. Last year for example one committee who met again

after 11pm provided an amended answer that had been redrafted after remaining in their reconvened committee until after 2am. The proposal was rejected by Conference the following day. I am sure you will agree this is far too long a day for anyone to sensibly work with committee business having begun at 09.00am on the Saturday.

It was the conscience of the CSC that with the number of questions now back to historic numbers of 2 per committee, there will be far greater time for each delegate to provide valuable input and insight in their allocated committee meeting times with their respective committees on each question, more than was available at last Conference. In addition, these reduced numbers will also provide sufficient time for debate and amendment on Sunday morning, with clear refreshed heads allowing for a better overall experience of Conference by allowing more time for rest and reflection from the previous evening.

The delegates, by definition, are delegated to carry the conscience on behalf of the groups in their regions into the committee meetings. There is a great onus on the committee members to debate, challenge, support or reject the proposals in committee, in line with the conscience provided by their groups. When the draft committee reports are issued on the Saturday the proposals are really the property of the Fellowship from that point. It was felt that by allowing any redrafts or amendments to be made on the Sunday morning with all in attendance, it would be a more inclusive experience.

I know I speak on behalf of this year's Steering Committee when I say that there is a heavy responsibility on the Steering Committee to conduct its business with the good of the Fellowship, including the Conference delegates, at the forefront of its actions. I am happy that we have done this with integrity and in good faith throughout.

In retrospect it may have been more helpful to have included an explanation for the amendment to the Conference programme when it was issued, and this lesson can be included in our recommendations to next year's Steering Committee. It is, of course, open to those replacing the present CSC for next Conference, to change, amend or further adopt what we have tried to achieve this year. We hope that the amendments that we have made to the programme allow for a more inclusive experience with valuable input from everyone, especially on the Sunday morning when the Fellowship's voice is truly heard.

## **Orientation**

I would like to invite Ranjan, General Secretary, to share the Orientation and Conventions.

Ranjan read the orientation, a copy of which had already been given to delegates, covering any last-minute changes, safety information and the National Convention dates which are:

Scottish Convention – 26 – 28 April, 2024

Welsh Convention – 31 May – 2 June, 2024

Southern Convention – 20 – 22 September, 2024

Northern Convention – 2025 TBC

## **Closing of First Session**

We are now approaching time to start your committee proceedings and I take this opportunity to remind you that we work under the guidance of the 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts. When dealing with important fellowship business it is very important that we best serve the Fellowship by conducting this business in the spirit of love, patience and understanding. After all, "Love and Tolerance is our code".

Every member of each of the 6 committees has an equal, important voice. You have been specifically delegated to carry the conscience of the groups your Regions represent, and they are relying on you to speak up, challenge and offer insightful comment and thought. Whilst there may be debate and differences in committee proceedings, let us be guided by principle rather than personality.

When voting has concluded on Sunday we will have completed important fellowship business which will be disseminated out to the membership. Let us do so with the Fellowship's needs and the protection of it and its members at the forefront of our minds.

Please enjoy your time at Conference this weekend. It is a long few days but I am sure when it is over you will see how important and fruitful a process it really is. "It works, it really does".

Please help me close the session with:

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

The first session ended with everyone saying the Serenity Prayer.

## Friday 7.45pm Second Full Session

Sean welcomed everyone back and opened the second full session of Conference at 7.45 pm with a moment's silence to reflect on why we're here and still suffering alcoholic and the Preamble. Sean then asked for nominations for Conference Chair 2025 before handing over to Justin, Chair of the Board, to introduce the General Service Board Reports.

### NOMINATIONS FOR CONFERENCE CHAIR 2025

The under mentioned were proposed and seconded for the Chair of the Fifty-Ninth General Service Conference 2025:

Jane C	-	North East Region
Frank C	-	London Region South
Alison F	-	East of Scotland Region

The nominees signified their willingness to serve and each gave a brief summary of their AA service background. The formal election, by way of a modified Third Legacy procedure as recommended by Conference 1998, to take place at the final session of Conference.

### General Service Board Reports

#### Introduction

(Justin T, Chair GSB)

Hello. My name is Justin, I'm an alcoholic. My current service position is as Chair of the Trustees of the General Service Board.

Welcome to York! For some York will be a new experience, others may be veterans of Liaison Officer meetings, sub-committees or be in their second, third or even fourth year of attending Conference. Everyone is very welcome, and I look forward to the outcome of your deliberations and any new priorities for the Board's work. A particular welcome to our Observers from AA fellowships beyond these shores – the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Poland and Portugal .

Tonight, we'll have presentations from CLIVE, our Honorary Treasurer on the charity's finances, then JO who'll take us through the Literature submitted for approval and update us on some longer-term projects. Last year we had TOM and TIM presenting work from PI and E-Comms; as a change, this year it'll be TIM and TOM – I'm hoping we'll get sight of the new website on which they and the Sub Committee (SC) have been beavering and other exciting initiatives – films to encourage inclusivity and work on a new cross country poster campaign.

Tomorrow, we'll hear from BARBARA on the Health initiatives – NICE! Then we'll hear from HOLLY on FROSC – including an explanation of the initials that form the name, and LEVEY who has exciting developments to share about the National Telephone Service.

Reports on all the other service disciplines, and the relevant SCs form part of the written report in your delegate pack. The trustees who wrote them are all here and will have name badges, so please do discuss any matters of interest with them.

The complement of Trustees on the General Service Board is not full, we still have several regions without a local member on the Board who can report back to them. This is a pity for the region, but also for other regions' trustees who must work even harder and attend more SCs to take up the slack.

Last July, for the first time ever, we invited representatives from each region's Executive Committee to attend an online session as part of the Board's annual workshop. We discussed this disconnect from regions without trustees and after consideration, a potential solution was circulated to all regions. If a region will have been without a trustee for at least two years, we will override our usual best practice of interviewing a minimum of two nominees, and be prepared to interview a single, qualified candidate. The Service Handbook reflects GSB practice on such matters (we are charged to appoint our own successors) but does not direct it. It is hoped that it'll seldom need to be applied but will bring currently under-represented regions back into close contact with the charity.

One matter raised in Conference 2021 was the subject of greater inclusivity, and we are delighted to report that films appealing to still suffering alcoholics from three groupings: Women, LGBTQIA+ and People of Colour, have been shot and we are able to show some of these to you this weekend – a year ahead of schedule. We also have a film that's been created for the Employment Subcommittee on alcoholics in blue light services, police, fire, ambulance.

As part of this work, we looked at the make-up of the Board, and realised that we could attract diversity most readily through our Non-Alcoholic Trustees (NATS!). We currently have a cohort of NATS who are more diverse in terms of Age, Gender and Ethnic origin than ever before. We still have some vacancies, and if you know of a suitable non-alcoholic, who believes in our programme – particularly if they are from an under-represented group - please pass their details to Ranjan.

One of the GSB's responsibilities is handling questions and complaints, both from the public and members of the Fellowship. Over recent years some of the correspondence from members has become unpleasant and, in some cases, threatening. It seems modern communication channels exacerbate this - inside and outside the Fellowship.

Please remember to treat all the Fellowship's servants in the way that you would wish to be treated, with love and respect. Conference is usually a great example of how we may disagree without being disagreeable and accept a group conscience with which we may disagree. This is the essence of Tradition 1 and how we can preserve Unity.

But the GSB is about much more than handling "How dare you tell us what to do" and "Why won't you intervene".

Over the past year we have forged closer links with AA US and Canada – indeed we have two trustees hot-footing it to the airport on Sunday (think Phil Collins at Live Aid) to observe the US/Canada Conference, which starts that very day! York hosted the European Service Meeting in October last year and is in the running to be host of the World Service Meeting in 2026. We have made substantial donations to the International Literature Fund and the World Service Meeting Fund, to help the developing fellowships in other countries receive the help that so benefitted our structure.

We've held events in the parliaments in London, Edinburgh, and Cardiff – to cite one highlight, we had a very moved Scottish Health Minister ask, "How can we help?".

Personally, I have found the last year in this service role to be challenging and I'd like to offer a particular thanks to my trustee colleagues, the General Secretary, and the staff at GSO, NSO and SSO for their counsel and support.



And now, let's hear from CLIVE our Honorary Treasurer...

## Finance

(Clive K – Honorary Treasurer GSB)

Good evening, Conference. My name is Clive, I'm an alcoholic and I've been privileged to be your Honorary Treasurer for the last three years.

This presentation is to give you a brief outline of the Charity's finances for the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

The Fellowship has continued to meet the challenges posed by the current uncertainty in society post pandemic. We, as the Trustees of the Charity, would like to say a big THANK YOU to you all for your continued generosity and service.

As a reminder, we hold three accounts for the Charity:

1. Development Fund Account (Closed or Restricted Account)
2. European Service Meeting Account (Closed or Restricted Account)
3. General Open (or Unrestricted) Account

**Development Fund Account** is serviced by the royalty's derived from the sale of the Hard Copy versions of the Big Book and The Twelve & Twelve books.

This money is used to promote Primary Purpose activities and aid the AA infrastructure around the globe, mainly in Eastern Europe & Sub-Sahara Africa.

**European Service Meeting Account** is serviced by the English speaking countries in Europe to fund their bi-annual meetings which are held in York

**General Open Account** is serviced by the contributions from the Fellowship, sale of AA literature and Investment revenue.

It is used to carry out Primary purpose work within the UK as directed by the Fellowship by the deliberations of the Conference Committees.

The Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) are our investment company and have been for the last few years. This fund is amongst the top performing funds in this sector. The Charity now takes an income from the investments, as opposed to accumulation of units.

### Income to the Charity

**Voluntary Contributions** – from yourselves through the service structure. Groups sending money to Intergroups which is surplus over and above what they need to cover their own expenses. Intergroups send their surplus, after meeting their commitments, to Regions. Then again, Regions having met their commitments send it to GSO. This is one of the main ways the Charity gets its money.

**Conventions; Legacies; Gratitude Week;**

**Personal** (which can be gift aided but only individuals can gift aid and they have to be UK resident taxpayers);

**Publications** – another big part of our income, the sale of our literature.

**Reserves as shares and**

**Financial Accounts Interest**

### Unrestricted Fund Income & Expenditure

Totals	Financial Year to 30 / Sept / 2023 £'s	Financial Year to 30 / Sept / 2022 £'s
INCOME	1,738,607  A decrease of 113,739 from 2021-2022	1,852,346
EXPENDITURE	1,856,797  An increase of 33,328 from 2021- 2022	1,823,469
SUR / DEF	<b>(103,566)</b>  After Gains on investments of 14,624	<b>(53,097)</b>  After losses on investments of 81,974

As you can see, our income for the financial year that we are dealing with was just under £1,739,000 and that's quite a decrease from the previous year of nearly £114,000. Our expenditure was nearly £1,857,000 which represents an increase of just over £33,000 on last year.

#### Income from Publications

As shown in the accounts includes:

Income from Share & Roundabout plus diaries and calendars  
and all other 'listed' literature sold

Income from publications was: £785,768

#### Cost of Publications

Represents all external printing of items on the Literature Stock list  
plus Share & Roundabout

Purchasing of Literature costs: £353,396  
(including £30,000 Written down Stock)

Below, you can see the comparison to last year and the surplus is a little bit down from last year's total:

	2022-23	2021-22
Income from Publications	= £785,768	£703,715
	LESS	
Cost of Publications	= £353,396	£249,195
Surplus	= £432,372	£454,520

*Our literature stock is only of value to AA.*

The literature surplus covers:

- Storage of literature
- Importing books from America & Cost of damaged literature
- Stationery, Internal Printing(ink) & Photocopying
- Postage & Packaging – which has gone up considerably
- Staff and associated premises overheads
- P.I. Leaflets, Free Literature, Confidential Directory
- Group Treasurers Cashbook, Illustrated Literature Catalogue
- Conference Reports (Preliminary & Final.)

## Reserves Policy

Concept 12 - Warranty Two: Sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve should be its prudent financial principle.

Ample Reserve held by the charity should exceed 1 year's expenditure.

Sufficient Operating funds are considered to be one quarter's expenditure.

Giving a total Free (Prudent) Reserve of over 1.25 year's expenditure (this current year is £2,320,996). AA & CC recommended practice.

The Prudent Reserve figures are always taken from the Unrestricted/Open Account.

The calculation of how we came to the prudent reserve figure:

- |                                    |            |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| • Total Expenditure 2022 to 2023   | £1,856,797 |
| • One Quarter's Operating Fund     | £ 464,199  |
| • Charities Required Total Reserve | £2,320,996 |

Taken From 2022 / 2023 Audited A/c

ASSETS: Investments & Cash – Creditors	£2,284,068
LESS	
Warranty 2 level (W2)	£2,320,996
Capital over & above W2	<b>(£36,928)</b>

*This is the working capital that enables the GSB to fulfil its own primary purpose to the public, professionals and services to Alcoholics Anonymous without dipping into our prudent reserves and operating costs.*

Our current position as at the end of September we were nearly £37,000 in the red eating into our prudent reserve.

I would like to conclude my Final Conference Report as your Honorary Treasurer by saying a few words. I hope you will indulge me for a few moments longer.

I will start off by saying that it has been an absolute honour and privilege to serve you, the Fellowship, as a Trustee on the General Service Board over the last six years; the first three years as your Eastern Region Trustee and your Trustee who had responsibility for Archives, the Fellowship Survey and the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Publication Working Group and these last three years as your Honorary Treasurer. I have learned so much about our wonderful Fellowship and have met and worked with some truly amazing people and forged lifelong friendships along the way too.

I would like to give my sincerest and heartfelt thanks to all the amazing staff at GSO and the Northern and Southern Service Offices. Your hard work, friendly disposition, diligence and willingness to help is second to none.

I also want to thank my fellow Board Trustees, past and present, who have encouraged and supported me throughout this journey of service. I wish to take this opportunity to remember Sandy MacV and Wullie I, both of whom were great mentors to me. May they continue to rest in peace. I also want to remember Geoff F, who was the North West Regional Treasurer when I became the Honorary Treasurer of the charity in 2021. Geoff was a calming influence and extremely supportive to me. May he continue to rest in peace too.

I want to wish my successor and your incoming Honorary Treasurer, Gretchen, all the very best in her new role. I have every faith and confidence that she will continue to work with due diligence for the benefit of all in our wonderful Fellowship.

I must also give my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to all the Sub Committee members, past and present, that I had the privilege of working with, in particular Archives, Fellowship Survey, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary SC and Anniversary Working Group (the Book Club), our Board Finance and Executive committees and our Regional Treasurers past and present.

Finally, I would like to thank you, Conference, the collective conscience of AA in Great Britain and English Speaking Continental Europe for your encouragement, support and love over these past six years.

It has been a wonderful journey for me and a steep learning curve. However, as with any journey in life, it hasn't always been plain sailing. There have been many twists and turns along the way. In addition to the great love, support and encouragement there has, unfortunately, been some vindictiveness and plain nastiness in some of the emails I received. May I take this opportunity to apologise if I ever came across as objectionable/ passive aggressive or whatever the modern term is these days. I'm happy to admit that I don't have all the answers and I'm certainly not the sharpest tool in the box. Mea culpa, Mea culpa, Mea Maxima culpa!!

I would not have considered putting myself forward for the Honorary Treasurer role on my own initiative. I was asked by my predecessor if I would like to put my name in the hat for it. I thought and prayed about it before agreeing to put myself up for election. I also sought the advice of good friends on the Board and remembered what an old timer said to me many years ago about not refusing anything I'm asked to do in AA service as far as possible. I'm glad that I was elected by my peers and as I mentioned earlier, I have enjoyed this role immensely.

I firmly believe that carrying out any service role in our wonderful Fellowship is an honour and privilege and ought to be carried out in the spirit of love and tolerance.

To carry out any role in AA with selfish, ulterior and dishonest motives, or with the intention of feeling superior by trying to sow disunity and disharmony, whether that be individually or by the setting up of various groups completely out with our service structure in AAGB, goes contrary to our Steps, Traditions and Concepts. It can only lead to discouragement and vacancies in positions throughout the service structure which is completely understandable. Who would want to take on a service role in good faith if it just leads to being bullied, criticised and micromanaged when all your trying to do is your level best for the Fellowship!!

As someone who was unfortunately bullied in AA many years ago, the first time in my life that I'd encountered this, I had hoped that I would not encounter this sort of behaviour in service. I thank God that these incidents only strengthened my resolve to continue to carry out my duties as best I could.

It gives me great comfort to remember that I don't stand up here with any sense of entitlement. I also don't perform any service role in AA with any selfish motives of trying to get something for myself.

As in life I have to take responsibility for my actions and not hide behind whatever the latest fad is.

I like to think that the same spirit of kindness and love that I experienced in AA nearly four decades ago still exists today regardless of who you are or what background you come from. As in life, even with all the different labels we have to contend with these days, we are all one blood. Our primary purpose is to offer the hand of friendship and help to all who reach out for it!

Finally, yes, I can hear the gasp of relief from the floor! I know the majority of you assembled here this weekend are continuing in our third legacy of service in the spirit of unity, love and tolerance, I would like to wish you a wonderful weekend and all the very best as you continue your journey in service to our beautiful Fellowship.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

And if no one has told you that they love you today, please let me be the first to say, I love you all.

Love in Fellowship  
Clive

## **Literature**

(Jo F)

Good evening, Conference. My name is Jo and I'm an alcoholic. It's really nice to see everybody. I have the privilege of being the Chair of the Literature Sub Committee and this presentation is a report on what we have done over the last year and there are five items for you to vote on this evening and Literature Sub Committee news.

The information you have all received has been sent out through the Fellowship structure and is also in your packs.

It's been a privilege to work with the Literature Sub Committee and we have worked in collaboration with other Sub Committees and everyone has worked really well and you will see the productivity that's happened this year.

There are five items for your approval:

1. 'Alcoholics Anonymous as a Resource for Criminal Justice Professionals'  
The information came from the Probation and Criminal Justice Service Sub Committee, it's been looked at by the Literature Sub Committee and it's an outward facing leaflet going to professionals.
2. 'DOES ANYONE ELSE LOOK LIKE ME IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS?'  
This has come up from Birmingham Intergroup Public Information Committee which has been looked at by the Literature Sub Committee and is specifically to encourage people of colour into the Fellowship.

3. 'Now that I am an Employment Liaison Officer (ELO)'  
This information came up from the Employment Sub Committee and it's a service-based leaflet looking inwards.
4. 'A Guide for the Health Liaison Officer'  
This is also a service-based leaflet coming from the Health Sub Committee
5. 'Little Book 2'  
This was put together by the Literature Sub Committee using already Conference approved literature bringing together all sorts of key seminal texts that we all know and love within the Fellowship. Its aim is to provide a little meeting in a pocket for you all.

First, to the proposed pamphlet '**Alcoholics Anonymous as a Resource for Criminal Justice Professionals**' and we have had no feedback from the Fellowship on this leaflet. Could we please vote to approve this leaflet.

***Conference approved the above pamphlet with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Next, '**DOES ANYONE ELSE LOOK LIKE ME IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS?**', we have had a small amount of feedback from the Fellowship and thank you very much for that. The information didn't really enhance the leaflet in any way and one of the suggestions was to enlarge the text but we can't really enlarge it, for various reasons including increasing costs and not being able to fold it. So, we have decided to keep it as it is and I would like to go to a vote on this.

***Conference approved the above pamphlet with a two-thirds plus majority.***

The proposed pamphlet '**Now that I am an Employment Liaison Officer (ELO)**'. We have had some feedback from the Fellowship which is great, and we are always grateful for feedback. One of the comments was some of the abbreviations weren't written in full so we've sorted that out on the leaflet and we've put them in the appropriate places. We've also had the inevitable typos, which is a shame, but of course we are not perfect. So, on page 1 of the literature sent out to you all it says *what does and ELO do* and now reads *what does an ELO do?* On page 2 we had a repeated number bullet point, which was my fault because I put it in twice, so we deleted the extra one. That completes all the feedback and the inclusion for this leaflet so can we go to a vote on this.

***Conference approved the above pamphlet with a two-thirds plus majority.***

The proposed pamphlet '**A Guide for the Health Liaison Officer**'. Again, we have had some feedback on this, some abbreviations weren't written in full where appropriate, so that has been adjusted. The feedback was on page 1 'health care' shouldn't be two words and it now reads 'healthcare' as one word. On page 2 of the information that was released to you, the first paragraph, we have inserted a comma after the word exhaustive. On the fourth bullet, we've added the word 'meeting' and deleted the word 'working', so it says, including Open Meeting Workshops, and again on page two, the seventh bullet, we've included the words 'Alcohol Liaison Nurse and crossed out the word 'practitioner', so it reads find out if there is an alcohol liaison nurse or liver specialist, nurse, and so on. And that really includes all the feedback that we received included so can we go to the vote please?

***Conference approved the above pamphlet with a two-thirds plus majority.***

The last item for voting on is **'Little Book 2'**. We have had several people point out to us that the third and fourth editions and quite likely that the fifth edition have different page numbers for stories. We originally put in the page numbers using the fourth edition. For the story on Acceptance on page 12 of the literature that you received, we originally referenced Acceptance page 417, Alcoholics Anonymous, and we changed the reference to the actual title of the story, Acceptance was the Answer, Alcoholics Anonymous so everybody knows which story we are taking about. We did the same on page 12 for the story on resentment, which was originally referenced as page 552, Alcoholics Anonymous. Again, we changed it to the title, Freedom from Bondage, Alcoholics Anonymous. That concludes all the feedback so can we now go to the vote.

***Conference approved the above booklet with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Thank you, Conference, that concludes all the voting part of the presentation and all of the literature got through which is marvelous and we'll just go on to the second part of the presentation.

### **Literature activity following Conference 2023**

We've actually revised the Handbooks, they've undergone a major refresh to the AA Great Britain family look, which I hope you all approve, we've had a lot of really positive feedback on these. And you know, even newcomers are picking them up and actually opening the pages and seeing what service is about. So, I think we might have a winner there.

There were 6 revisions to the Structure Handbook following Conference 2023, and a new chapter for the Service Handbook. These are all in place in the 2023 revisions.

The other thing that we needed to do was temporarily replace the '12 Traditions Illustrated' because we removed that from the shelves of the Fellowship and we brought over 'Experience Has Taught Us' from USA and Canada. I believe that the '12 Traditions Illustrated' in America has now gone back on sale without the offensive cartoons.

### **Literature Sub Committee Activity 2023/4:**

- Completing the 'Mental Health and AA' pamphlet ready for Conference 2025
- 'A Brief Guide to AA' – revision underway
- Welsh language leaflets revised and rebranded in AA family look
- 'AA as a Resource for Employers' via the Employment Sub Committee - review underway
- 'AA as a Resource for the Medical Profession' via the Health Sub Committee - review underway
- Preparation of 'Service Summaries' for Handbook – so people can see what a piece of service might entail in a snapshot in a really short paragraph, hoping to grab people's attention and then getting them hopefully to read a little bit more about service. Again, it's just trying to attract people into service.
- Ongoing review of literature items prior to reprint - for gender-neutral language / applying the AA family look
- Support to GSB sub-committees for their pamphlets and Service Handbook chapter revisions

### **Other items of literature up for revision and rebranding:**

- 'Prisons' literature – via Prisons Sub Committee
- 'When Drink Stops Working'
- 'What does Anonymity mean to AA'

- 'AA and the Armed Services', a new pamphlet – requested stories from Fellowship in an advert in AA Service News and if you have a story you would like to share please do write in.
- Not forgetting any literature items which Conference 2024 decides are our priorities...

I just wanted to reiterate again my thanks to the Literature Sub Committee, they are a really productive team, they do sterling work and it's an absolute privilege to work with them and that concludes my presentation.

## **PI & E Comms**

(Tom Fox and Tim B)

Good evening. I'm Tom and it's a great pleasure to be here. Great pleasure to see so many familiar faces and so many new faces. Conference so far has been a blast. Let's hope it stays that way. I'll do my best to undermine if I can!

What we're going to do in a moment is demo the new website for you but just a couple of things to say before we do that.

This is a big project. It's probably a bigger project than either Tim and I realised when we started because the website of AA has been used for so many things, it has become the 'all things to all men' that St. Paul talked about. What we've done so far is delivering what Conference asked us to do, which was revising the meeting finder, simplifying the landing page and making it more accessible to the still suffering alcoholic coming to the website. And we've done something in conjunction with our colleagues in GSO, about upgrading the shop experience and making shopping on the website much easier than it's been in the past.

What it's led us to, and I've mentioned this a bit at the end, is the realisation that we've got work to do. This is a piece of work in progress and I'd like to thank a number of people who have made this possible. The staff at GSO, particularly Gillian, for the hard work she has put in and members of the Sub Committee who have also put in tremendous work on this, members of the Fellowship who have and are supporting us in continuing testing even as we speak.

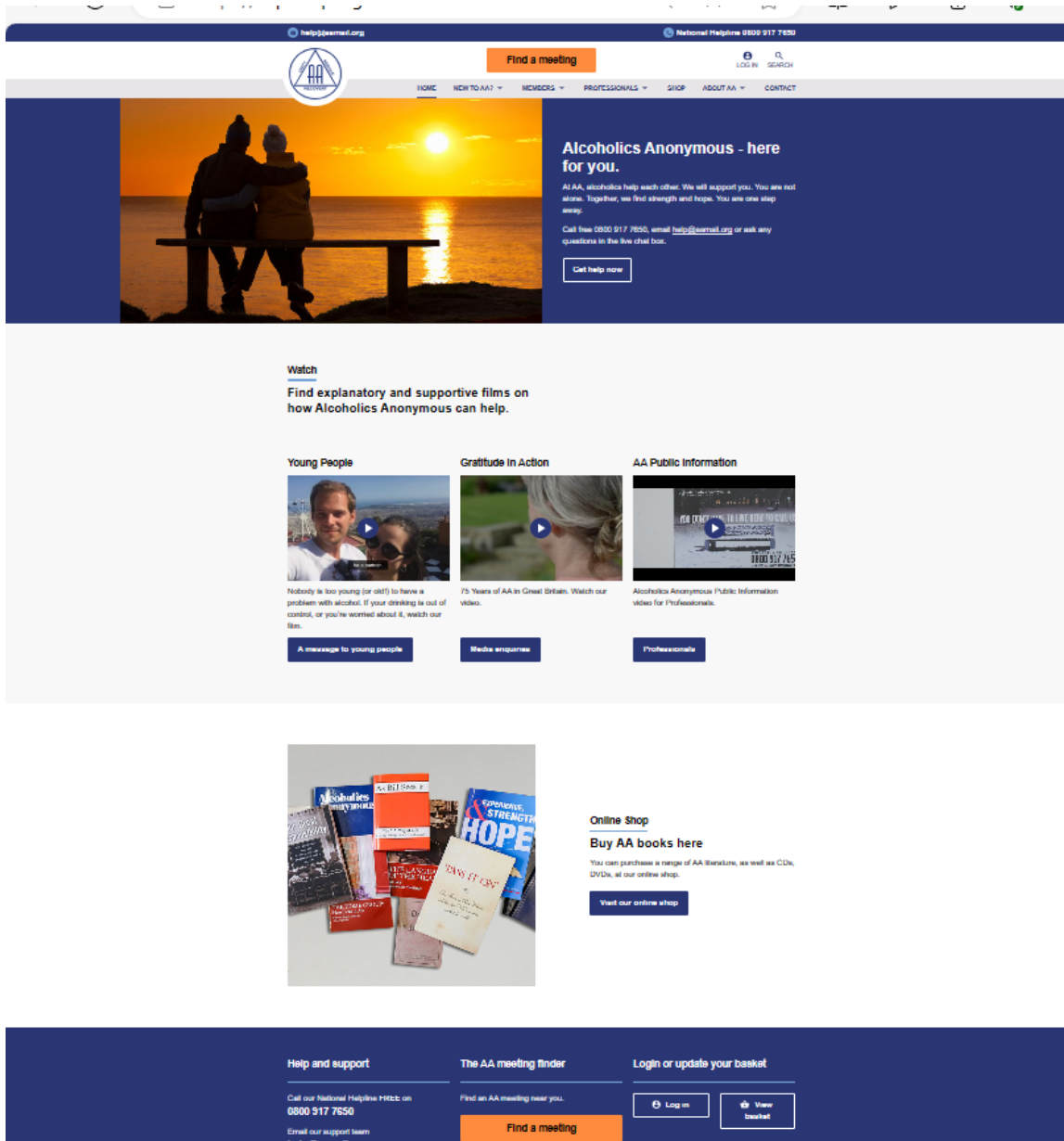
The good and the exciting news is that we would hope to launch this probably by the end of this month, it's not quite there but we hope all being well and the final testing being okay we will launch in the next few weeks.

Now Tim will take us through the website and then there will be opportunity at the end if you have any questions.



Good evening Conference, my name is Tim and I'm an alcoholic.

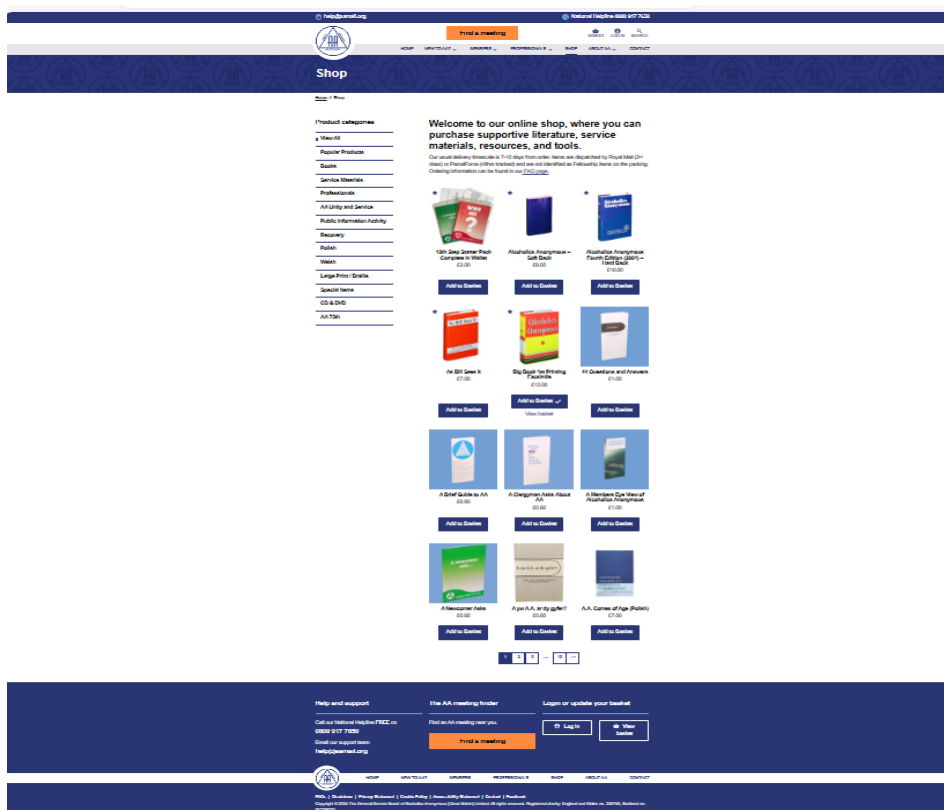
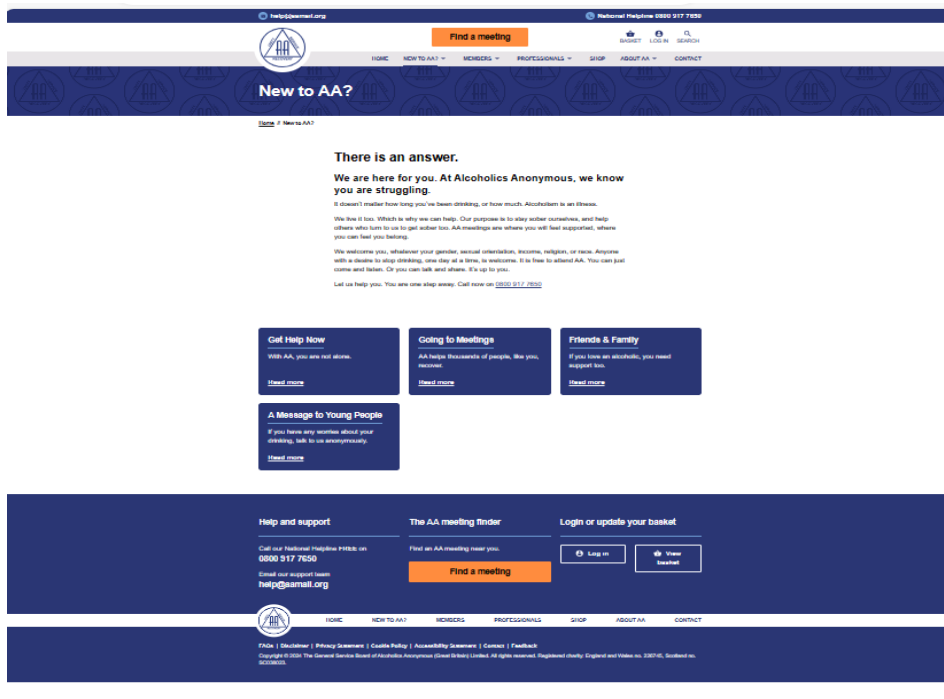
It is my pleasure to show you this and it is the same website, as long as there are no bugs found, that will be going live but at the moment it's on a test server. Last year I had the privilege of showing you the static pages, the design look and feel, but this is the actual website all connected, all working.

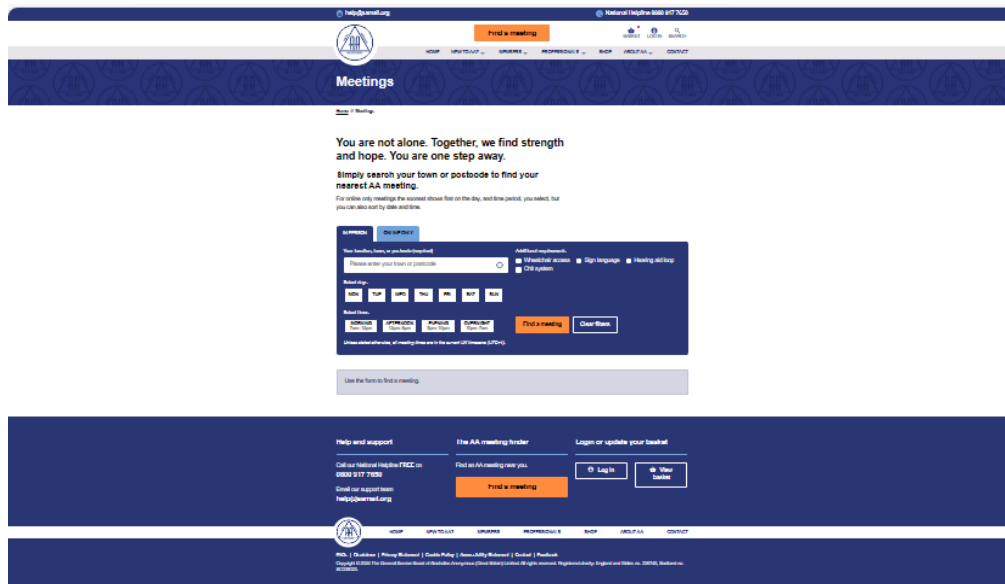


So, this is the home page which over the year, we've been refining what we've been doing, we've been listening to feedback, we've been getting comments from people and making some changes. What we've done on the homepage is to simplify it, we're conscious of the fact that the most important user of this website is the person trying to find help, the still drinking alcoholic. And so, we want it to be clear and uncluttered. And we want it to be straight to the point. So, we have removed some of the sections that we had with additional information, which we decided were just too much information. You can see now we will literally just have an introduction, we have some videos and a link to go to the shop and get some literature. We have the same navigation system, which was one of the things that we were asked to do, we have a navigation bar at the top and a navigation bar at the bottom, which makes it really easy, wherever you are, to find a way back or forward or to another part of the website. You can see that we've got the

Find a Meeting button prominent in both the bottom and the top. Again, that's one of the prominent features which if you're shaky, your quivering, even if you've come off a bender and you want to find some help, you'll be able to get that quite quickly and be able to see it.

Just to show you some of the other pages and there is a lot of information, as Tom mentioned, on this website and we have tried to simplify it, make it easy and reduce some of the information.





Basically, we use different types of pages, using tiles to give a summary, which is top line information giving a little bit of information to describe what that tile will be.

On the shop page, click on the Starter Pack and you get more detail. Again, we have a navigation bar running along the side so it's quite easy to track back where you want to go or to follow on and get further information.

We have lots of links taking people to different parts of the website. It was one of the main requests from Conference to improve navigation and we think we have done that.

Find a Meeting. This is obviously going to be really important to newcomers, but it is also very important for members of the Fellowship out and about and trying to find a meeting. It's really simple and quite easy to use. We know that the vast majority of our users are mobile phone users or mobile device users and you will get the same features and same readability on a mobile phone as you would on a computer screen. It's very simple, putting in a location, selecting other filters that you want to filter your selection on, it will default to in person meetings but there is a separate tab for online meetings. If there's any special features or additional features you need to refine your search, then that's just a simple tick box and you can use as many or as few as you want.

There's a location function. Location services are available if switched on. If you have location services on your laptop or mobile phone and it's switched on then it will know where you are and if you hit find a meeting it will automatically bring up the nearest meetings to you.

We used the development agency, who have been absolutely brilliant, throughout this whole exercise and have been working really hard to try and understand what we wanted and be able to deliver what we wanted. Another thing we wanted was for a meeting to show the local helpline number which helps the Telephone Service and a newcomer who wants some help and wants someone to meet up with them.

Online meetings are much the same and there is no concept of location because you can get to them from anywhere, just select what you want and click find a meeting.

Whatever you have selected brings up a printable pdf list and, on the current website, you would have to go to the microsites to get it so we have made that easier for people to get that information.

As Tom mentioned, we have done some work on the Shop and made it a lot clearer and easier to use. There are features built into the website which weren't available on the old website. There is a basket, and you can make some selections and it will show in there and you can go off to other parts of the website, come back to the shop and the items will still be in your basket and you can complete your transaction. You can create an account and login and if you have made previous purchases, it gives the option for you to purchase these again.

One of the things we are pleased about, and Gillian particularly, is that all the way through this there have been little things that needed changing and we have been able to do that, because we have access, through Gillian, to be able to change any of this. We have the control to change it in a way that we didn't with the previous website. We have the ability to change things at GSO as and when required. That is a huge benefit, and it allows us a degree of responsiveness which wasn't the case before. We are proud of this and recognise that there is still a lot of work to be done, it's a work in progress and it takes us to a better place than we were in before and we are happy to take questions on this.

### **National Poster Campaign Proposal 2024/25**

I want to give you a flavour of the background to this before we do the presentation. A number of Regions have been using poster companies to do advertising in Alcohol Awareness Week and other occasions for some time.

We were made an offer by a company called JCDecaux and I don't know if the name means anything to you, but I guarantee you have seen the poster sites, they are the big electronic poster sites beside motorways and outside supermarkets and the like. JCDecaux, in common with quite a number of companies, have what one might term a social responsibility policy and they offer advertising at reduced rates at particular times of the year and in sites of slightly less demand.

When we started off with this my first thought was Tradition 7. Can we accept this? It transpires that there are precedents in the US and elsewhere that parts of the Fellowship have involved themselves in these campaigns. The next question was what's in it for them? Because usually, when you're doing these sort of campaigns they expect the recipients of their magnificence to be singing their praises from the rooftops about how wonderful they are.

Affiliation. We can't do that. We had several protracted conversations with them, all the time expecting them to say okay, sorry, we can't help you. And they didn't and they were willing to accept that we will not do the sort of things and the sort of press releases that you will normally get as a payback. So, we decided to have an in-depth conversation with them. We've worked for some months with them and we made it clear that we could not accept this for nothing, that we would have to make some contribution to what was being done, particularly in terms of design costs, and negotiations have been going on with GSO.

They introduced us to a number of agencies that they have working for them, and one in particular, a company called The Raised Eyebrow Society, and they came up with a campaign involving members of the Fellowship in the production of the campaign. Let's say, the concept is an anonymous campaign by Alcoholics Anonymous. You'll get there when I show you what they have in mind.

First, what the campaign isn't, is a call to action. It's not a poster that says if you're having problems with alcohol phone 0800 917 7650 and it doesn't say go to the Alcoholics Anonymous website. What it does is encourages people to think and I'm going to take you through some slides quite quickly. Happy to let you have a look at your leisure but just to give you an idea of what we are talking about.

The advertising agency have spent the past few months developing a poster campaign that delivers the AA message in accordance with our principles and traditions.

The advertising agency said: *“We have not created an advertising campaign. We’re merely utilising the apparatus used for advertising purposes to carry the AA message to people still struggling with alcohol.”*

A preview of the campaign was sent to delegates in February.

Le**A**rn to live without **A**lcohol

You need never drink **A**g**A**in

Stop **A**s you me**A**n to go on

Is **A**lcohol costing you  
more th**A**n money?

Try J**A**nu**A**ry

**A**lcohol isn't the **A**nswer

What the proposed campaign looks like now...

LE**A**RN TO LIVE  
WITHOUT **A**LCOHOL

SOME OF US ARE  
POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL

ALCOHOL IS NO PAIN-KILLER

TRY ATTENDING A MEETING

ALCOHOL ISN'T THE ANSWER

If we choose to accept the offer from JCDecaux we will have the opportunity to run the poster campaign nationally in 4 separate bursts. Launching in July for Alcohol Awareness Week. Ending after a 5-week run between Christmas Day and Jan 31st 2025. What that campaign amounts to is probably a rate card value of about half a million and we are making a contribution but we're not doing anything like that.

**Do you think we should take the opportunity to reach more people struggling with alcohol using this poster campaign?**

***Conference approved the above campaign with a two-thirds plus majority.***

The advertising agency have used existing AA language in many of the headlines. We've also got a range of other headlines, which I'll come to later, where they tried to expand this into other similar messages, but not necessarily messages that we have previously used. These are the previously published ones. You've seen examples and they are just simple statements.

LeArn to live without Alcohol

You need never drink AgAin

Alcohol isn't the Answer

Is Alcohol costing you more thAn money?

You Are not Alone

HAs your drinking reAched the point where it worries you?

Life After Alcohol

ChAnge your behAviour

Are you powerless over Alcohol?

There is A wAy out

PersonAl Anonymity

Attend A meeting

Alcoholism is An illness

### **Headlines *Not previously published***

Alcohol is no pAin-killer

If you cAn't control Alcohol

Some people Are powerless over Alcohol

SeArching for the Answer?

ReAdy when you Are

Stop As you meAn to go on

Try JAnuAry

It's time to tAke cAre of yourself

Still sneAking About?

FACe your feAr

A new wAy of life

A life chAnging experience

Whenever you're reAdy to tAlk

Try Attending A meeting

We understAnd how you Are feeling

Do yourself A big fAvour

CreAte A better life

YeAh you cAn

StArt Afresh

StrAight tAlking time

Wipe the slAte cleAn

Stop As you meAn to go on

Is your heAlth totAlly wrecked?

ContAct us todAy

No one is A hopeless cAse

The best ideA you will ever hAve

I'm coming to the next thing I want you to vote on hopefully, the agency are very strong in the view that the simple approach, the anonymous approach, is what's best, but I think that view might not be shared by everybody within the Fellowship.

So, we asked them to look at two options. A plain one, which you've seen and the one with a logo in the corner. The logo identifies AA, as ever, although I'm not sure that the logo is immediately identifiable to people beyond the confines of Fellowship, but remember, we've got that internal audience to address as well.

Below, see with one with the logo and the one without



So, that's it with a logo. That's it without the logo. The poster without a logo will trigger intrigue, well, they're creatives, they would say something like that. The decision is for us. Do we want it plain and simple the way they do, or do we want a logo on it.

Certainly, I think, as somebody that used to work in the business, for a PR perspective, the anonymous poster campaign will attract more attention. I think that's probably true. But that doesn't mean to say we should abide by that. We also have to make sure that we do what sits best with the members of the Fellowship. So, logo or no logo that is the question.

***Conference voted by a two-thirds plus majority to not have the logo on the posters.***

## **New Films**

As Justin mentioned earlier, we were commissioned by Conference in previous years to produce some further PI films, about women, about LGBTQI+, about people of colour, and another film primarily addressed to employers within the blue light services. We've done it. We didn't think we were going to be able to get these films to you this year for approval. We've done it. We've got three of them. Now, what I'm about to show you, is not quite the finished product. There won't be anything else added other than some subtitles and some intro shots. The substantial content of it will be exactly as you see it tonight.

A couple of caveats, we've not finished all the anonymization so it will be more like the 75th film which I'm sure most of you have seen and ensure that we protect the anonymity of the participants. I think it's important that we define what we mean by anonymity, which is, there are people sitting in this room tonight who will know who they are. But nobody, in terms of the alcoholics that are in the films, won't be identifiable to anybody beyond possibly their immediate family and members of the Fellowship. So, it's not quite the finished product, but as near as damn it, and we thought you would want to see it. If you approve it, it means we can start using it this year as part of the launch of the new website and not have it sitting on a shelf for another 12 months. So, with that in mind, let's show the first and the fastest filmed, which is the one made for women, by women in the Fellowship.

### ***The film for Women was shown***

Now you've seen one, I think I should tell you what remains to be done on these films. First of all, the sound quality will be significantly improved. These are just rough cuts in that sense and the colour balance will be much brighter, much more technicolour. There will be subtitles provided on the videos for people who are hard of hearing and there will be a final call to action, helpline number and website address at the end of the video. So those are the bits that are missing and I thought it's probably best that you saw one and remember those things when you're looking at the other two.

### ***The film for People of Colour was shown***



The last film has a slightly different target audience. In the last year we've been at about trying to attract people from groups that these members of the Fellowship represent. This last film is about trying to communicate to employers the positive benefits of those in their employ who have a problem with alcohol to seek the help and support. When we've shown this film, we're going to ask you to vote on each of the films in turn and allow us to use them for PI purposes.

***The film for Employers Blue Light Services was shown.***

Before we got the vote, I think it's only appropriate to we offer some thanks to the members of the Fellowship, who were so candid, open and honest about their experience. It's what makes it powerful. It's real. We're very lucky that we have so many people who are willing to give so much of themselves to help encourage others to seek the help and the support of Alcoholics Anonymous. I'd also like to thank Board colleagues for their hard work and commitment to this project, to the Sub Committees who helped to review the content, and women in the Fellowship who provided feedback on some of the early versions of this.

I'd also like to thank those members of the Fellowship from the LGBTQ I+ communities. Although we haven't seen the film tonight, that commitment was no less and the value of the contribution that they've made is just as great. So that's a treat, God willingly, we can look forward to next year. So, anybody got any questions before we move to the vote?

After discussion, Conference was asked the approve the following films:

Women in AA  
People of Colour  
Employers & Blue Light Services

After voting Conference approved the above films with two thirds plus majority.

**Sunday morning (reported here for continuity) - Films**

The Conference Chair reported that a minority opinion had been expressed that there had been no time available to formulate questions regarding target audiences, production management, intended use regarding these films on the Friday night and that another vote be taken on these films after full discussion:

*Women in AA*

***Conference approved the above film with a simple majority.***

**Minority opinion**

The video raised expectations that any woman who wanted to would be able to attend a Women's meeting in their area, but women's meetings are not available in all parts of the country. Some delegates mentioned having to travel distances of 50 miles or more if they wanted to attend one. Expectations were similarly raised about women's meetings 'dealing with' domestic abuse, which we do not do, in the sense that it might be understood by the public at large watching the video. The statement that we have 'safeguarding policies' in place again could lead to unfulfilled expectations from professionals or the public, in that the Charity has a clearly formulated and published safeguarding policy, but not the groups.

*People of Colour*

***Conference approved the above film with a two-thirds plus majority.***

*Employers & Blue Light Services*

***Conference approved the above film with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Sean thanked everyone and closed the Friday evening session with the Serenity Prayer.

# SATURDAY EVENING

## Continuation of General Service Board Reports

Sean welcomed everyone back and opened with the Preamble and went on to invite Barbara O and Kieran Moriarty (GSB) to commence the continuation of General Service Board reports.

### Health

(Barbara O and Kieran Moriarty)

Good evening, Conference. My name is Barbara and I'm an alcoholic. It's been my privilege to serve as the Trustee for Midlands Region and the Trustee for Health for the last few years, and this is my last year I'm rotating out this year and I thought I'd been able to dodge this experience but I haven't. So here I am on my last hurrah and I'm a bit nervous but I'm among friends so just bear with me. I am the warm up. I am the warm up woman because the main part of the act is Kieran and this is our health report and I hope you find it interesting

- ❖ **AA has a history of working with the healthcare community, whether visiting patients in hospital (Bill and Bob visiting "The Man in the Bed"), talking to doctors and nurses either in hospitals, treatment centres or GP surgeries, making presentations to communities or talking to a patient referred to AA**
- ❖ **Frequently the alcoholic is referred to as a "problem drinker", alcohol dependent or "suffering from alcohol-use disorder"**

This is just the introduction we did for Chapter Six which we brought to Conference last year. Health has always been a really important discipline; it is where Bill and Bob started visiting the man in the hospital and for a lot of people health has been a really vibrant discipline over the years. We often hear nowadays people refer to the alcoholic as a problem drinker, alcoholic dependent or suffering from alcohol use disorder. We, as we know, always refer to ourselves as alcoholics and I am quite proud to do so, because if I hadn't called myself an alcoholic, I wouldn't have found this wonderful Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

When COVID came in, it obviously affected lots of disciplines, but I think health was the was probably affected more than most. All that work we've done in hospitals and things like that obviously had to come to an end. There were lots of ways we had to keep looking at how to keep the health discipline going and keep in contact with health professionals and some of the instances we had, the Open Meeting workshops went online. We carried on doing training for new professionals, new doctors, new nurses hoping that were sowing the seeds for future development in the health profession.

Our biggest achievement in 2023 was the recognition we got for AA in the National Institute of Clinical Excellence quality standards. This has been really, really important I think because, as I said, a lot of people refer to alcoholics as problem drinkers, it's a lifestyle choice, never understood that, but anyway we understand, as alcoholics, we understand the value of AA, we understand that it is a lifetime, one day at a time recovery for alcoholism. A lot of the professionals want evidence, and they look for evidence of how we can prove this and getting a recognition on these standards is what has given us that evidence to go out there and present to professionals what AA can do. It's all been down to Kieran, I'm not going to take any credit for any of this work. Kieran, our non alcoholic Trustee, has done a tremendous amount of work for the Health Sub Committee and for AA in putting the word out there and as I said, I am the warm up woman and I'm going to hand over to Kieran and he's going to carry on going through the slides and explain about the NICE quality standards.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Kieran Moriarty and I'm a non alcoholic Trustee. I think the first thing first thing I should say is in the two years I've been on the Board and the Health Sub Committee, Barbara has been absolutely fantastic. Her main role usually has been to rein me in and she's not the only one who does that.

What I'm going to talk to you about tonight is about NICE mainly, and the other thing is a shortened version of the article that's in the Spring AA Service News. It's often easier I think to hear somebody talk about it as it's bit heavy duty.

What are the NICE quality standards. Nice stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and they produce quality standards which are a comprehensive set of recommendations for a particular disease or condition. They gather evidence and have a committee and that committee was about six people, two of them were friends of mine, one had taken over from me as the Alcohol Lead for the British Society of Gastroenterology and the other was on a Public Health England Committee that I was on. I think there were two lay members and when I heard them talk, they were either members of AA or they were what you would call people with lived experience on the committee and these two people had a big influence on pushing AA and the 12 Steps. They came up with the quality standards. These were revised from 2011 and there have been no standards on these alcohol use disorders since then and NICE have come up with five statements and these five statements are meant to drive and measure quality improvements within a particular area of care.

NICE really focus on the one big bit of evidence and I think people of have said, you know AA works for me but there's not been the evidence, and it wasn't there for me when I retired clinically in 2018 after working 43 years in the Health Service and I'm ashamed to say that during that time I didn't liaise with Alcoholics Anonymous at all. Neither did anyone from Alcoholics Anonymous come to me, the field is wide open but I think, knowing how doctors are, I would encourage AA members to make the first move wherever possible.

The standard (QS11) is entitled 'Alcohol-use disorders: diagnosis and management', published in 2023, provides 'best practice', evidence-based recommendations to national policy makers in England & Wales, health & social care practitioners, service providers, commissioners, adults seeking help for an alcohol-use disorder (AUD). I think people in Scotland and Ireland will certainly take on the recommendations because they are applicable there as well. It covers identifying and supporting adults & young people (aged 10 and over) who may have an alcohol problem, and caring for people with alcohol-related health problems, as well as support for their families and carers.

The key statement is Quality Statement 2, out of 5 recommended, and it's the one that is relevant to AA and that's 'Adults seeking help for an alcohol-use disorder are given information on, and support to access, community support networks and self-help groups.' As we say they emphasise the 12 step programme. Further information can be found at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs11>

The Cochrane view was published in 2020. What is a Cochrane Review? There's a number of them and what they do is they get experts and here there were three experts John Kelly, Keith Humphries and Perry was the third author. In this they looked at 27 studies which were high quality studies, in which people compared AA and the 12 Steps against cognitive behavioural therapy and motivational enhancement therapy, and it covered 10,500 patients in total.

The NICE recommendation was based on the findings of those Cochrane review of those 27 studies. And the Cochrane Review showed that AA and 12 Steps produce similar benefits to the two therapists' cognitive behavioural therapy and motivational enhancement therapy on all drinking related outcomes apart from continuous abstinence and remission, where AA and 12 steps were superior. They were in no doubt about that.

Barbara and I met John Kelly and Keith Humphries at a meeting we were at and it was very encouraging and very inspirational. They're both tremendous scientists and also extremely nice people as well. They've come up with a couple of soundbites, I wrote to both Kelly and Humphries because we're also updating the section in the Service Handbook 'What professionals have said about AA' and John Kelly sent me a quote, which I think is a superb quote:

"Evidence demonstrates that AA confers long-term benefit by simultaneously boosting relapse prevention coping skills, enhancing and maintaining recovery motivation, reducing craving and impulsivity, and increasing spirituality, which can help people to reframe and better cope with stress. Since AA is widely available and accessible for free in most communities, this new evidence indicates AA may be the closest thing public health has to a 'free lunch'."

I have no political affiliations whatsoever, but I have been on government alcohol committees for 20 years and I can tell you, and you all know, the public health cuts have been brutal over the last 15 years and the thing is that AA treatment is free, whereas NHS treatment is usually time limited, and also AA treatment is lifelong.

This is Keith Humphries' soundbite:

"AA was created by people who knew what they needed to recover; a new outlook, a new community, and new ways of interacting with other people. The scientific evidence demonstrates that the results of their efforts is a free, grassroots organization that helps more people recover than all professional treatments combined. Giving support is as good for our health as getting it. AA gives a sense of worth and service."

I mean, not only are they great scientists, but they're great at putting things succinctly I wish I had either of those gifts.

One thing I am proud of is we've got the NICE guidance, the NICE recommendation and if you go on the website, there's a PDF which doesn't really say a lot but what I am pleased about is the Consultation Summary Report and if you go on the website just mentioned in the article, press the History tab, you'll get the Consultation Summary Report and they published every single word that every organisation submitted to them, now they approach 344 stakeholders 17 responded, and AA was one of them and we put our responses in, and then they approached people with their draft second response. Three of those 17 responded and we were one of those. They published every single word that we put in and AA came first alphabetically so we were first. I think we constituted about 40% of the whole Consultation Summary Report and we covered the Cochrane Report and we will come to the survey data later, but there was also a lot about ethnicity, accessibility and safeguarding. We were the only organisation that mentioned safeguarding at all.

In the Summary Report we addressed the stigma and the prejudice associated with people who misuse alcohol. You don't need me to tell you about that but I can tell you about it from my perspective, in the 43 years I was there, and still the treatment for people with alcohol problems, particularly alcohol related liver disease, which was where I dealt with, mainly which was very poor. Treatment was dreadful and intensive care doctors would refuse to take people with alcohol problems on to intensive care even when they just had pneumonia and would get better. Thirty years ago, the Birmingham Liver Unit wouldn't transplant people with alcohol related liver disease, again, they'd said this is a self-inflicted condition. Things have improved, but there's still a long way to go and I think with this evidence that's out there now, we can push and push and push. It's a moral failing and historically it's led to poor recognition too. They would never not treat somebody who was grossly overweight and smoked 60 cigarettes a day and had a myocardial infarction, but they just choose on alcohol for some reason.

I never used the word alcoholic when I was working but if people want to call themselves alcoholic, that's fine but when we were dealing with this if the word alcoholic got thrown in there, you knew you were going to get inferior treatment. So, when we were treating, I used to push for alcohol related but now I'm involved with AA I'm quite comfortable in the use of the word.

We come to the other big point highlighted in the NICE consultation report and that's the 2020 membership survey and spirituality and in that survey members were asked about their notion of a higher power, and I, and maybe many of you, were surprised that 65% of respondents reported that their concept of a higher power was based on a secular foundation, compared with only 35% whose views had an overtly religious basis. To many of us that exploded the myth and the misconception that AA is a religious organisation and that has led historically to reticence in accessing AA services. Many people, including me, believed, and many doctors, that to be in AA you had to believe in a God and so most doctors don't believe in God and therefore they wouldn't refer. With me, it was a bit the other way around. I'm a Catholic, and I didn't feel at all comfortable in talking about religion with patients who were under my care who are vulnerable, and I thought I'd be taking advantage of that. So that's why I didn't do so. But as we know, AA has members of all religions, no religion and different cultures.

I've been looking around for quotes and I spent about a month and I couldn't find it. So again, I went to John Kelly and John Kelly came up with this and it's a bit ambivalent and it leaves it open and I don't really quite understand it but it's:

Is AA Religious, Spiritual, Neither?

"In tapping into the "God idea" and borrowing some religious concepts, language, and practices (e.g., faith, prayer, meditation, confession), arguably AA might be considered "religious", but not a religion.

Without any formally agreed upon definition of what "spirituality" actually is, AA's focus on gratitude, hope, forgiveness, and compassion, might be considered spiritual in essence. It has facilitated a self-defined notion of spirituality, including even a non-spiritual, secular spirituality if one chooses, to ensure everyone has a chance at making use of its "protective wall of human community" and all that it has to offer.

So, "Is AA religious, spiritual, neither?" The answer, would appear to be, 'Yes'."

### **What does the NICE Quality Standard QS11 mean for AA?**

It is the new Gold Standard for alcohol use disorders and national policymakers are obliged to stand by it. The last review was in 2011. So, this review might be there for at least the next 10 years or so. We were making the push and I think that is a big opportunity for us in the health community. We are really actively trying to recruit people to the Health Sub Committee and to Health Liaison Officers roles to help to facilitate getting this message across. At the end of our committee meeting yesterday afternoon, two of the members of the committee told me inspirational stories. Whenever we have a Health Sub Committee meeting, we usually only get five reports from around the country. We need people out there getting those reports to us because we need encouragement as well.

AA members, all members, but particularly in health or public information can highlight now the Cochrane Review, in dealing with GPs, any hospital doctors, nurses, nurses are the important thing. Remember, doctors are the nominal head of the department and the people who do the work are the alcohol liaison nurses based in psychiatry and the liver specialist nurses based in liver units. We can highlight that and the survey data when we're dealing with health and social care practitioners.

Alcohol Care Teams, you'll have heard that expression. I first coined that phrase in 2010 in a paper and if you just Google up Alcohol Care Teams, and stick my name in, you'll find the latest paper on that in 2009 and number of other publications related to it. It was that expression, I worked with Public Health England for about 11 years, and they bought into it. They persuaded NHS England to fund Alcohol Care Teams, which is basically lots of nurses in the 25% of hospitals in England with the highest rate of alcohol dependent admissions. But since 2010, we put the evidence out and hospital trusts have already implemented appointing nurses in vast numbers of hospitals before Public Health England and NHS England started funding it, so there are very few major hospitals now without Alcohol Nurses, try and identify them, they are the key people. Look at addiction psychiatry and liver units.

If you can set up meetings in hospitals, I think that's number one priority because if you can get a meeting in a hospital and get patients into that meeting before they're discharged and start drinking again, and you can get a sponsor with them or someone who will take them to a meeting then that's a big opportunity, the golden opportunity. So, establishing meetings in hospitals and if you can somehow get a relationship in an emergency department and that's very difficult, then that's a big plus.

We also need to get into Primary Care. In Bolton. I was very friendly with the lead GP in the Alcohol Care Team and he did fantastic work. He had alcohol consumption data and he forced all the GPs in Bolton to do an audit, where they ask about alcohol consumption in all their patients. He had data on 60% of the patients in Bolton. Unfortunately, he's retired like me, and no one's picked it up and it also during COVID it all fell away so that that's sad. But GPs, they're overburdened now, I know people complain, but some of them are working really hard and if you can get in there and say this is what we've got to offer and if you can get that message over and set up meetings there's a lot of mileage to be gained from that.

The concept of 'Better than Well', I'd never heard of this until a few weeks ago. Dr David Best, University of the West of Scotland and Louise Hibbert found that Quality of Life (QoL) continues to improve over periods exceeding 5 years in recovery. In those who make it to this point, their wellbeing can exceed that typically reported by those never addicted. This concept of '**Better than Well**' offers a model of hope and change and suggests that the goal of recovery is a QoL process of ongoing growth.

Henry Kissinger, who lived to be 100 and I don't think he had a drink problem himself, but he obviously had vision. He was a US Diplomat Politician, working for Regan, Nixon, all of them and he said, and if you think about it, all the things he experienced in his life, *"America's greatest gift to the world is Alcoholics Anonymous."*

## **Telephones/First Response**

(Holly A and Levy P)

Good evening, Conference. I'm an alcoholic and my name is Levey and Holly has just told me that I'm the warm up. I'm responsible for the National Telephone Sub Committee. When I was nominated as a Trustee and then elected, I became a trustee in 2022, I was tasked with the National Telephone Sub Committee being the only trustee whose region is not involved with the 0800 number - what better choice!

One of the recommendations passed by Conference 2021 was that an opportunity be taken to review the National Telephone Service as a whole, including Continental European Region, to promote unity and consistency. The General Service Board (GSB) tasked the National Telephone Sub-Committee (NTSC) to carry this out.

A working party was set up with regard to the 0800 number.

The 0800 number is not a direct line to a responder/operator/volunteer but is in reality a call distribution number that will forward the call to an AA Telephone Service and is not manned directly. This call can at present be directed anywhere and not necessarily to the telephone service region where the call originates.

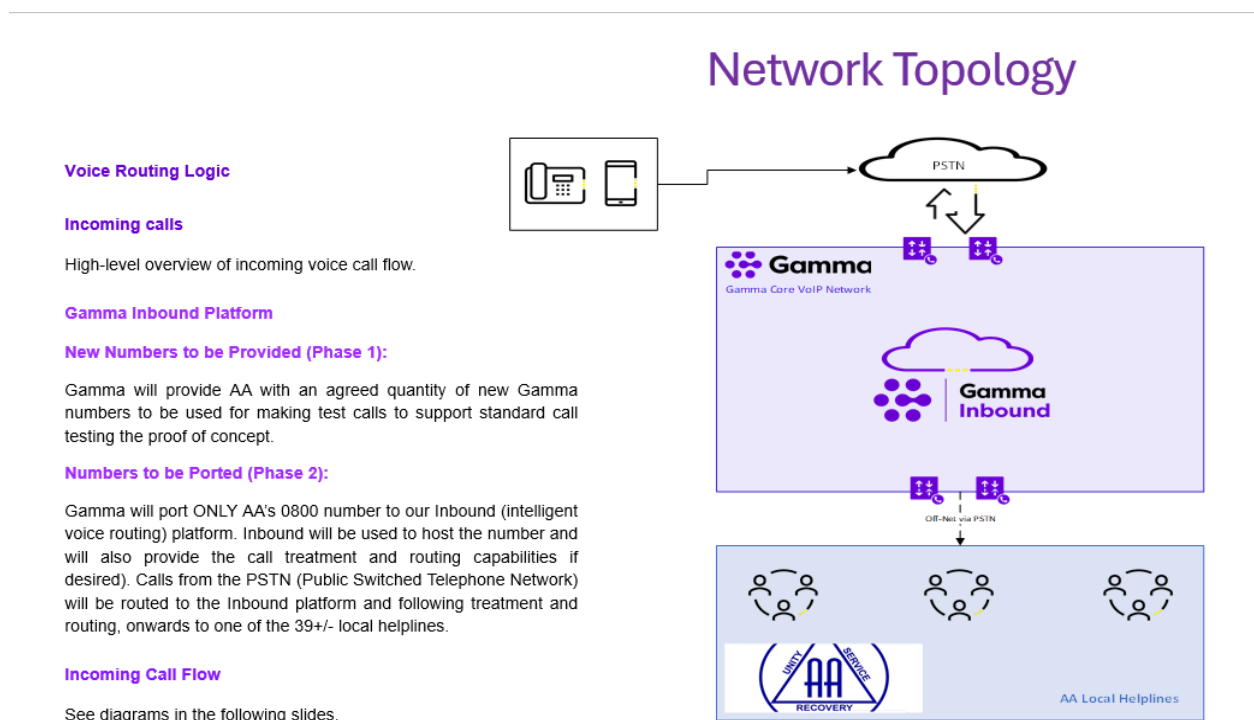
**The new platform will not interfere in anyway with the autonomy of the 39 Helplines or their individual operating process. They will not even know the difference.**

The contract requirements were sent out to four service providers and three of these engaged with the NTSC working party. One has been chosen after a lengthy consultation period, and a recommendation was made to the General Service Board. The provider chosen was Gamma, which was accepted by GSB. The contract was signed with them by the General Secretary acting on behalf of GSB and NTSC. The NTSC Working Party is now engaging with Gamma to ensure the earlier requirements of the Fellowship are met. For example, missed or dropped calls, withheld numbers and call blocking nuisance callers when necessary.

Further information will be available and discussed in detail at the Regional Telephone Liaison Officers Meeting 9 - 10 August 2024. The NTSC will have a much better idea of the launch date of the new platform by then. Should we have important information prior to the Regional Telephone Liaison Officers meeting, or a launch date we will inform all RTLOs and TLOs.

Another task that was given to us was a revision of Chapter 10 in the Service Handbook, which is on telephones, and this has been started by the Sub Committee. It's about 90% complete and the reason that we cannot complete it yet is because we had to get this contract and we had to see exactly how the operating platform works so that we can incorporate that in there also. Once this is done, we'll send it to the Literature Sub Committee for revision or check the grammatical errors and stuff like that and then next year at Conference, it'll be here for approval.

I want to take you briefly through what this new platform, this new operating system is going to look like.



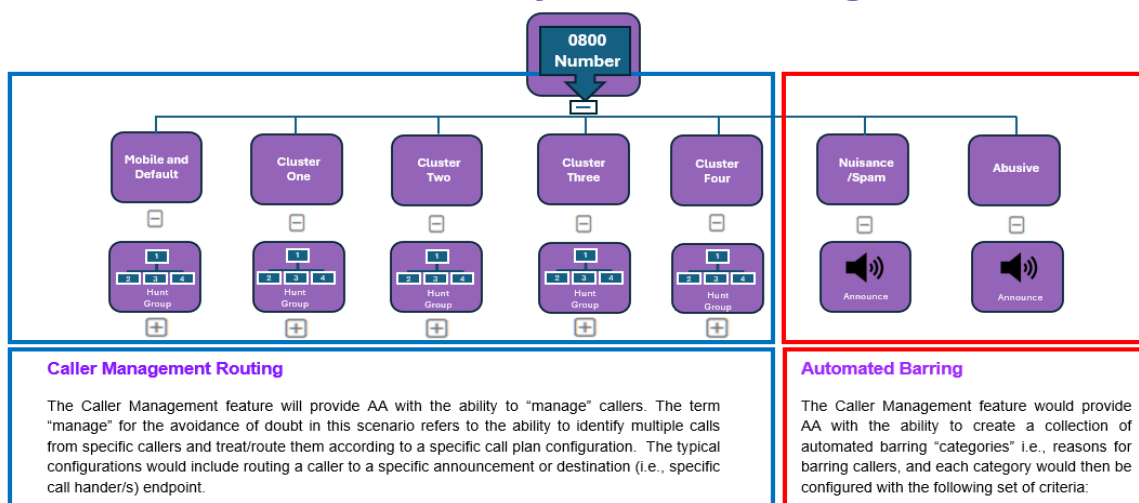


## Network Topology explanation.

I'm going to go through this briefly and just let you know a lot of this information is also new to me. We only got this last week, but I'm very happy to be able to present this to Conference to let you know that we are working on the task that you have given us.

Voice routing logic, incoming calls, high level overview of incoming voice calls flow, the Gamma inbound platform, new numbers to be provided. Phase one, Gamma will provide AA with an agreed quantity of new Gamma numbers to be used for making test calls to support standard called testing to prove the concept. This is all going to be tested thoroughly before going live. Numbers to be ported is going to be Phase 2, Gamma will port only AA's 0800 number to our Inbound (intelligent voice routing) platform. Inbound will be used to host a number will also provide the call treatment and routing capabilities if desired. Calls from the Public Switched Telephone Network will be routed to an Inbound platform and following treatment and routing onwards to one of the 39 plus local helplines.

## Alcoholics Anonymous Inbound Design



1. **Interval** - Calls received within a set period, for example within a 30-day period.
2. **Call Count** - The threshold for the quantity of calls received.
3. **Categorisation Period** - If the first two conditions are met, how long should the auto categorisation will be applied for.

Alcoholics Anonymous Inbound Design call management routing. The caller management feature will provide AA with the ability to manage callers. The term 'manage' for the avoidance of doubt in this scenario refers to the ability to identify multiple calls from specific callers and treat/route them according to a specific call.

Call plan configuration. The typical configuration will include routing according to specific announcement or destination, i.e. a specific call handler endpoint.

Automated Barring. The Caller Management feature would provide AA with the ability to create a collection of automated barring 'categories', i.e. a reason for barring a caller and each category would be configured with the following set of criteria:

1. **Interval** - Calls received within a set period, for example within a 30-day period.
2. **Call Count** - The threshold for the quantity of calls received.
3. **Categorisation Period** - If the first two conditions are met, how long should the auto categorisation will be applied for.

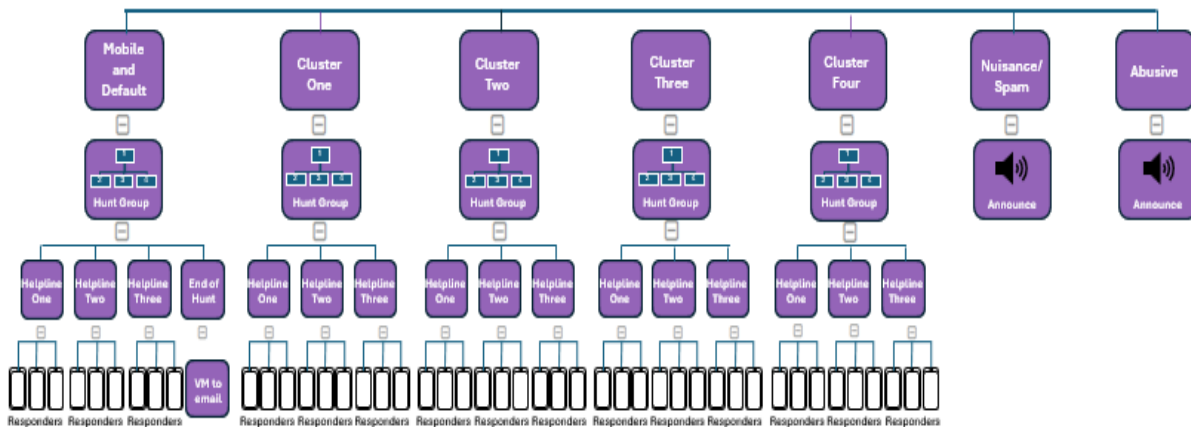
Just the other day we had a nuisance caller that, within a very short period of time, made over 300 calls. Every one of those calls cost the Fellowship money, so this is one of the things that we are trying to avoid with the new platform.

## Hunt Group Routing

Inbound will also provide AA with the ability to configure hunt groups to distribute calls effectively to the next available call handler in the configured Clusters and Hunt Groups.

Using the "serial" based hunting option, will enable the Inbound platform to try and evenly distribute calls amongst the call handlers as best as possible. There are also options for the Hunt Group to route calls in a prioritised or simultaneous fashion, if those are required.

The Hunt Group will hunt on busy and or no answer, with the option to configure how many seconds to wait (where no answer), before trying the next Responder or Helpline.



What's going to happen, we are going to be able to look at the operating hours of the local helplines. For local helplines operating from 6am to 10pm, we are not going to be routing calls to them after 10pm. We are going to be routing those calls to the 24 hour call centres, those Intergroups or groups that have 24 hour services.

What we want to try and avoid is having the phone ring over and over and no response. We want to be able to pick up that phone as soon as possible because we know how important that call is to the still suffering alcoholic.

This is a work in progress, like I said, it's still going to take some time, but I felt that it was important to update Conference on the progress made so far. This progress could not have been done without the tireless work of the Sub Committee. I cannot tell you how many days, hours, weeks, months they have sacrificed, it is important to them because the still suffering alcoholic is important to them. So, I really, really want to thank the Sub Committee for all their hard work because they are the ones that did this.

They are the ones that are there for the Fellowship, I'm just the mouthpiece, I'm just carrying the message that was given to me by them and I am really grateful for the help that they have provided to me understanding the system, because when I took over as Trustee I didn't have a clue. I really want to thank them for their patience, their tolerance and their understanding because without them I would not be here right now so thank you Sub Committee.

Hello everyone, my name's Holly, and I'm an alcoholic. I am the trustee for the First Response Online Sub-Committee (FROSC) which is responsible for the administration of our Chat Now service and the Online Response Service (ORS).

Chat Now and ORS are primarily services for the newcomer, and both provide an online point of contact for the still-suffering alcoholic who is reaching out for help. Chat Now is an instantaneous live chat service that is available on the homepage of the AAGB website, and the Online Response Service is an email service using the address [help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org)

Previously, Chat Now and ORS have been part of the E-Communications Sub-Committee, and then became part of the Telephones Sub-Committee on a trial basis in 2022. The First Response Online Sub-Committee was then formed at the end of 2022, as it was felt that it was more appropriate for our online services to have their own sub-committee.

There are many similarities between Chat Now and ORS, and the Telephone Service. They are all the first point of contact for the still suffering alcoholic who is reaching out for help, and the message of recovery that is carried by the responders for all services is the same. However, the way that the services are administered is very different, which is one of the reasons that it was felt appropriate to create a new sub-committee specifically for the online services.

As Chat Now and ORS are run through our AAGB website, they fall under the responsibility of the General Service Board, rather than the overall Fellowship. FROSC, as a sub-committee of the General Service Board, deal with the running of the services and members of the sub-committee act as administrators of the services.

### **The Online Response Service**

ORS started in 2002 when it was recognised that there was a need for an email service, and it was originally called the 'E-12<sup>th</sup> Steppers' - this was changed to the Online Response Service in 2003, in recognition of the fact that the aim was to encourage people to call the helpline so they could arrange a 12<sup>th</sup> Step call locally.

ORS is an email service, and people get in touch using the address [help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org). The address can be found on the AAGB website, as well as local websites and some of our literature and any sources where Public Information have reached out and made the service known. Responders take regular shifts and are expected to answer an email within about half an hour of it being sent. Every newcomer is provided with a link to the meetings finder, the starter pack via the newcomers' link, and the National Telephone Number. If they provide their postcode, they can be given their local helpline number and meeting details in their area.

As well as the still-suffering alcoholic, ORS also receive emails from family members and professionals, and provide contact details for Al-Anon, or PI information, as appropriate.

Since it began, the number of emails received by ORS has steadily increased. In the first year that ORS was up and running, 3271 emails were received. By 2021 that number had increased to approximately 19,000 in a year, and we currently receive an average of 1500 emails each month. During the 'covid years' the number of emails received increased by almost 100 percent.

### **Chat Now**

Chat Now is an instantaneous live chat service located on the AAGB homepage and is primarily a service for the newcomer. The service began in 2016, following a recommendation from Conference. Visitors to the homepage of the AAGB website can click on a button which starts a chat with the responder on duty. Like ORS, the responders do not 12<sup>th</sup> Step - the main aim of the service is to encourage the still-suffering alcoholic to call the helpline number or attend a meeting. Responders take shifts, and if there is nobody on shift, a link is provided to the [help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org) address and the national helpline number.

Due to the instant nature of a live chat service, responders have access to predefined replies to use for common enquiries, as well as PDF's of various leaflets to share with the newcomer. On average, there are 1,150 chats per month, although this figure increased to approximately 2000 per month during lockdown.

As previously mentioned, the sub-committee are responsible for the administration of both Chat Now and ORS, and some of the work that is done includes: the application process for all new responders, training of responders, arranging the rota and providing ongoing guidance and best practice. For example, we have recently been working on guidance for responders when dealing with under 18's who reach out for help.

We have also been streamlining the application process by creating job descriptions and application forms that cover both Chat Now and ORS, as well as ensuring that all guidance for each service is mirrored in the other. Up until recently, the services have been operating very much independently of each other, and we have been working to bring them together under the same First Response Online umbrella.

The increased importance of safeguarding means that we have been establishing various measures to ensure that we fulfil our duty of care to everyone involved in Chat Now and the Online Response Service, including the screening of chats and emails, and keeping a record of the contact details of all responders. **As Chat Now and ORS are the responsibility of the General Service Board, we must have robust safeguarding procedures in place to ensure that the charity, and our Tradition 7 funds, are not at risk in the event of any safeguarding issue.** As part of this we are in the process of introducing DBS checks for all existing and new responders, as well as continually reviewing the training and support that is given. These measures ensure that we can continue to carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic, whilst meeting our safeguarding responsibilities and protecting the charity for future generations.

Because they are run by the GSB, Chat Now and ORS are not represented in the service structure of the Fellowship, so they are not always talked about at Intergroups and Regions. The First Response Online Sub-Committee are working to change this and to let the Fellowship know about the services, and hopefully inspire members to become responders.

### **Service as a responder**

The requirements for service as a responder for ORS and Chat Now are 2 years' continuous sobriety, and a good working knowledge of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. Basic computer literacy, and a desktop or laptop computer is required. All applicants need to be endorsed by their GSR, Intergroup or Region, or by a member of FROSC, and the term of service is 3 years. Applicants also need to agree to a Basic DBS check being undertaken before beginning service. If responders wish to re-apply to either service, they can do so after a break of 1 year.

Full training is given for both services, and there is a huge amount of support for responders. There are Skype chat rooms for responders to share experience and support, and the administrators on the sub-committee are available for help with any issues that may arise.

We are finding that increasing numbers of still-suffering alcoholics are reaching out to AA through online services. Currently, we receive more than 2000 messages each month for Chat Now and ORS combined, and this is likely to increase. The three methods that we have for the people to contact AA – the telephones, ORS and Chat Now, each cater to slightly different needs. Some people prefer to speak to another person, whilst others like the instant nature of Chat Now, or the anonymity of emailing

someone. Despite the differences, the message of recovery is the same across all services, and they are a vital part of primary purpose work.

We are always in need of new responders for both these services and would encourage anyone who is interested in joining to get involved. For more information, and to request an application form, email [secretary.fro.sc@aamail.org](mailto:secretary.fro.sc@aamail.org)

*Time was given at the end of each presentation for questions to be asked from the floor.*

## **AA Service News Update**

AA Service News (AASN) has grown in size and quantity. At the last count, it was carrying the message to 4000+ alcoholics in print, and to 2000 alcoholics digitally, and will continue to do so on a quarterly basis to individuals, groups, intergroups and regions.

It helps meet AA's primary purpose by carrying the message across the whole Fellowship. It comprises your stories about the service you carry out daily across the Fellowship.

Also included are:

- Conference questions and recommendations in the winter and summer editions respectively
- Regular messages from the General Secretary
- Board meeting bullet points
- Job adverts for sub-committees
- Parliamentary events across the UK
- Regular updates on how the website project is unfolding

There are also occasional requests for your shares on particular topics for AA pamphlets, such as Mental Health, Sponsorship into Service etc. Given the increased number of applications for sub-committee vacancies, we know you are reading AASN, and we are delighted. We have tried to make it attractive to pick up and read!

Your thoughts on improvements are always welcome, along with your articles on service and of course your pictures. Remember, AASN is all about **your** service! As ever, we thank you for your excellent articles and pictures and making AASN an interesting, informative and enjoyable read.

Jo F, GSB Trustee

## **Anniversary Sub Committee Update**

### **Terms of Reference for AAGB Anniversary Events**

#### **Background**

AAGB has marked our history by holding an Anniversary event every 25 years with the last one being our 75<sup>th</sup> held in Leeds in June 2022.

At our Conference 2023 the 75<sup>th</sup> Committee were asked to produce Terms of Reference as guidance for any future events being held in 25 years, or should the Fellowship choose to hold Anniversary events every 5 or 10 years.

It would be foolish of the 75<sup>th</sup> Committee to produce definitive Terms of Reference for any future event therefore we would suggest that any future Committee use the following content how they see fit.

Our 75<sup>th</sup> Convention was organised by an elected Sub-Committee working in conjunction with the GSB (General Service Board) and GSO (General Service Office).

For clarity it is important that we all understand the status of the Anniversary Sub-Committee.

The Fellowship having made its decision via Conference asks the GSB to organise our Anniversary events.

The Anniversary Sub-Committee becomes a Sub-Committee of the GSB and will be subject to the same criteria as any GSB Sub-Committee. Our Sub-Committees are financed annually by the contributions of the Fellowship and provide projected budgets to our GSB finance Committee.

All Sub-Committees report their progress and expenditure annually to the Fellowship via Conference; thus, our Anniversary Convention is run by our Sub-Committee in the same manner.

The committee costs for the weekend of the convention are part of the event costs and reported as such within the fiscal year that the event takes place.

So, our Fellowship via Conference asked the GSB to select a committee made up of members from our Regions to organise the event.

Interviews were held and a committee of 6 members, who had all served on one of our National Convention Committees were selected (by the Nominations Committee) with each taking on various roles and responsibilities.

As a result of the interviews the committee included the following skill sets:

- Web and Graphic Design (Audio Visual content)
- Finance
- Health and Safety
- Procurement AA literature (merchandise)
- Project Management
- Administration

They were joined by the Vice-Chair and the Hon. Treasurer of the GSB.

## **Future Anniversary Conventions**

### **Purpose**

Our Anniversary Convention is an opportunity for AAGB to come together for a weekend of Unity Service and Recovery. It ought to be an event where - Who we are and What we do are our focus- both locally to where the event is taking place and nationally.

We need also consider the diverse nature of our Fellowship that is reflected by our approach of inclusivity - Our Primary Purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The Unity achieved in planning such events is of immense value to the Fellowship. Sharing with other Alcoholics from across AAGB and beyond is of immeasurable benefit to the development of AAGB...as well as our own personal Recovery.

We believe the success of any Anniversary event is based on how well we fulfil our obligation to the still suffering Alcoholic whilst developing the friendships that help us to achieve that aim.

We have concluded this document with a list of projects that were part of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention weekend which reflect how well we fulfilled the above aims.

### **Committee selection**

It may be that for future events the Fellowship decides to select a Sub-Committee following the method used for the 75<sup>th</sup>. Alternately a Region or Regions could put forward a proposal to run the event, or our National Conventions could rotate responsibility for running the event. We suggest that the Fellowship via Conference should make this decision.

It would be best if prospective Sub-Committee members have a minimum of 5 years continuous sobriety. All members of the 75<sup>th</sup> Committee had served on a National Convention Committee and had attended Conference. We therefore suggest that Conference and our GSB consider this when selecting Sub-Committee members.

Sub-Committee members will serve until the convention is over and review meetings have taken place post-convention.

We would suggest that Fellowship Sub-Committee members strive to have regular attendance at all Sub-Committee meetings, if a Sub-Committee member fails to attend two consecutive meetings, they will be deemed to have resigned their post – individual circumstances may be considered.

Should you be considering joining a future committee the time commitment required for members of the Sub-Committee based on our experience will be in the region of 600 to 800 hours over the course of the event.

GSB Trustee Sub-Committee members will be subject to normal board rotation and their successors may attend committee meetings as part of their sponsorship into the role – they will be non-voting until rotation is complete.

Only Sub-Committee members will have a vote.

Members of the GSB may attend Sub-Committee meetings by invitation.

All Sub-Committee members to be assigned an 'aamail.org' email address for all relevant communication.

### **The role and responsibilities of the Sub-Committee / GSB /GSO**

#### **Planning Stage**

Once the method and selection of the Sub-Committee has been decided we would suggest the following as good guidance.

We would recommend that all Committee members familiarise themselves with Annex A- Check list for National Conventions on page 179 of our Structure Handbook.

The Sub-Committee will meet quarterly. We would suggest that initially these meetings can be.... 2 Face to Face meetings with 2 on-line meetings.

The frequency of the meetings will increase as the event gets closer, and we would leave the decisions around these up to the Trusted Servants that form the Sub-Committee.

It may be that the Sub-Committee need additional support to add to the 8 initial members, again this will be at the recommendation of our Sub-Committee Trusted Servants and would require Board approval.

We suggest the Sub-Committee review all financial spreadsheets from the 75<sup>th</sup> Convention which will help with key timeline decisions, along with the minutes of the 75<sup>th</sup> Committee which have been archived at GSO.

The Committee should select and agree the venue based upon:

- Projected attendance numbers
- Cost and size, with preferably 2 to 3 options being considered
- A venue that has capacity for large main meetings accommodating all members
- A venue that has a variety of meeting rooms for additional meetings/service events
- We would suggest that cities or large metropolitan areas are the preferred option
- Consider transport links
- Variety of available accommodation.
- Consideration should be given to requirements of sub-committee project works as other venues may be required – see [below](#) Projects.

Our Conference for the 75th tasked the Committee to Aim to be self-supporting. Bearing in mind that a major part of our Anniversary Convention ought to be Service as carried out by all Board Sub-Committees we take this to mean that the cost for the venue hire together with associated costs for the weekend including the Committee expenses should be the Committees consideration. Whilst the 75<sup>th</sup> fell below this aim we believe that our pre Covid projections were spot on, and we would have delivered an event that met with the aims.

### **Inclusivity**

Consideration needs to be given to our Whole fellowship when planning meetings over and above our main meetings.

For example, we had a large contingent of Polish speaking members, a large attendance of LGBTQ members and a large Persons of Colour group. Meetings were arranged for all these groups at Leeds Museum.

Having selected a suitable venue, the Sub-Committee should prepare a projected budget.

Ticket pricing matters to the Fellowship ...as we would like as many members as possible to be able to afford to attend.

Service work carried out by Sub-Committee for the 75<sup>th</sup> which could have been outsourced, Website, Registration Ticketing and Health + Safety helped in keeping the costs down.

As an additional benefit this also meant that the Fellowship were always dealing with a member of the Fellowship rather than a third party which helped protect the anonymity of those members.

The Sub-Committee will have responsibility for a website to support the event.



The website will be linked to the Board website for payments, as Conference approved.

The Sub-Committee will be responsible for Registration. Once the website is up and running the Sub-Committee may wish to communicate with the Fellowship for various aspects of the Anniversary Convention.

Our Fellowship's Data is confidential, whilst registration enables us to communicate directly via text and email, we should seek permission from each individual member via an opt out box at time of Registration. Guidance on data protection (GDPR) must be adhered to and this guidance will be provided by GSO.

The Sub-Committee will decide if merchandise for a one-off Anniversary event will be made available. - in line with current Conference recommendations.

The Sub-Committee will be responsible for providing Safeguarding guidance to cover the event.

The Sub-Committee will provide quarterly reports to the GSB and will help support the Board in the preparation of the annual Conference report.

The Sub-Committee will have responsibility for the weekend Programme. Note for the 75<sup>th</sup> no expenses were paid to any Chairs/Speakers and all who attended bought their own tickets with the exception being our VIP guests. (VIP guests come from various professions, together with members of the public).

For the 75<sup>th</sup> all main stage Speakers were recommended by their Regions and meeting Chairs were the Chairs of our National Conventions.

The Sub-Committee will have responsibility for all aspects of Health and Safety.

## **GSB AND GSO**

The aim of the GSB/GSO will be to support the Sub-Committee in achieving its aims with all GSB Sub-Committees actively participating.

It will be the responsibility of GSB/GSO to work with the Sub-Committee to engage with the Region and local Intergroups who are located near the Convention venue.

It will be the responsibility for GSB/GSO to agree with the Sub-Committee the various projects that will take place both in the lead up to /and during the weekend of the Convention.

The GSB/GSO will be the one link between the Fellowship and the Sub-Committee via Conference.

## **More about Finance**

Anniversary events are financed directly by the GSB / GSO who are held accountable by the Charities Commission, with our Management Accountant open to Audit at any time. Therefore, we need to have a line of direct accountability to our GSO Management Accountant. To achieve this, we would recommend that a working group that includes our Hon. Treasurer, our Committee Treasurer and our Management Accountant are put in place.

The role of the Management Accountant on this working group will be advisory.

This working group will be accountable to the Sub-Committee and have areas of responsibility that have been agreed by the Sub-Committee, GSB and GSO.

Financial control over the weekend running of the Anniversary event should be managed by our Sub-Committee Treasurer as lead.

### **Sub-Committee Service Positions Roles**

**Note the Sub-Committee Chair, Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Sub-Committee Treasurer form the Sub-Committee Executive.**

#### **Executive Committee**

- To put in place insurance to cover all aspects of the event
- Have responsibility for any safeguarding requirements that may arise
- Have responsibility for all Risk Assessments relating to the event
- Have responsibility for liaising with venue management regarding health and safety – this may be delegated to a Sub-Committee member
- The Executive will have authority to make decisions on behalf of the Sub-Committee should it be required

#### **Sub-Committee Chair**

It is the responsibility of the Sub-Committee Chair to set the Agenda for Committee meetings.

To assist and encourage all committee members to best fulfil their commitments.

To work as the liaison between the Board together with the Board Sub-Committees.

To have responsibility encouraging liaison with local Intergroups and Regions for both the Sub-Committee and the other GSB Sub-Committees.

To liaise with local authorities, Tourist board, council, and police.

#### **75<sup>th</sup> Chair experience**

The role of the Sub-Committee Chair was both a privilege and a challenging role.

It required a dedication of time and a willingness to engage with the whole Fellowship across Groups, Intergroups, Regions and all Sub-Committees

Understanding that the Anniversary event was an opportunity for our Fellowship to serve with Unity whilst undertaking a variety of service projects was a large part of the role. The Committee, The GSB, GSO and many members across our Fellowship took the approach of – What can I contribute to this event, which made it a pleasure to be a part of.

Fortunately, a lot of that work had already started before I joined the Sub-Committee and therefore it was just a matter of following the good example of the previous Chairs.

#### **Honorary Treasurer**

- Support Sub-Committee treasurer throughout planning stages and at the event itself
- Act as conduit between Sub-Committee treasurer and management accountant (finance working group).
- As Chair of the Finance Committee there is a responsibility that the GSB Finance Committee check that all projected expenditure relating to Anniversary events together with associated projects meet the Terms of Reference of the GSB Finance Committee.
- To report on event finances to the GSB and to Conference

#### **Sub-Committee Treasurer**

- Responsible for preparing an event budget, monitoring and updating figures throughout planning stages
- Advising sub-committee on financial implications of decisions

- Will work in conjunction with Hon. Treasurer and GSO Management Accountant as part of the event Financial Working Group
- Collection of all cash points maintaining separate revenue streams for reporting and accounting purposes
- All cash movement and handling to be carried out in pairs by committee members or approved volunteers
- Please note Tradition 7 collection does not form part of the Convention revenue.
- Creation of order forms for the shops helps to keep queuing at a minimum.

Our experience showed that the hardest element to predict was accurate attendance figures. We believe this was down to Covid and the financial uncertainty that affected all in the lead-up to the 75<sup>th</sup>. Given a healthier environment we believe that an attendance of 5000 would have been achieved.

Encouraging the Fellowship to pre-register for Anniversary events is good practice.

### **Sub-Committee Secretary**

- Be responsible for minutes of executive and Sub-Committee meetings within one week of the meeting for chair to confirm prior to circulation
- Minutes also to be sent to GSO Admin for records
- Maintain a Sub-Committee contact list
- Support the chair to create meeting agendas and circulate one week prior to Sub-Committee meetings
- Circulate relevant communications with Sub-Committee members when received
- Wherever possible, attend additional meetings and note any major decisions
- Keep a separate log of all major decisions
- Keep a list of all external contacts
- Use Bcc mail for any non-AA/GSB addresses

### **Website**

Website needs to be interactive for the fellowship including but not limited to:

- Event date/time details
- Countdown to event clock
- Accommodation – Promotion of Hotel Discount Codes for the event
- Volunteering – Service Positions\*/Choir/Fun Run
- Travel information: National and Local
- Registration/Ticket Purchasing
- Data retrieval
- Service updates

This is what was provided on the 75<sup>th</sup> Convention website, however, as technology advances more options may become available that may be useful.

### **Registration**

- Maintain and report numbers of registrations
- Responsible for training volunteers using any digital systems used at the event for registering
- Responsibility for ensuring all cash is counted and handed to committee treasurer

### **Floor Managers**

- Understanding of Health and Safety requirements
- Ability to write risk assessments
- Travel to venue(s) outside of regular meetings

- Liaison with local Intergroup/Region if taking part
- Liaison with AlAnon if taking part
- Audio Visual supplier liaison
- Venue Liaison
- Event/Venue Security Liaison
- Co-ordination of Marshals
- BSL signers
- Accommodating special needs requirements
- Production of Safeguarding plan for the weekend of the event

### **Floor Manager Experience**

This role developed from the initial planning and grew as the Convention neared. The floor manager liaised closely with venue prior to and at the Convention. With a background in Health and Safety it was natural to take responsibility for risk assessments relating to our activities. It also meant that by the time of the Convention I was familiar with all areas of the venues used and key members of the venue staff.

### **AA Literature**

It is important that AA literature should be sold in a separate area from any merchandise. Our venue at Leeds had 2 shops so this was easily achieved. To mark the occasion, we produced an Anniversary cover for our Big Book.

### **Merchandise**

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| • Agree on what merchandise will be used  | 2 years before convention |
| • Agree on what quantity                  | 2 years before            |
| • Gain costs and design from manufacturer | 18 months before          |
| • Agree on costs and quantities           | 10 months before          |
| • Order items from manufacturer           | 8 months before           |

Our experience was the importance of establishing what we wanted to order and Fellowship input from our members can be helpful in reaching this decision. Buying locally was not the best option so we chose to buy directly from a Chinese manufacturer which proved more cost effective and still provided high quality merchandise.

One of the main factors in the selection of merchandise was the Charity Commission's financial thresholds for VAT. These can be ascertained at the time by our Management Accountant. These thresholds heavily influenced decisions on the selection of merchandise the committee chose to make available for the fellowship.

Storage and transportation of merchandise to venue must be given consideration.

### **Audio/Visual**

The visual content provided over the event weekend on main screens and throughout the venue, were informative and fun. They were designed in-house by a member of the committee and going by feedback were much appreciated. It also gave the fellowship the ability to display Archives and Public Information materials.

Audio Visual was used to enable BSL signers to be projected onto big screens.

### **Local Tourist Board Liaison**

- Establish contact with local council/tourist information at least two years before event (we were provided with support that is provided to all major event organisers)

- Creating link for tourist information on the event website to provide the Fellowship with local details

### **Sub Committee Liaison**

- A vital role for the planning of any anniversary event.
- A vision of what will assist the local Region together with how we can carry our AA message at a national level is required for this role – See projects below.
- All projects run by sub-committees of the GSB need to be overviewed by the Convention Committee to integrate with the overall event plan

### **Regional and Intergroup Liaison.**

Once the venue is selected it is important that the Sub-Committee engage with the local Region and Intergroup as a matter of courtesy. This support will help in both the run-up to the event and over the weekend. We can say that the support provided for the 75<sup>th</sup> was excellent. For example, West Riding Intergroup took responsibility for running our early bird meetings.

We were also able to have the Governor and staff from Wakefield prison attend on the Friday evening with the Governor being presented with a Big Book and giving a commitment to work with AA to re-establish AA meeting at Wakefield.

### **Raffle**

- Current guidelines for running a raffle at a Convention can be found in the Structure Handbook (2022 Page 126)
- Raffle revenue is part of the financial budget plan
- Committee should have knowledge of gambling laws in relation to raffles (ask Management Accountant)

We decided to provide voucher prizes with a financial value which were issued via GSO one week after the event to prevent members needing to carry bulky items home.

Hindsight suggest we could have made the fellowship aware of this fact more clearly.

More support from volunteers in selling tickets may have helped with our sales – we sold under 50% of available tickets.

Emphasis on making the raffle stand more prominent may have helped sales.

### **Entertainment**

- Budget Plan to Include any entertainment required for the weekend
- Consider live entertainment (Space and AV requirements)
- Listen to fellowship questionnaire feedback

Our experience of providing entertainment for the 75<sup>th</sup> was recognising that whilst we had budgeted £5K to cover this our spend was nominal.

Our fellowship is blessed with having many members who are talented and more than willing to contribute. We held a late-night disco on the Friday and Saturday evenings which were provided by members who wished to do service.

We also provided the facility for our musicians who were more than happy to run a singalong on Friday and Saturday evening.

### **Ambassadors**

- Regional Ambassador is a volunteer service position required for the success of the event
- Working with the Sub-Committee and reporting progress updates on the event within their own regions
- Promotion of how to purchase tickets
- Encouraging local members within regions to volunteer for service at the event.
- It is suggested that any Volunteer should only work a maximum of 4 hours.
- Could help co-ordinate group travel arrangements

### **Volunteers**

- Without volunteers no event could happen
- Volunteer positions should be found on event website
- Database of volunteers will be required (bear in mind GDPR requirements)
- Suggest volunteers serve for a maximum of 4 hours

### **General Requirements**

- Sub-Committee should engage with all parts of the Fellowship
- Flyers should be made available to all groups at appropriate times (Basic Initial Information, Fellowship Survey, Logo/Theme Competition, Ticket/Pricing Information)

### **AlAnon/Alateen**

- Consider if AlAnon/Alateen are going to be part of the Convention at the planning stage.
- If the decision is to include AlAnon participation, understanding and identifying their needs will be necessary at the planning stage prior to choosing venue.

### **Project examples.**

Should our Fellowship via Conference decide to hold an Anniversary Convention it is imperative that that the event has the support of the GSB and the support of GSB Sub-Committees.

All Sub-Committees should look at what they can contribute working with the Local Region and Intergroup and working with the GSB when considering National projects – see examples under projects.

All Sub-Committee project that contributes to our Anniversary weekend are budgeted through each GSB Sub-Committee with consideration at the planning stage essential.

### **Projects**

We have provided an overview of the projects that were undertaken by the 75<sup>th</sup> Sub-Committee whilst working in Service with the GSB, GSB Sub-Committees, GSO, our Regions and Intergroups.

We would hope that any future Anniversary event considers these as an example of the impact that can be achieved when AAGB as a whole works in Unity to carry our message to the still suffering alcoholic.

### **Archives Sub-Committee**

Held an exhibition in Leeds Museum. The Archives Sub-Committee worked in conjunction with the West Riding Intergroup and were able to hold an event that was open to the public.

The cost for this event was a nominal donation to Leeds city council who wished to support our event as part of their own health initiative for the city.

## **Publications**

Archives, Roundabout and Share produced our new AAGB 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary historical book. This service work was carried out with the support of all AAGB Regions and became a labour of love for many ... We would recommend it for any member wishing to better their knowledge of AAGB.

## **Comms/PI/Archives**

A new video called Gratitude in Action was produced in conjunction with Archives and Comms/PI. This video is available to any area of the Fellowship who wish to use it.

Refreshing our history should always be a part of AA. It gives our newer members a better understanding of the Fellowship they have joined, and we hope it encourages a pioneering spirit that reflects the gratitude with which we all come to serve our Fellowship.

## **75<sup>th</sup> Sub-Committee / Regional Archivists**

The creation of a Historical walkway which reflected the History of all our Regions grew arms and legs during its creation... with Intergroups and National Conventions wanting to be part of the action... all done with Unity Service and Recovery... We hope that all the Banners found their rightful home at the end!

## **Prisons**

We had the attendance of the Governor of Wakefield Prison (Wakefield was the prison that held the first prison meeting of AA in GB.) It was great that we were able to re-establish contact with Wakefield and we can advise that this contact has continued.

**Media** – Consideration must be given to Television and Radio. For the 75<sup>th</sup> we had radio interviews with our Non-Alcoholic Trustees taking the lead in the months before our event and running throughout the year.

## **Television**

At GSB through contacts we were able to engage with the BBC in the making of an hour-long groundbreaking documentary – I'm an Alcoholic: Inside Recovery.

By using deep- fake tech. the viewers saw firsthand what an AA meeting is really like and were able to follow the journey of some members during their Recovery. This documentary has now been viewed in many countries around the world to great acclaim and helped many suffering alcoholics to finally get in touch and begin their own journey of recovery.....

Financially this project cost the Fellowship nothing.

## **Comms /PI**

Has a massive role to play in any Anniversary event and ought to work with the other Board Sub-Committees, local Regions and Intergroups to provide a comprehensive list of guests (VIPs) that we would like to attend our event at some time over the weekend. (VIP) Healthcare staff, Prison Staff, Police, Probation, Welfare Services, various religious representatives, and employers, together with members of the public. Setting a target figure of attendees is a good start.

## **Young People**

Our YP sub-Committee together with many of our younger members were there in force over the weekend. A YP Roadshow took place over the course of the weekend, and I'm told the Saturday morning fun-run was well attended.

## **GSO Roadshow**

Through working with GSO we were able to hold a GSO Roadshow during the weekend. This normally takes place at Regional Forums. Holding it at the Anniversary event gave a wider section of our Fellowship the chance to meet with staff and get a better understanding of the work carried out by staff.

## **Sub Committee Rooms**

Each Sub-Committee should attend our Anniversary event to advise the Fellowship of on-going Service work. The 75<sup>th</sup> benefitted greatly from this with many more members applying to join Sub-Committees.

We are sure that over time these suggestions will require updating to reflect the conscience of our Conference and any technical advancements that may make some suggestions obsolete.

As a final note should any of our members wish to join a future Anniversary Sub-Committee, we can safely guarantee that you will find the role both Challenging and Rewarding.

As with all GSB Sub-Committee Service roles see it as a privilege to serve the Fellowship - Just remember to bring along your Humility!

10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024

Stevie S, Vice Chair GSB

## **Archives Update**

My name is John, I am an alcoholic and currently the General Service Boards trustee responsibility for archives. I was invited to join the Archives Subcommittee in February 2018 as an archive subcommittee member and stayed on the subcommittee as a trustee after ratification at Conference 2022. I took over responsibility for archives after Thomas B rotated out as trustee at Conference 2023.

### **Archive Subcommittee Meetings**

The Archive Subcommittee met three times during the past year the fourth meeting was rescheduled to January 2024 due to my ill health. The subcommittee have been very productive in their discussions on various issues during this time. These issues include the following the Oral Histories of AA, the Borthwick Institute cataloguing project, updating archive literature, Group histories and revising section 2 A brief history of AA in Great Britain.

At the September Archives Sub Committee three members of the Borthwick institutes were invited (Emma Hollis AA Borthwick Archivist, Laura Yeoman, Emma's line manager and Gary Brannan Keeper of Archives and Research Collections) and attended the meeting. The exchange of information and experiences between the Borthwick institute and the subcommittee was very productive. It was felt that it would be beneficial to both sides to do this on a regular basis.



## **Oral Histories**

The oral history of AA will be a set of interviews with old timers in the fellowship recorded by regional and intergroup archivists. It is hoped that these interviews can then be put on the new website on a rotating basis. The sub-committee is in the process of developing guidelines which the archivist can use.

## **Borthwick Institute Cataloguing Project**

I'm pleased to announce that the archivist Emma Hollis has been appointed by the Borthwick Institute to continue the work on the AA archives. She will be working on our archives 2 1/2 days per week. This will include cataloguing the AA digital records. Although the bulk of the physical archives have been digitally catalogued the digital records have not been catalogued yet. The AA digital records are digital records sent by GSO to the Borthwick institute and go back to the early 2000s.

The sub-committee has set up a working group to work with the Borthwick institute in developing a system where both the physical and the digital archives are catalogued using the same terminology.

## **Archive Literature**

With the relocation of the National Archives to the Borthwick Institute several new documents were created and some existing documents revised these can be found in the archive section of the document library on the AA website.

1. AA-Archives-Access-Policy
2. AA-Archive-Appeal-Policy
3. Archival-Displays-2018
4. Archives-Policy-&-Procedure-Manual
5. Guide for AA GB Intergroup and Region Archivist
6. Intergroup-Archivist-Job-Description
7. Regional-Archivist-Job-Description
8. Terms-of Reference of the-Archive-Sub-Committee
9. Why Rotation is inappropriate when applied to Archival activity.

The sub-committee has set up a working group to develop guidelines for the Fellowship regarding the catalogue and storing of digital material.

## **Group Histories**

One of the main sources of information for group histories is the pink form. GSO puts together a spreadsheet for the archives sub-committee which contains information on group numbers and other non-personal information. It was noticed that some groups have not filled in a pink form for several years. It would help our work if groups would keep the group information up to date by letting GSO know of any changes to the group.

## **Revised section 2 A brief history of AA in Great Britain**

This section in the chapter Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain has been updated and presented to this Conference for its consideration.

## **The Archivist Network**

The archive network meeting was held on the 22nd and 23rd of September 2023. A total of 24 members attended 14 in person and 10 online. Martin B gave a presentation on questions for old timers. Nick H gave a presentation on group histories. I gave the update on the work of the archive subcommittee. There was a sharing of experience from the different regions.

The archive subcommittee was asked to investigate the possibilities of running several short online tutorials covering the different aspects of archiving within the Fellowship.

## 75<sup>th</sup> Banners

The banners created for the 75th archive display at the Leeds City Museum have been used at AA events nationwide. They are available for use by the Fellowship. If you like to use them at an AA event, please let the Archive Subcommittee know.

This report would not be complete without expressing my sincere gratitude to this hardworking and extremely supportive subcommittee and to say goodbye to Nick H who rotated out of the subcommittee in September 2023.

John C, GSB Trustee

## Armed Services Update

I would like to start my report with a huge thank you to all the intergroups and Regions Armed Service Liaison Officers who have been carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the Armed Services, health workers and their families.

### **Excerpt from Guidelines 2:1 - AA and The Armed Services:**

Intergroups and Regions are responsible for the appointment of an Armed Services Liaison Officer [ASLO] to work in conjunction with other intergroup and regional officers. The role of the ASLO is to establish and maintain communication between Alcoholics Anonymous and The Royal Navy, The Army and The Royal Air Force and to report back at all levels within intergroup or region.

### **Update**

- The Armed Services Sub-committee met four times this year two online and two at GSO. The subcommittee consists of two subcommittee members and two trustees. One subcommittee member will rotate out in February 2024.
- There are several vacancies on the sub-committee which if not filled may impede the ability of the sub-committee in its role of supporting ASLO and RASLO.
- The terms of reference were reviewed.
- AS (Armed Services) 12<sup>th</sup> Steps list continues to be updated by the subcommittee. It contains approximately 72 members and is available on Google document for telephone responders.
- With the assistance of the General Secretary the subcommittee has re-established contact with Dr Ruth Rushton who is a researcher and practitioner in the field of alcohol treatment for UK military personnel. One of the subcommittee members is acting as a point of contact for her and any inquiries coming in from her defence clinician's colleagues.
- The subcommittee are updating the literature on the AS services section of the website.
- The sub-committee would like to update the existing relevant Armed Services literature and is actively seeking armed service members to contribute to this. Unfortunately, we have had no response to date.
- AS regional liaison meeting held on the 17th/ 18th February 2023. There were 9 attendees including 4 subcommittee members.
- Many points were discussed including vacant AS Liaison posts within the Fellowships and the possibility of holding an AS Seminar.
- In November 2023 according to the Confidential Directory there were five regional armed service liaison officers in post (one of the regional officers is on the subcommittee). Forty-three Intergroup Liaison officers and another seven Intergroups that have a referral from Armed Services to another service position. This means that roughly 1/3 of all Armed service positions within the Fellowship are filled. It is hoped that the upcoming Armed Services seminar may help to address this problem.
- A seminar is planned for February 2024. As of January 2024, there are 22 confirmed attendees.

This report would not be complete without expressing my sincere gratitude to this hardworking and extremely supportive subcommittee. We now have a second Trustee on the subcommittee Hamish McS who joined us in January 2024. We said goodbye to Jonathan R who rotated out in May 2023.

John C, GSB Trustee

## **Employment Update**

Today's Environment of Care requires Employers to have policies to safeguard the Health and Welfare of Employees.

Workplaces need specific provision of this facility. It is with enthusiasm AA can offer, free of charge, a significant contribution, which is increasingly welcomed. Alcoholic behaviour and consequences are commonly recognised, frustrating the workforce by their illogical and unpredictable nature.

We are encouraged by Employers recognising the information and help we offer, asking for continuing presentations and workshops, used in conjunction with their own endeavours.

Our Employment Subcommittee, chaired by a Board Trustee, welcomes several new experienced members this year, including a Non Alcoholic Trustee. We address enquiries for help received and passed to us by our General Service Board; we make initial introductions to organisations and national employment concerns - with a view to passing continuation of contact and care to the area, AA Region; we maintain contact with each Region offering support and learning of the primary purpose work being achieved. Where there is no serving Regional Employment Officer, we contact the Regional Chair and/or Secretary. We are grateful that most Regions are represented at our annual face-to-face Employment Workshop and Zoom Presentation.

The revision of our pamphlet "What do I do?" will be offered for approval at Conference 2024.

Opportunities have been offered for continuing interaction with the Northumbria Police, where a leading police official has spoken at our Zoom Presentation of the value of AA.

The London Fire Brigade have had a further presentation by London Region South to their Mental Health First Aid Team - appreciating AA's specific value in complimenting their own health and safety programme. Posters provided for 102 Fire Stations!

Network Rail Safety/Pastoral Care received further presentations; slots being used on Station digital billboards for AA information.

A Zoom presentation given to a National Bank's "Enable Disability Network" was, by request, followed by a presentation of the "AA Group at work", "Tips on Living Sober" and a "Myth Busting " session. These events were recorded for the exclusively internal national use of the bank for those staff unable to attend the live meetings. Literature and an experienced Al-anon contact were requested and supplied. The Bank's Group Leader subsequently reported their valued experiences of AA at our Employment Presentation.

These are a few examples of the many inspiring examples of "Carrying our Message" to Employers throughout our Regions and Intergroups.

Our enthusiasm is well founded!

Charles R, GSB Trustee

## **European Service Meeting Update**

Jo F and Levey P attended the European Service Meeting (ESM) in York, 20-22nd October 2023. The theme was 'AA in a Changing World'. There were attendees from 20 European Countries plus 2 attendees from the General Service Office (GSO) in New York. The meeting was held in English, but we all spoke the language of the heart in discussing the challenges and opportunities in service: finding people to do service, leading by example, and the importance of unity and safeguarding.

Bob W, General Manager AA GSO US and Canada gave a talk on AA World Service (AAWS): 'Translation & Licensing Publishing'. Irene D, International Desk AAWS gave the keynote address, 'AA in a Changing World'. AAs from Eastern Europe demonstrated the pioneering spirit with how, as a structure, they had gone to any lengths to stay sober and pass on the message of recovery overcoming barriers of poverty, politics, wars and language, showing how fortunate we are in Great Britain and English-speaking Europe to have our AA structure and literature in place.

The ESM took place during the weekend of Storm Babette. One delegate from Finland took three days to get to the ESM! She arrived on the Sunday morning - it was so important for her to get there and meet other alcoholics doing service. The topic for the next ESM will be 'Unifying and Safeguarding our Fellowship.' Our thanks go to the GSO in York who put on a wonderful conference for us all.

Jo F, GSB Trustee

## **Prisons Update**

Sadly, we had no one on the Prison subcommittee until the end of September due to four members rotating out at the same time. This hinders the work that we can do. I'm pleased to say that in September we welcomed three new members. Lenny C SW Scotland, Davy McW - Glasgow and Bruce B from CER and also Hugh D from Wales and Borders in January.

The subcommittee also work closely with our NAT Tom Fox who is an asset due to his involvement with the Scottish prison service and the new Trustee for Midlands Region Max J will also join us.

Everyone was allocated jobs and had an induction onto the Subcommittee. Lenny became our secretary. Davy is looking at which prisons within the UK hold AA meeting and Bruce will be restarting our quarterly newsletter for which any letters either from prisoners or people with prison experience would be very welcome. Hugh and Max will be allocated roles at our next meeting which will take place in March.

We are still looking for Subcommittee members and we aim to get a good geographical spread of people.

In March I attended the Scottish and National Convention where I hosted a Prison stand to give information regarding the roles of prison sponsors, IG Liaison officers and Region LO officers. In Scotland I was assisted with this by two regional LO officers, Davy and Lenny and also Tom Fox our NAT who is a great support due to his knowledge of the Scottish Prison Service. It was really good to connect with people who go into our prisons helping to facilitate AA meetings. I also attended the Northern National convention in the same capacity.

I was pleased to be invited to the Midlands forum in June and gave a presentation about what we do the roles within the prisons. There was a Q and A session after and there was the opportunity to chat with people who were interested in prison service.

In June we held our annual Regional LO meeting in York where we were enlightened as to what was happening in all areas of the UK. Similar problems seem to be reoccurring. Clearance is still a big problem

and finding people to commit to going into prisons as a prison sponsor (visitor). On the 1st July together with the Probation/CJS we held Seminar at the Park Inn York with over 60 in Attendance. The morning dealt with the Prisons. The prison video was played, and we had two speakers Wendy Sinclare-Geiben HMCIIP who spoke of the Scottish prison service and Sarah Hancock HMPS who is the compliance manager who deals with clearance. A good day was had by all, and it was an ideal time to chat to others who were doing the same work as you.

We have also dealt with queries one of which was the possible use of conducting meetings using a video link. We were approached by a company called Visionary with whom we had discussions but decided that it would be against our traditions to go ahead with this. Also, some prisons have approached us to fetch AA into their prisons.

I would also like to say thank you to anyone involved with prisons, your commitment and service are a valuable way to give back what was freely given to us.

It is my pleasure to be of service and if you have any questions, please contact me and either myself or subcommittee will be pleased to help you. YIF Zelma Kesans Trustee for Prisons. Mob: 07817125143 Email: [trustee.w.bregion@gsogb.org.uk](mailto:trustee.w.bregion@gsogb.org.uk)

Zelma K, GSB Trustee

## **Probation / Criminal Justice Service Update**

The Probation Sub Committee has had a productive and busy year. We are grateful the Board approved the expansion of the subcommittee from 4 to 7 potential members, this we hope, will support more cooperation for the fellowship with Probation and CJS agencies throughout Great Britain.

Probation / Criminal Justice Service liaison officers (LO's) have been making progress with the chit system. Figures from our website show that in December 2022, 515 Alcoholics Anonymous Groups in GB were listed as offering the 'chit' system this figure has risen to 603 at the start of December 2023. Anonymous success stories are coming through in IG reports, showing the Chit system working through Alcoholics Anonymous action.

Through co-operation with HMPPS Recovery focused Approved Premises, a mailshot took place where AA information from GSO was distributed to all 105 Approved Premises in England and Wales. Our Gratitude to our workers in the office. Following this Liaison officers and Subcommittee members took part in Recovery focused Approved Premises open days and presentations throughout the year. This has reinvigorated and enthused cooperation, in various locations.

The subcommittee has also been cooperating and making progress with other agencies including HMCTS, Alcoholics Anonymous has now been included in a new national Court Directory for England and Wales and we are actively progressing our primary purpose with HMPPS, HMCTS and Police Forces at a national level.

Within the fellowship presentations and service information stands have taken place at National Conventions and Service Forums, whilst continuing to assist RLO's and IGLO's when requested. The joint Seminar held with Prisons in July was an enormous success with enthusiastic professional and alcoholic speakers, we were delighted to have the HMPPS Director who leads on offender health present for us. Criminal justice professionals were invited and were present at both the Westminster and Holyrood parliamentary events. Glasgow Court committee continues to provide great service at the Alcohol Court and the Custody Suite service work in London Region North is making inroads, carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Probation Sub Committee, has reviewed, updated, and submitted our external facing leaflet, now titled; *Alcoholics Anonymous as a Resource for Criminal Justice Professionals* which we hope conference will approve. Probation / Criminal Justice information has been reviewed and updated on the GB website.

Hamish McS, GSB Trustee

## **Race2Day Working Group Update**

What a year it's been for Race2Day!

The Race2Day Working Group has had a very busy year. Our 2nd and 3rd Conventions were held in March and September with delegates from many countries, in particular from US and Canada who showed great interest, passion and encouragement.

Workshops were also held at London and Birmingham Conventions with tremendous participation and input from ethnicities.

The pamphlet, "Nobody Looks Like Me in Alcoholics Anonymous" produced by Birmingham intergroup will go to Conference in 2024. In November in a new South Asian meeting was set up in Glasgow after outreach in the local community by the intergroup and members of Race2Day. The response of the Fellowship to the initiative has been tremendous, in recognising and helping deliver Conference 2021's recommendation to improve diversity within the Fellowship and better actualise our Third Tradition. We hope to maintain and increase the momentum with workshops booked for the Northern, London and Glasgow Conventions in 2024.

Jo F, GSB Trustee

## **Roundabout Update**

Two members of the Roundabout subcommittee and I attended the Scottish Convention on the weekend of 28/29/30 April 2023 in Queens Hall Dunoon. As well as promoting the Roundabout the subcommittee members had the Roundabout banner and issues of the Roundabout picked up from the Northern Service Office and taken to the convention. Members shares were recorded and written up later for the Roundabout magazine. There were also 6 interviews recorded. Those who completed interviews and shares stated that they preferred to record rather than type.

The Chairperson of the Committee of the Scottish Convention announced that the person who had initiated the Scottish Convention moving to Dunoon had been a great advocate for the Roundabout. This set the tone for the whole weekend and our two members even had the opportunity to talk about the Roundabout before one of the meetings.

I attended an online meeting on 2 March 2023 with Jo, AA Service News and Charon, Share Trustee to discuss the little book contents in the hope of changing this publication. Jo was looking for input from the Roundabout and Share sub-committees. Charon and I decided to have a joint online meeting with our sub-committees on 10 March. The outcome of this meeting was that proposed changes were sent to Jo.

There were 6 online meetings for the Roundabout subcommittee in March, June, July, August, October and December. We had 3 new members joining us in the latter part of the year. Jan, Secretary and Gordon and Margaret, Proofreaders. This leaves one Proofreader and an Assistant Editor to complete the Roundabout subcommittee.

Two new banners were purchased for the Roundabout team to use at Conventions in Scotland. The Roundabout subcommittee had decided that every Convention in Scotland should be attended by at least 2 members who would promote the Roundabout.

The Conventions attended were Dundee, Lanarkshire, Cumbernauld, Aberdeen, Monklands, Troon and Highlands and Islands.

There were 2 online meetings with myself and Jo, Trustee for Literature Subcommittee and with Charon, Trustee for Share. This was to discuss the articles for inclusion in the Service Handbook for our disciplines. The Roundabout Subcommittee met online on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 9<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> August to discuss the Roundabout Article. It was felt that the Roundabout article should be separate, and a document was produced and sent to Jo to be passed to the Literature Subcommittee.

An invitation was received for the Share Liaison Officers meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September in York. Due to train strikes Moira and Dylis, Proofreaders and Ian our Link Officer of the Roundabout subcommittee and myself attended the online meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September. We would like to thank the Share subcommittee for the invite.

I was invited to attend the Scottish Parliament event on 4<sup>th</sup> October. It was a very enjoyable event with speakers sharing part of their experience, strength and hope with members of Parliament and some invited charity members. There was also a question and answer segment.

Tom and I were invited to the Highlands and Islands Annual General Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023. This was to hopefully encourage someone from the Region to put their name forward for the Trustee position on the Board.

The December Roundabout included an article informing the Fellowship that the Roundabout would cost £2 from January 2024. This is due to increased prices for publishing and also to allow the Roundabout to be self-supporting.

A face to face meeting of the Roundabout subcommittee was scheduled for 16/17 February 2024 in The Atholl Centre, Pitlochrie. This meeting will enable the new members to have an induction to the subcommittee.

It was decided to hold the Annual Intergroup/Regional Liaison officers meeting in Renfield St Stephen's in Bath Street on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Online meetings for the Roundabout subcommittee are scheduled for 2024 as follows:

June 7<sup>th</sup> 2024  
August 9<sup>th</sup> 2024  
October 11<sup>th</sup> 2024  
December 6<sup>th</sup> 2024

Andrina, GSB Trustee

## **Share Update**

Our magazine has seen some major changes in the past twelve months.

Firstly, having not had a price increase for more than twenty years, we needed to take a look at how Share might become more self-supporting. Having done the sums, we decided to increase the price to £2 per copy, taking effect from January 2024. Most fellows will agree that it's still incredible value considering all that is contained in each issue.

With Share becoming more financially stable it allowed us to start thinking about ways to make Share more accessible, and as a result we have increased the font size to bring it further in line with Accessibility Guidelines. Of course, this affects the overall look of the magazine, increasing the number of pages per issue and altering the layout, from double to single columns. For many people, reading single column pages is easier and makes the magazine more user friendly. This is a trial that we are open to adjusting, according to fellowship feedback, and it will be interesting to see how we progress over the next twelve months. We hope everyone will support us as we endeavour to make Share the best possible version of itself.

The team welcomed our new assistant editor this year who has settled in very well, leaving us with no vacancies at present.

The things we are currently working on are: new bookmarks for 2024, a presentation at the London Convention 2024 and continuing to produce a fantastic magazine worth every penny of its new price.

Charon B, GSB Trustee

## **Survey Update**

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain [GSB GB]) Limited have conducted a survey of the Fellowship every five years since 1972. The intention of these surveys is to learn more about the Fellowship in GB and Continental Europe so that AA's message of recovery may be disseminated more effectively to the still suffering alcoholic, thus helping us to fulfil our primary purpose.

The Survey Sub Committee was established as a separate subcommittee tasked to deliver the 2020 Survey. Previously the Survey was delivered by the PI Subcommittee.

Due to Covid and lockdown the 2020 survey was delivered online for the first time. The decision to continue the survey online has been agreed using what was learned in 2020 to improve the content and method of communication to the Fellowship and increase engagement.

The results of the 2020 survey were reported to Conference 2021 and the committee produced and infographic leaflet for the fellowship and to be used as a public information outreach tool.

The committee have put together a timeline of work for the 2025 Survey that includes four phases of the process that began in 2023. The committee are currently liaising with some of the relevant subcommittees to finalise the content of the questionnaire and considering the survey design. The survey will be launched in March of 2025 and the final results will be reported to Conference 2026.

Gretchen S, GSB Trustee

## **Young People Update**

Young People's service continues to be enthusiastic and engaged, with a lot of work being done across the country to help carry the message of recovery to younger people. A Young People's Roadshow was held in Cardiff in April 2023 which, like previous events, generated a lot of enthusiasm for the service with new Young People's meetings being set up, and more members engaging in service across the structure. Another roadshow is planned for May 2024 in Glasgow with a variety of interesting and inspiring speakers.



The Young People's Sub-Committee continue to hold online drop-in meetings every quarter to provide an opportunity for liaison officers and anyone interested in the role to get support and share experience.

The sub-committee have also started a podcast called 'They Stopped in Time' which is available on the usual podcast platforms. There is an established and supportive community of Young People's liaison officers across the country, who share their experience, advice and resources to help each other carry the message of recovery.

Holly A & Henry L – GSB Trustees

## Parliamentary Events Update

### Westminster

The Westminster Parliamentary Event Committee delivered a very well attended face to face event in the Atlee Suite in Portcullis House on 16 May 2023. The event was sponsored and hosted by Steve Brine, Conservative MP for Winchester.

The two non-alcoholic professional speakers spoke highly of what AA had to offer and the AA speakers shared their experience strength and hope as well as talking about how AA is addressing the diversity issue and working to make the fellowship more welcoming and open to people of all different cultures and background.

After a brief summer break, the committee has reformed with new members and is well into the planning stages for the Westminster event for 2024, which will be held in Portcullis House on **Tuesday 21 May 2024**. The MP sponsor this year is Rachael Maskell, Labour MP for York Central.

The professional non-AA speakers yet to be confirmed. AA service news as well as emails have gone out to the fellowship asking for any member who may have contacts of professionals to get in touch with those contacts and urge them to invite their colleagues who would benefit from hearing more about AA. that also goes for anyone who may be in contact with professionals and practitioners that come into contact those who would benefit from the hand of AA.

This year, like every year, the emphasis is on is getting MPs and parliamentary advisors, health professionals, practitioners and people who encounter and work to help the still suffering alcoholic, **and** who don't know much about AA, to come along to hear what AA has to offer. The committee reaches out to the Fellowship to provide contacts to invite. This is **not** an event for AA members or even the people we already work with in our PI initiatives although we rely heavily on them to encourage their contacts and colleagues to attend.

Gretchen S, GSB Trustee

### Scottish

The Scottish Parliament event took place on 4th October 2023, following two and a half years of this event being rescheduled we were delighted it finally went ahead and was very well attended. The theme was Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness. Following An address from our Sponsoring MSP our four AA speakers gave fantastic talks, which were well received. Our professional guests heard first-hand from members how they found sobriety and experienced positive social impact in their lives and the lives of those around them. Their talks gave insight into the reality of the programme of recovery available in Scotland to all who suffer from alcoholism.' Following our speakers there was an enthusiastic question-and-answer session. Feedback forms were used, and the response was overwhelmingly positive.

The committee worked extremely hard to source professional guests. This was reflected in the turn out with 21 professionals as well as MSP's attending and 2 members of Al Anon. The Scottish Minister for Drugs and Alcohol and the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health as well as the Scottish Government lead on Alcohol and Drug policy were all present as well as several other leading professionals. The committee has benefited from a more structured approach in its operation and administration. Whilst there were some difficulties with administration it is hoped that we can build on the success of this event in 2024. The Northern service office provided administrative support, and we are grateful for our workers contribution. We would invite all members to suggest invitees through their regional committee member or directly to the committee at [scot.parl@aamail.org](mailto:scot.parl@aamail.org) for our 2024 event.

I have now rotated off GSB service for this event and would like to thank all who made this event such a great success, thank you for letting me be of service.

Hamish McS, GSB Trustee

## **Welsh**

The Senydd Assembly took place on the 14th of November 2023.

The event was hosted by Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, Plaid Cymru in the Senydd, Cardiff Bay.

The event was well attended with about 20 professionals present. The Armed Services video was played and we were lucky to have Justin, the Chairman of the Board, with us who spoke about his role. I then spoke about my role as the Wales and Borders Trustee and the activity we have in our Region. Two of our members shared their Experience, Strength and Hope. These were all well received and created the opportunity to for a Q and A session.

Once the presentations had finished, we retired for refreshments with the professionals where the conversation continued forming links and giving insight into the disease of alcoholism.

The date in November and sponsor for the 2024 presentation have yet to be finalised.

Zelma K, GSB Trustee

## **National Conventions Update**

### **Southern**

It was with great pleasure and excitement (and a fair dollop of relief) that the Southern National Convention Committee has secured a new venue for the 2024 Convention which will be held over the weekend of the 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

The Convention Committee has an agreement with Isle of Wight Tours to hold an annual convention in September at Sand Bay Resort until 2026. This Holiday Village is just to the north of Weston Super Mare with great onsite accommodation and facilities. There are also plenty of local attractions nearby.

The agreement with IOW Tours was only finalised just before Christmas 2023 and the first opportunity to publicize the event was at the Brighton Convention in January. Since then, there has been a fantastic response from the Fellowship with registrations continuing at a steady pace after the initial surge of bookings. The Committee is confident that the Convention will be fully booked well in advance of the Convention weekend.

The theme of the 2024 Convention is “A New Beginning” and the work of the Committee is now in full swing to provide a weekend programme of AA Meetings, including the Spiritual Meeting on Sunday morning, and Al Anon participation over the weekend. The programme will also include Service Workshops, Saturday night entertainment and, of course, plenty of opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

The Southern National Convention AGM was held in January with representatives of the 6 Sponsoring Regions. After the tribulations of the previous year, there was fantastic buzz in the meeting along with a real sense of purpose to build momentum for the 2024 event and keep things going for the 50<sup>th</sup> Southern National now scheduled for 2025.

Tim B, GSB Trustee

## **Northern**

The Northern National Convention (NNC) was held in March 2023 at the Norbreck Castle Hotel Blackpool, with an attendance of over 950. The NNC is sponsored by three Regions, Midlands, North-East and North-West and its committee is made up of three delegates from each Region plus the executive committee. The committee meet regularly, and the AGM was held in October 2023 to enable preparations to commence for the 48<sup>th</sup> Convention to be held 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Barbara O, GSB Trustee

## **Scottish**

The 66th Scottish National Convention, was held at the Queens Hall, Dunoon on 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of April. Online registration on the SNC website assisted with planning and event management. The convention took its regular form of meetings being hosted by each Region, with a Young Persons and Old timers meeting, the Saturday night meeting was open including an Al Anon speaker and rounded off with a sobriety countdown. Al Anon also had their own meeting room and meetings were well attended. The dedicated service room was popular being shared by invited service disciplines and a literature table. Feedback forms were used, and members confirmed what a great event this was.

The Convention Chair rotated out at the AGM after steering the committee through Covid and troublesome times, we are grateful for her service and look forward to the continued success of the convention with our new Chair.

The Committee has been working effectively and met in person and online throughout the year and continue to do so. The planned 67th Scottish National Convention will again be held at The Queens Hall, Dunoon with capacity in the main hall for 450 with more of the meetings being open to attract those interested in finding out more about Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholism. We look forward to welcoming you to the 67<sup>th</sup> Scottish National Convention 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

Hamish McS, GSB Trustee

## **Welsh**

The convention was held at the Metropole hotel, Llandrindnod Wells on the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023. There were 163 attendees from a wide geographical area.

On the Saturday there was a Welsh speaking meeting with a simultaneous translation into English along with other tabletop shares, a workshop and marathon meetings alongside. A room was available for Alanon, and entertainment provided.

This year's convention will be held at the same venue 31<sup>st</sup> May to 2<sup>nd</sup> June. All are welcome to join us for a warm Welsh welcome.

For flyers and more information contact Wales & Borders Region - Welsh National Convention ([aawalesandborders.org](http://aawalesandborders.org))

Zelma K, GSB Trustee

## OPEN FORUM

Sean welcomed all to the Open Forum which is a non-voting session where delegates get the chance to ask any questions which may not be covered this weekend or about anything they have heard this weekend so far.

The evening ended at 10pm with Sean thanking everyone for their hard work and asking all to join him in saying the Serenity Prayer, following which the preliminary Committee Reports were distributed.

# SUNDAY 14 APRIL

Sean welcomed everyone back for the third and final day of Conference and opened with the Preamble. He went on to say that it had been brought to his attention that there was a minority view that had not been recorded with regard to the new films shown on Friday night, which needed to be addressed and another vote taken on these films (*reported on page 30 of this report*).

As agreed at Conference 1995 each recommendation will be voted on and whether or not it is a two-thirds majority will be recorded.

Sean then invited the Chairs of the six Committees to present their respective reports which were fully discussed and adopted and as much time as was possible given for minority opinions to be heard.

These Committee Reports are included in this report on the pages indicated below:

Committee No. 1	Pages	70 - 72
Committee No. 2	Pages	73 - 83
Committee No. 3	Pages	84 - 86
Committee No. 4	Pages	87 - 88
Committee No. 5	Pages	89 - 90
Committee No. 6	Pages	91 - 93

## ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR CONFERENCE 2025

The nomination received on Friday evening was presented and, after a vote, Alison F (East of Scotland Region) was duly elected.

## CONFIRMATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

(Justin T, Chair GSB)

Hello, me again. Massive congratulations to Alison, next year's Conference Chair, and thanks to all those who volunteered for this service and I note that 5 of the last 6 years we will have had a Scottish Chair.

Many of us will have tried to connect with our higher powers in informing our voting and some of us will have gone down on our knees. Somebody yesterday went down on one knee and that was our Conference Chair, Sean. So, can you please congratulate Sean on his engagement.

Thanks too, to all those in Committees who worked hard at recommendations that reflect the conscience of our Fellowship. But it is not just the work here that is the fruit of the Conference process. Some questions fulfil purpose merely by getting discussion and debate at the highest level of our service structure – the groups. Some, like reviewing Literature, get greater engagement further down the inverted triangle. But today is not the end of Conference 2024's work. It is when the Committee reports and GSB news are disseminated throughout the Fellowship that even better work on our primary purpose can flourish. Of course, the GSB and its SCs will be working hard to follow up on your recommendations and bring them to fruition. Please do not be shy in talking about your service work and its benefits to others and yourself – it is not boasting, but attraction - the way that we will be ready to help still suffering alcoholics in 10-, 20- and 30-years' time.

I now have the honour to present the new trustees to Conference – please stand up as I announce you:

ANGIE from the NORTHWEST, who will have a trustee for the first time in 4 years – she'll be working on the National Telephones SC, Northern National Convention and PI E-Comms

CARMEL, of SOUTHEAST REGION, to work on Health and Probation

MAX from the MIDLANDS she'll be working on Prisons, Literature and the 2025 Survey and

TONY from LONDON REGION SOUTH, who will be chairing our new INCLUSIVITY GROUP, and work on the Westminster Parliament event, Employment and Nominations. He's already proved himself a great asset by toiling with Tom and me on the new films.

But you may be wondering what's happening to the incumbent trustees?

Well, GRETCHEN from LONDON REGION SOUTH joins the Executive Committee as our new Honorary Treasurer, adding an additional two years to her service.

Other trustees are rotating off, having completed their four years on the board.

From the MIDLANDS, BARBARA, who joined the GSB at the same time as me, just as lockdown started, so we didn't meet face to face for almost 18 months. She has worked tirelessly at Health and Nominations Committees, both of which have benefited from her chairing. She also served on the Northern National Convention and the Committee Six working group from which evolved the Race Today initiative and our three new films. She attended the Sub-Saharan Africa service meeting from her spare room, via zoom. Just last month, she attended the AA Ireland Conference as an observer.

From the SOUTHEAST, CHARLES who joined a few weeks before Barbara and me. Charles, having already attended real live board meetings, seemed like a veteran when I logged on to my first Board meeting on Zoom. He has worked on your behalf on PI, the Westminster Parliamentary event and chaired the Employment SC whose initiatives over recent years have been hugely impressive. The Blue Light film that we have created is a result of his tenure on the SC. He represented us on a virtual Danish Conference and in person in Poland.

Also leaving us today are two long-serving stalwarts of the Exec, both of whom have served the maximum 6-year stretch.

CLIVE, who came to us from the EASTERN REGION and has served on Archives, Finance, Survey, the 75<sup>th</sup> SC, and also the 75<sup>th</sup> publications group, which produced the updated history of service in AAGB. He attended the Irish Conference and represented us on the Government sponsored Mutual Aid Group, which was so supportive of our work during the pandemic. He has been Honorary Treasurer for the past 3 years and responded to questions from the Fellowship with enviable good humour. He always plays FARE, never deviates from the BEST ROUTE and devotes his time willingly to service, never leaving the METER RUNNING. No longer Hon Treas, he is now simply: a Treas.

Then there's STEVIE, originally from SCOTIA region who have, so far, found him an impossible act to follow. He's served as Vice Chair for all my four years on the Board, and like the Ravens at the Tower of London, he's been a constant, our own Rock of Gibraltar. The role of Vice Chair is the fixer on the Board, and he's led our Safeguarding initiatives, helped get FROSC off the ground, and chaired the 75<sup>th</sup> Sub Committee. He stood in for Amanda at the World Service Meeting in 2022, from his home in Cumbernauld. I had to research his previous trustee roles and can report that he earlier served on Roundabout, Scottish parliament event and the Scottish National Convention. Who knew?

He has been a huge support to three Chairs during his tenure (the job description includes 'critical friend') and I shall be very sad to say goodbye to Stevie. He's been an absolute Brick (note takers, that starts with a 'B').

Finally, TOM FOX who joined us as a NAT four years ago, has done sterling work on PI, Prisons and has often been the 'face' of AA – in press, radio, and films – will replace Stevie as Vice Chair – it's been a while since we had a NAT on the Exec and I look forward to working with him.

Please thank all these servants of the Fellowship in the traditional way.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Conference Steering Committee, our GSO staff, the Hotel staff and of course, Keith who handles our Audio Visuals, all of whom have enabled us to have a unifying Conference.

See you next year, and farewell to those rotating out – please think of joining a Sub Committee or putting your name forward as a potential trustee.

God bless you all.

## **Close of Conference**

(Sean M)

Conference 2024 is now drawing to a close and I am sure you will agree that we have achieved a great deal in the last two and a half days. Thank you to each of you for playing your part in taking the annual conscience of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous forward.

This will be my last year at Conference, having attended in 2021 as an alternate delegate, 2022 and 2023 as a full delegate, and this year as your humble servant and Conference Chair. I was told early in my service that the lower down in the triangle you go the more people you are serving. To have had the opportunity to serve you in my final year, as your Chair, has been an emotional, challenging but very rewarding and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for nominating me and for putting your trust in me to chair the business of Conference this weekend. Thank you.

Before we go, there are a number of people it is very important we take the time to thank:

First and foremost, the Fellowship – to those willing members that took the time to submit great questions and to groups and individual AAs, for carefully considering these questions and providing such comprehensive feedback.

A massive thank you to the Trustees of the General Service Board, for their continued time in doing tireless work on behalf of the Fellowship.

Thank you to Sharon, our Conference Co-Ordinator, for organising yet another excellent AAGB Conference – Sharon does a great deal of work behind the scenes that isn't seen, and I know you will want to join me in thanking her for her efforts this year.

Thank you also to the members of the GSO team, who have been quietly working away in the background all weekend, putting everything in place and ensuring that things ran seamlessly. From the lead up, to the microphone work, to the counting, the preparation and service throughout the whole weekend, our thanks go to you.

Also, a big thank you to Keith, our excellent audio-visual technician for all his work.

To our Overseas Visitors, thank you for your participation. I hope you have enjoyed your time with us and have found it a rewarding experience.

I would like also to offer my personal thanks to Ranjan and Sharon, for all the support and guidance they've given me over the past year, in my role as Chair of the Conference Steering Committee, and, for all their help and encouragement this weekend.

Thanks to our Board Trustees: Tim and Hamish, for the benefit of their experience, support and participation in the 2023 submission selection process and special and sincere thanks to my fellows on the Conference Steering Committee: Committee Chairs: Pete, Jim, Jane, Alan, Gordon and Vikki, for their hard work over the last year, and for steadfastly steering their committees through the challenges of this year's submissions and subsequent recommendations to Conference – it's not an easy job, but brings monumental reward.

To you, the Delegates - thank you for all your hard work, throughout the pre-Conference process and here at Conference this weekend. You have done incredibly important work and I hope you see how important it is now that the process is drawing to a close. Thank you.

To those Delegates who are rotating out this year - thank you all for your service. I hope that yesterday's Sub Committee "drop-in," went some way to encouraging you to give some serious thought to putting your valuable experience to good use as a Sub Committee member.

My final thanks, on behalf of us all, go to the hotel staff for looking after us so splendidly again this year. Thank you.

It's been an absolute privilege to serve you as Conference Chair this year. I am not a natural public speaker, so I appreciate all of your patience as we have navigated throughout this weekend's proceedings together. I will remember with pride my time in service at Conference. I would also like to remind you, as mentioned in my keynote speech, of the wise old owl who told me "*I put my hand in yours, and WE did, what I could not do alone*".

Congratulations to next year's Conference Chair, Alison, I wish you and the new Conference Steering Committee all the very best for 2025.

That concludes the business for Conference 2024. I wish you all a safe journey home.

To formally close our proceedings, please join me in saying the Responsibility Statement, followed by the Serenity Prayer:

*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.*

*God Grant me the serenity, to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Thank you.

## **DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT CONFERENCE**

The Fifty-Ninth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain will be held at the Raddison Hotel, North Street, York on 11 – 13 April 2025.



# FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

## COMMITTEE No. 1

CHAIR                      PETE N                      NORTH WEST REGION

SECRETARY              PATRICK R                  LONDON REGION NORTH

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

1. **Conference is asked to consider, and make recommendations, for a comprehensive overhaul of the service structure.**

**Members' availability for service is challenged by unprecedented demands in the workplace - greater job insecurities and pressures on time.**

**A streamlining of disciplines could reduce persistent vacancies and make carrying the message more effective in changing times.**

**There are 12 service disciplines at Intergroups and Regions, in addition to the positions of Chair and Secretary. Many vacancies exist also within Board subcommittees.**

**Could Employment, Health and Public Information be unified within Public Affairs? Could Electronic Communications and Telephones become Responding? Is Young People's Liaison essential as a separate discipline?**

**Carrying the message with greater effectiveness ought to take priority over the protection of existing individual disciplines.**

**There are enormous changes in society - AA is part of society, not removed from it.**

Whilst this question has generated much helpful debate amongst our fellowship, this committee does not believe a comprehensive overhaul of the service structure is needed.

The main reasons are:

Observing Tradition 4 and Tradition 9

Tradition 4

"each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole."

Tradition 9

"AA as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

Combining roles makes service less attractive, which increases the workload with a danger of individuals being overwhelmed.

The importance of our third legacy of service. If you reduce the number of service roles it decreases opportunities for service.

The committee observed that there was a second question in combining certain service disciplines.

It was noted that historically, this has already been trialled with chat now, online responders, and telephone (at the national level) but this has now been reversed.

Examples were found at group and intergroup level where certain disciplines have merged in accordance with Traditions 4 and 9. Due to vacancies, practicalities, needs at a local level or when disciplines have a natural overlap.

This committee recognises the importance of preserving separate service disciplines. e.g.: Young Persons Liaison Officer and Electronic Communications Liaison Officer.

Vote 19 voted unanimous.

A minority opinion was recorded that we should always be looking at how we move with the times and we shouldn't be standing still as a fellowship.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

## **2. Would Conference investigate the viability in terms of security, cost and anonymity, of opening Conference to online observers?**

We did consider whether this was supposed to be a question directed to the Board as conference cannot access the relevant information.

However, the Conference Charter Article 2 would need to be changed by conference. This is with reference to The AA Structure Handbook Great Britain 2023, page 150. This would have to be a new question for Conference.

In addition to the above the conscience of our regions highlighted a lot of positives with concerns and some of these are listed below:

### Positives

Transparency  
Attraction into service  
Demystifying  
Inclusivity

### Concerns

Anonymity of participants at conference  
Security – online bombing and safeguarding  
Potential costs  
Restriction of freedom of speech  
Risks undermining the idea of trusted servants. Concept 3

We also felt that:

Some regions already have pre and post conference meetings so members can meet all 6 delegates in person.

General Service Board and GSO are open and are accessible to individual members.

AA Service News have all the reports as well.

Also there is a "General Service Conference" pamphlet already available.

The Final Conference Report is simultaneously distributed to all groups.

Our committee voted against this question unanimously on the grounds that this will not be possible or practically viable via conference to assess the feasibility.

FOR 19 votes – unanimous.

A minority opinion was recorded regarding the question not being answered in the spirit of the question due to the technicalities of the wording of the question.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**3. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Patrick R, London Region North as Chair of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2025.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected David H, South West Region as Secretary of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2025.

## FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

# COMMITTEE No. 2

CHAIR                    ALAN F                    SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION

SECRETARY            CHERISSE D            EAST OF SCOTLAND REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

1. **Could the conference please give more clarification and detail on situations in which making direct amends is against the spirit of the steps if it is likely to cause harm?**

**Context:** locally there are various traditions of sponsorship in which sponsees have been told to make these amends e.g. victims of sexual assault have been told to get in touch with their assailants to make amends for harbouring resentment against them (this has included a situation where the sexual assault in question was incestuous); people who have been subject to restraining orders or threatened with restraining orders have been told to make direct contact with those requesting restraining orders to apologise for causing them fear and distress.

The concern is that commands to make these kinds of "amends" bring the Fellowship as a whole and our 12 Step programme into disrepute (particularly in the eyes of other organisations such as Rape Crisis) and has constituted a perceived barrier to being accepted as a member of our Fellowship.

**Would Conference consider if the suggestion in step 9 "unless to do so would injure them or others," applies to the sponsee as well?**

We have thoroughly and conscientiously discussed this question in detail and range and feel that to give a proper and just response will require further work. Therefore, it is recommended that a working group is formed.

This is the information that we discussed and are proposing that this is the key input for the working group to take forward.

1. Sponsors should never command sponsees.
2. Sponsees should never be encouraged to break the law.
3. Add to sponsorship pamphlet.
4. Good to seek a second opinion if you are uncomfortable with the suggestion, speak to another member with good experience.
5. A sponsee can say no to a sponsor.
6. Recommendation of giving generic suggestions for situations which limit.
7. Add sponsee to the sponsorship pamphlet.
8. To add to sponsorship pamphlet.
9. Victim does not have a part.
10. If the person working with another alcoholic does not have experience in the issue, seek experience with professionals.
11. Speak about safeguarding at meetings.

12. Clarifying where it would be published.
13. Safeguarding statement to be read out at every meeting.
14. Suggestion of a recommended period of sobriety for sponsorship.
15. Sponsors should go ahead with restraint and prudence.
16. Look for recovery that you want when choosing a sponsor.
17. Who you choose as a sponsor is very important, try to look for someone that has had similar experiences. A member should refer, when looking for a sponsor to the Structure Handbook, 12 and 12, Big Book and other conference approved literature.
18. Look at the Structure Handbook, Chapter 5.

This Committee abhors and does not condone this behaviour by sponsors.

It is essential to understand that a sponsor's responsibility is to guide not command. We share our experience, strength, and hope. A victim of sexual abuse or assault has not caused a harm.

They may need to deal with resentments which could affect their sobriety and here, a good sponsor can listen and support and give suggestions. A sponsor who does not have experience with an issue presented by a sponsee should refer that sponsee to someone who does have experience with that issue. Of course, the resentment must be dealt with, however no amends would be necessary. To insist or even suggest that a sponsee who has been the victim of abuse or assault must make amends to the perpetrator is potentially damaging to the sponsee. The experience of sexual abuse or assault is extremely traumatic. There is not just risk but high probability of the sponsee experiencing retraumatization, revictimization, and shame. This is a mental health issue and as the Big Book suggests, should be left to professionals who have the training and experience to address it, not the AA sponsor.

The issue of perpetrators making amends, particularly where there are legal issues such as restraining orders is also potentially damaging. Legal matters, as stated in the Big Book, should be handled by legal professionals not AA sponsors. A person violating legal restrictions such as a restraining order to make amends is potentially causing harm to themselves and their families as well as their victims. The abuse or assault is not an AA issue. A resentment or other threat to sobriety is an AA Issue.

This committee is firmly of the opinion that the suggestion in Step 9 "to injure them or others" does include the sponsee.

Voting

For 15

Against 2

Abstention 2

**Minority opinions:**

Not suitable for questions for Conference, addressed the context, not answered the question.

We cannot legislate or micromanage. The ways sponsors guide sponsees not a question for conference, it is out of the remit of conference. There is guidance in the 12 x 12, Big Book and the pamphlet. Concept 12, Warranty 6 "Conference shall never put forward an act of governance in the Fellowship". The question might have breached the Terms of Reference of

the Conference Steering Committee. The difficulty inherent in issuing edicts is it opens us up to other edicts being instituted. (Reference pg. 237 As Bill Sees It).

*Conference approved this recommendation with a simple majority.*

**2. Would Conference share experience on how AA members may communicate with each other on matters affecting AA as a whole, as well as their specific roles?**

**Good communication between members should be encouraged without promoting specific platforms.**

For delineation of official AA business we strongly suggest that you use the official communication structures that are already in place (refer to The AA Structure and Service Handbooks for Great Britain 2023), however we do understand that other platforms are being used and would ask people when using these platforms to use safeguarding measures to protect the individual and the group.

We emphasise not losing the importance of meeting people face to face. From our experience many groups, intergroups and regions use a messaging platform as means of communication at all levels of the AA structure.

**Group**

1. Encourage the use of announcements in AA meetings as a method of disseminating information.
2. Good service sponsorship is vital for people to comprehend their role.
3. For each group to hold regular group conscience/business meetings.
4. Each group having a Group Service Representative (GSR) and referring them to the pamphlet of "Now that I'm a GSR" and the AA Structure and Service Handbooks for Great Britain 2023.
5. Encourage GSRs to present information from Intergroup meetings both verbally and in writing.

**Intergroup**

1. Encourage Intergroup officers to use the official AA email address and the Confidential Directory for continuity.
2. Encouraging Intergroup officers to communicate with groups that do not have representation, where possible, to attend Intergroup and have a GSR take up this role.
3. Using intergroup microsites as a method of communication.

**Regions**

1. Some regions reported that their experience of using online workshops helped with communication.

**GSO**

1. We recommend that GSB look into the possibility of having a forum for people that have an AA email address.

Voting

For 11

Against 3

Abstention 3

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

### 3. Review amended Introduction in the Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

The Committee agreed in general with the changes that have been proposed with a few recommendations as set out below and the changes from us are highlighted in yellow.

Voting Unanimous.

## Structure Handbook

### Introduction 2. A brief history of AA in Great Britain

Guide to alterations:

- ~~Red ink is text deleted~~
- Blue ink is text added

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 for 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 1 Redcliffe Gardens and its services.

The following sentence is a recommendation to be added as follows: In 1951, Roundabout Magazine appeared in print, the primary purpose of Roundabout, the fellowship Scottish Magazine, is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous in print. 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 continued to serve the Fellowship in Great Britain and helped establish the regions in Scotland. The committee was disbanded in 1999 when it was felt that there was no longer a requirement.

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 40th Annual Conference in 2005.

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~~-Share, and this in turn has continued as a monthly publication ever since. At that time the monthly circulation was about 2500 copies. In 1982, Share celebrated its 10th anniversary by which time its monthly circulation had risen to over 5000 copies. In 2007, Share celebrated its Diamond Jubilee with an Anniversary Journal.

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.

The first AA handbook 'The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain' was published in 1974 and was reviewed annually until 1998. It was then superseded by the 'Group Handbook', renamed 'The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain' which was in use until 2012. This was then divided into two books 'The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain', approved 2012, and 'The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain', approved 2013. These are used today and are updated annually.

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 1,500th 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 siting 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. It was then subsequently moved to Toft Green in 2007. 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, and for this reason Parliament passed the Alcoholics Anonymous (Dispositions) Act 1986.

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 of AA and Alanon in Great Britain and elsewhere. of Al-Anon. This was the year that Conference recommended the adoption of 'Gratitude Week' by all groups.

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. It was known as '0345 scheme' and ran for four years, with reports being given to Conference every year. This was then later changed to an 0845 number in 1998, and by 2022, it was in use by all regions. In 2015 the number changed again to an 0800 free phone number.

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 8,000 members of AA, Al-Anon and their families gathered at the Winter Gardens and Boating Lake. This was also the year that the GSB took responsibility for the Northern and Southern Service Offices to comply with legal requirements.

1998 saw the creation of the AA website, and by the year 2000, it was receiving more than 45,000 hits per month.

In 2001, the 4th edition of the British version of the Big Book was published. In 2003, the first advert for AA appeared on British television. In 2004, the 'Blue

Bonnet' Convention received a 50-year recognition plaque from Dumfries and Borders Council. **\*\* Replace advert with broadcast**

In 2005, the first AA parliamentary event was held at Westminster followed quickly by events at the Scottish and Welsh parliaments. 'Traditions Week' became an annual event in AA.

Between 2005 and 2009, the GSB formed four new Sub Committees - Electronic in 2005, Health in 2006, Armed Services in 2008, and Probation 2009.

In 2010 to mark 60 years of co-operation of AA with Barlinnie Prison, a celebration event was held.

The end of 2012 saw the launch of Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness Month. Its intention was to raise AA's profile, and to increase public understanding of alcoholism.

In 2016, the 'Chat Now' function went on the AA website, opening up an entirely new access point in reaching out to the still suffering alcoholic, and attracting newcomers to the Fellowship.

In 2017, Great Britain's first AA museum exhibition, 'Darkness into Light', was hosted for four months at Kelvingrove, one of Scotland's leading museums. It was opened by Sir Philip Dundas's (credited with bringing AA to Scotland) daughter and granddaughter. The exhibition was a world first co-operation between AA and a National Body and has been visited by over 350,000 people.

The Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain Archive Cataloguing Project began at the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York in 2018. Also in this year, there was an event in Winchester Cathedral celebrating the 100-year anniversary of Bill's visit to the graveyard, and his subsequent passage in his story regarding the Hampshire Grenadier.

In 2020, the COVID19 pandemic arrived, and the world changed. It meant the **temporary** closure of physical meetings. The Fellowship responded by changing their existing meetings to online, and in some cases, by the following week. The AA Conference **was postponed and merged with the Conference** held online in 2021.

In 2022, The Fellowship celebrated 75 years in Great Britain with a 75th Anniversary Convention in Leeds.

Televised in early 2023, the BBC 2 documentary 'I'm an Alcoholic Inside Recovery', a look inside Alcoholics Anonymous was the BBC's first ever access to an AA meeting **using deep fake technology**. There was an upsurge of inquiries to GSO by members of the public after this documentary.

\* This is historical information as neither video is produced now.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Phil E, Scotia Region as Chair of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2025.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Hugo J, North West Region as Secretary of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2025.

# FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

## COMMITTEE No. 3

CHAIR            JIM M            EASTERN REGION

SECRETARY    PRAGNYA G    SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

- 1. Would Conference consider how online meetings are best represented and sharing information with each other? Would it be prudent to have an Online Intergroup for each region or nationally where online meetings talk to each regarding online matters and carrying the message online.**

This committee makes no distinction between online and face-to-face meetings and recognises the importance of Traditions 1 and 4 in responding to this question. The guidance is already present in the current handbooks in The Group section and the AAGB website for all groups.

The following link may be useful.

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/AA-meetings/online-&-telephone-meetings>

Representation of all our meetings is possible within the existing and evolving service structure.

The committee agreed that it was prudent to respect that each group is autonomous and may join whichever intergroup its conscience decides on the condition that the intergroup accepts them. Groups can also form a new intergroup if they wish.

Vote: unanimous.

A minority opinion was recorded that if an online group, non-geographical, joins an intergroup which belongs to a region. Does it mean that somebody from outside of GB and Continental Europe can vote on something that affects only us in GB because it's outside influences should not be coming in.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

- 2. Would Conference share its experience on the importance of rotation at all levels of service within the AA structure? (The impact of having vacant positions and why members should not repeatedly occupy the same service position).**

After much discussion, we referenced information from the 2023 Structure Handbook (p168), which reflects the committee's responses.

*"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".*

We also identified three parts to this question. Our responses include but are not limited to:

- i) Importance of rotation  
Rotation is essential, healthy and improves communication within the service structure and with each other. It generates new ideas, strengthens recovery and diminishes ego. Service helps keep you sober.
- ii) Impact of vacancies  
Our experiences show that following the guidelines in the handbooks help groups to fill vacancies via informed group conscience. Our experience recognises the positive benefits of continuing to sponsor people into service, making one-to-one contact and holding service workshops.
- iii) Members not occupying the same roles repeatedly  
This is important in order to discourage territorial and complacent behaviour. This encourages all members to get involved in service.

To summarise, the conscience of this committee is reflected in the following extract on p168 of the 2023 Structure Handbook.

*“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”.*

Vote: unanimous.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

3. **Review Service Handbook page 90, Section 9.4 The General Service Board’s Probation/CJSWS Sub Committee, first paragraph. Please replace ‘up to four other members’ with ‘up to seven other members’ as approved by the General Service Board.**

**Would conference approve the following revision of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain?**

**Chapter Nine: Probation/Criminal Justice Social Work Services (CJSWS) p90 section 9.4, second sentence, to now read:**

**'The main purpose of the Probation / CJSWS subcommittee is to assist the GSB in supporting the fellowships structure in its service work. This includes raising awareness of Alcoholics Anonymous and its services through cooperation with Probation/ CJSWS agencies at a national level.'**

**In place of the text which currently reads:**

**'The aim of the Sub-Committee is to raise awareness of the work of the Probation/Criminal Justice Social Work Services in Great Britain throughout the Fellowship.'**

**Last revised 2015**



The committee is in favour of replacing the text from 4 to 7 and make necessary revisions of the AA Service Handbook for GB. The committee agrees to the addendum, which clarifies the service work of the sub-committee.

Vote: unanimous.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Pragnya G, South Midlands Region as Chair of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2025.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Gillian S, Continental European Region as Secretary of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2025.

## FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

# COMMITTEE No. 4

CHAIR                      JANE C                      NORTH EAST REGION

SECRETARY              RACHEL D                LONDON REGION SOUTH

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

- 1. Would the Fellowship consider the following questions concerning Chapter 4 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, "For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field" and make recommendations to Conference.**

**a. Is the chapter about AA service?**

**If not, then**

**b. Should it be removed from the handbook?**

**If so, then**

**c. Should the material be presented in a different format, such as a pamphlet?**

a. Is the chapter about AA service? - No

b. Should it be removed from the handbook? - No

c. Should the material be presented in a different format, such as a pamphlet? -Yes

Committee 4 asks GSB to withdraw Chapter 4 and add a further section, point 5, to the Introduction in The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain which will reference an appendix. The content in the appendix will be based on Chapter 4, following a review with particular reference to sections 4.2 and 4.6.

The committee further recommend the production of a pamphlet summarising the content of the appendix.

Voted unanimous.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

- 2. Will Conference review "LGBT Voices" pamphlet with reference to Tradition 1. Our common welfare should come first: Personal recovery depends on AA unity.**

**(a) Consider a complete and more permanent title change for a constantly evolving community.**

**(b) Consider an Update to the Stories to include a wider and more up to date range of experience (LGBTQIA+)**

**(c) Consider removal or change the paragraph in the Title heading which reads "As a gay man in a very heterosexual AA it's a bit like being an alcoholic in a sober world" this is not inclusive to all in the fellowship only Gay men.**

- a. Yes unanimous.
- b. Yes unanimous.
- c. Yes unanimous.

Committee 4 recommends that the Board set up a working group to action the answers to questions a, b and c, in collaboration with the Inclusivity Working Group.

This group should include representatives from the relevant communities to review the title and content of the pamphlet, and consider the information in the opening paragraph of LGBTQ Alcoholics in AA US pamphlet, to be included.

Using the vehicles available including AA Service News, Share, Arena, Roundabout and AA website to obtain new stories and participants. Updated pamphlet to be available for approval no later than Conference 2026.

Voted unanimous.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**3. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Rachel D, London Region South as Chair of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2025.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Angela Y, Glasgow Region as Secretary of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2025.

## FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

# COMMITTEE No. 5

CHAIR                      GORDON M                      SCOTIA REGION

SECRETARY              JAN V                              SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

- 1. Could Conference discuss how the Fellowship's understanding of the principles of anonymity may guide those Groups requiring AA members and visitors to put their names in a signing-in book/attendance book at meetings.**

Following discussion, the committee recognises the conscience of the Fellowship is that anonymity is the spiritual foundation and bedrock of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The feedback from the Fellowship indicates groups rarely require signing in unless it is a policy of specific venues. Each group has the autonomy to apply the principles of anonymity as it sees fit via the group conscience.

Vote: Unanimous

- 2. Would Conference discuss and consider the viability of creating an additional version of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) incorporating stories from AAGB (including CER).**

The committee discussed the question and recommends creating an additional version of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) incorporating stories from Great Britain and English Speaking Continental Europe.

This will retain the 'Pioneers of AA' stories from the current edition and additional stories will then be included from members of the Fellowship from Great Britain and English Speaking Continental Europe.

For the avoidance of doubt the Preface, the Forewords, The Doctor's Opinion, the first 164 pages and the Appendices will also be retained.

In reaching this recommendation we have considered the following:

1. How we best carry the message
2. No significant additional cost
3. Inclusivity
4. Importance of the Big Book and its stories
5. Individual Choice
6. Examples from other countries
7. Opportunity to include stories from across the breadth of Great Britain and English Speaking Continental Europe
8. The work and effort required to achieve this

9. Any impact on Arena, Share or Roundabout magazines
10. Separate publication of Great Britain and English Speaking Continental Europe stories (deemed outside the scope of the question)

Vote: Unanimous

There was a minority opinion that it would have been preferable to have seen the stories before voting on the book.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**3. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Heather G, South West Region as Chair of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2025.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Andy D, Wales & Borders as Secretary of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2025.

## FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

# COMMITTEE No. 6

CHAIR            VIKKI C            WALES & BORDERS REGION  
SECRETARY    FRANK C            LONDON REGION SOUTH

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

**1. Would Conference share experience on how an AAGB App would help carry the message in addition to the AAGB website and existing apps?**

Committee 6 recognises the potential for the development of an official AA GB App in the future, to complement the existing website. Matters of content, financial implications and ongoing App maintenance and support would need to be considered before a design was addressed. There are also requirements from the online App stores in relation to content and security which would need to be considered. We acknowledge that technological developments will introduce additional challenges in ways which are unforeseeable.

There was some informed general discussion, based on the Conference Website Presentation which was delivered on the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> April. There is considerable membership experience with existing Apps and most who had used them found them useful. Given that the new website will be launched shortly and is mobile device friendly, feedback from users and website metrics will be useful in the scoping of any future AA GB App.

Committee 6 therefore recommends that consideration be given to the development of an App as part of the general strategy for the IT needs and requirements of the Fellowship.

This decision was supported by a unanimous vote.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**2. Would Conference discuss the merits of creating a user friendly information pack about how to be involved in the service structure, with each discipline running an online workshop, at the 3 yearly seminar, on how to get involved?**

We struggled with the clarity of this question because it posed two queries. One addressed an information pack, and the other addressed involvement in the Service Structure of the Fellowship, specifically in relation to online workshops as part of three year seminars.

There was a great deal of discussion about Service, and sponsorship into service. Fellowship comments were generally positive. Opinion on the provision of a new information pack was divided. Service workshops were discussed and whilst the Committee generally supported these, we did not feel our remit extended to a discussion of seminar content.

*Information pack recommendations:*

1. Online digital packs or videos, informed by Service Handbook information on various subjects, should be provided.

2. The literature needed to support Service is already in place, especially now that hard copies of AA Service News are once again available.
3. Original and creative signposting of our service material such as the creation of 15 second reels and/or podcasts should be considered.
4. Any new materials or revised existing materials would need to be attractive and engaging.

*Workshop recommendations:*

The Committee recognised that enthusiasm plays a big part in attracting and engaging participants and the filling of Service positions.

- a) Appropriate local workshops should be presented by people inspired by their experience of the particular area of service being addressed.
- b) Time needs to be spent both on optimising the use of existing resources and developing innovative and novel approaches to carry the legacy of Service to the Fellowship.

**The vote in favour was unanimous.**

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**3. Review new chapter on AA Publications for the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.**

A new chapter for the Service Handbook is already in draft form and relates to publications such as “Share”, “Roundabout” and “AA Service News”, and the role of the Literature sub-committee in their oversight and production. Nothing about the publications would change as a result of a vote on this matter, except that a comprehensive list of AA publications should appear on the website and at least somewhere in these publications. All that is being asked is whether or not they should be described and commented on in a new chapter of the handbook, and that background for the Committee questions should be readily available and updated annually. This might increase members’ awareness of these helpful and positive publications. Some discussion took place about duplication between the publications.

**A vote took place. It was agreed unanimously that this chapter should be included in the Service Handbook, subject to the deletion of Section 12.4 from “Files can be sent to GSO.....” down to “.....arrangements have been agreed” inclusive, and Section 12.6 in its entirety.**

The reasons we've asked for those particular exclusions is that the literature in Section 12.6, the literature section, we felt was just like an advertisement rather than a section like the other sections in the Service Handbook. But we did feel that the Literature Sub Committee ought to have its own section in the handbook, maybe revised this year and put to Conference for next year. So that's why we've asked for that to come out. And the others were alluding to copyright. Because we're actually working on what you'd call the image bank and also release forms for photographs, we're not sure yet how that's going to change. So, if we leave out anything to do with copyright, that will be in all the publications. Obviously, month by month that can be changed rather than put it in the Service Handbook.

*Conference approved this recommendation with a two-thirds plus majority.*

**4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Richard P-S, South West Region as Chair of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2025.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2025.**

The Committee elected Sharon W, Glasgow Region as Secretary of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2025.



## FIFTY-EIGHTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2024

### LIST OF DELEGATES

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN: **SEAN M** (Glasgow Region)

### GENERAL SERVICE BOARD

		COMMITTEE NUMBER	TERM OF SERVICE
Justin	T		
Holly	A	5	
Tim	B	6	
Charon	B	6	
Andrina	C	2	
John	C	1	
Jo	F	4	
Zelma	K	3	
Clive	K	1	
Hamish	McS	3	
Barbara	O	2	
Levey	P	3	
Charles	R	2	
Stevie	S	4	
Gretchen	S	1	
Carmel	G	(Elect)	5
Maxine	J	(Elect)	3
Angela	S	(Elect)	2
Tony	S	(Elect)	4
Ranjana Bell			5
Tom Fox			6
Emma Gipson			5
Kieran Moriarty			1

### GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

Ranjan B                      General Secretary  
Sharon Smyth  
Sophie Wright  
Jenny Pryke  
Chris North  
Mandy Tervet  
Gillian Thompson  
Emma L

**COMMITTEE  
NUMBER**

**TERM OF  
SERVICE**

**EASTERN REGION**

Mike	C	1	3
Kevin	D	2	1
Jim	M	3	3
Greg	H	4	2
Robert	R	5	3
Phil	S	6	1

**LONDON REGION NORTH**

Patrick	R	1	2
Ed	B	2	1
Ann	A	3	3
Richard	D	4	1
Cameron	D	5	3
Anne	M	6	2

**LONDON REGION SOUTH**

Sheila	C	1	A
Gary	E	2	2
Frank	O	3	3
Rachel	D	4	2
Rose	W	5	1
Frank	C	6	3

**MIDLANDS REGION**

Alex	Mc	1	1
Ian	C	2	1
Felicity	W	3	A
Janice	N	4	3
Gregory	V	5	3
Richard	T	6	1

**NORTH EAST REGION**

Mark	T	1	1
Bob	W	2	1
Jonathan	T	3	2
Jane	C	4	3
Jerry	B	5	1
Aline	B	6	2

		<b>COMMITTEE NUMBER</b>	<b>TERM OF SERVICE</b>
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### **NORTH WEST REGION**

Pete	N	1	2
Hugo	J	2	1
Julian	B	3	2
		4	
Julie	W	5	3
Chris	D	6	2

### **SOUTH EAST REGION**

Steve	W	1	2
Marie	L	2	1
Steve	E	3	1
Martin	S	4	1
Malcolm	D	5	3
Vanessa	H	6	1

### **SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION**

Antony	J	1	3
Alan	F	2	3
Pragnya	G	3	2
John	B	4	2
Janet	V	5	2
Melanie	A	6	3

### **SOUTH WEST REGION**

David	H	1	1
Dave	W	2	A
Peter	A-L	3	1
Jorge	L	4	1
Heather	G	5	2
Richard	P-S	6	1

### **WALES & BORDERS REGION**

Julie	P	1	A
Carol	N	2	A
Amanda	T-H	3	2
Rosie	F-A	4	A
Andy	D	5	2
Vikki	C	6	3

**COMMITTEE  
NUMBER**

**TERM OF  
SERVICE**

**EAST OF SCOTLAND REGION**

Alison	F	1	3
Cherisse	D	2	2
Gerry	C	3	3
Eric	L	4	3
Gordon	F	5	A
John	M	6	3

**GLASGOW REGION**

Robert	M	1	2
Jim	K	2	3
		3	
Angela	Y	4	1
Gary	H	5	1
Sharon	W	6	2

**HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS REGION**

Bob	S	1	3
Ian	M	2	1
Cath	W	3	1
		4	
		5	
		6	

**SCOTIA REGION**

		1	
Phil	E	2	2
Charlie	Q	3	1
David	S	4	2
Gordon	M	5	3
Matt	A	6	3

**SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND REGION**

Scott	R	1	2
Billy	T	2	2
Colin	A	3	1
		4	
		5	
		6	

		<b>COMMITTEE NUMBER</b>	<b>TERM OF SERVICE</b>
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### **CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION**

Marketa	K	1	1
Elizabeth	B	2	1
Gillian	S	3	1
Marisa	C	4	1
Jonathan	P	5	2
Jan	J	6	2

### **OBSERVERS**

René	F	(Czech Republic)	6	1
Niels	P	(Denmark)	3	1
Anya	S	(Ireland)	1	1
Tom	K	(Ireland)	2	1
Emmet	O'H	(Ireland)		2
Ilze	N	(Latvia)	1	1
Ada	Z	(Poland)	6	1
Paulo	D	(Portugal)	5	1

## Glossary of Abbreviations

AA	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i>
AAA	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness</i>
AASN	-	<i>AA Service News</i>
AAWS	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous World Services</i>
ASL	-	<i>American Sign Language</i>
ASLO	-	<i>Armed Services Liaison Officer</i>
BSL	-	<i>British Sign Language</i>
CER	-	<i>Continental European Region</i>
CMS	-	<i>Content Management System</i>
CSC	-	<i>Conference Steering Committee</i>
DAAT	-	<i>Drug and Alcohol Teams</i>
ECLO	-	<i>Electronic Communication Liaison Officer</i>
ECSC	-	<i>Electronic Communication Sub Committee</i>
ELO	-	<i>Employment Liaison Officer</i>
ESM	-	<i>European Service Meeting</i>
GSB	-	<i>General Service Board</i>
GSO	-	<i>General Service Office</i>
GSR	-	<i>Group Service Representative</i>
HLO	-	<i>Health Liaison Officer</i>
HSC	-	<i>Health Sub Committee</i>
MOJ	-	<i>Ministry of Justice</i>
NAT	-	<i>Non-Alcoholic Trustee</i>
NHS	-	<i>National Health Service</i>
NICE	-	<i>National Institute for Clinical Excellence</i>
NNC	-	<i>Northern National Convention</i>
NOMS	-	<i>National Offender Management Service</i>
NSO	-	<i>Northern Service Office</i>
NTA	-	<i>National Treatment Agency</i>
ORS	-	<i>Online Response Service</i>
PI	-	<i>Public Information</i>
PLO	-	<i>Prison Liaison Officer</i>
PPS	-	<i>Prison Postal Service</i>
PR	-	<i>Public Relations</i>
P/SS	-	<i>Probation/Social Services</i>
RECLLO	-	<i>Regional Electronic Communication Liaison Officer</i>
RELO	-	<i>Regional Employment Liaison Officer</i>
RTLO	-	<i>Regional Telephone Liaison Officer</i>
SC	-	<i>Sub Committee</i>
SPPS	-	<i>Scottish Prison Postal Service</i>
SPS	-	<i>Scottish Prison Service</i>
SSAFA	-	<i>Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen &amp; Families Association</i>
SSASM	-	<i>Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting</i>
SSO	-	<i>Southern Service Office</i>
TLO	-	<i>Telephone Liaison Officer</i>
TOR	-	<i>Terms of Reference</i>
YPLO	-	<i>Young Peoples Liaison Officer</i>
YPP	-	<i>Young People Project</i>

## The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. AA as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. 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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

