

National Telephone Sub Committee

N.T.S.C. News April 2016

"Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope."



Thank you to all who have contributed to this, second edition of our Telephone News Letter. As we stated at the beginning of our January edition, it is hoped that this will prove to be a valuable means of sharing our experience and information, and so enable us all to enhance and improve the service we offer.

The File Store has been up-dated - please contact the NTSC if there are any further amendments to be made. A CD, for the Telephone Service, will be available at the Seminar and from the General Service Office on request

Preparations for the Seminar, to be held in August this year, are well underway. All Regional and Intergroup Telephone Liaison Officers are invited. The topics we are to cover have been drawn from suggestions made at the Annual General Meeting held in August, 2015. These topics, specifically relating to the Telephone Service - one alcoholic talking to another - are 'Communication', Recruitment and Training' and '24hour Service'. There will be brief presentations from the NTSC, from our Statisticians, News Letter Editor and Treasurer; our RTLO contact will demonstrate the use, and benefits, of the information held in our file store

We look forward to meeting everyone in August.
Judy F. Trustee

2016 Statistics - Quarter 1

The January - March period in 2016 showed further evidence of the successful launch of AA's free phone helpline. Total calls to the national helpline numbers increased from 13,463 in Q1 2015 to 18,880 in Q1 2016 (+40%). Of the 15,689 successful (answered) calls in Q1 this year, 14,383 were to the new 0800 number (91.7%) and only 1,306 calls (8.3%) to the 0845 number.

Q1 2016 also demonstrated continued growth after the successful introduction of the new 0800 number last year, with successful calls up from 14,487 in Q4 2015 to 15,689 in Q1 2016 (+8%) with continued concentration on the 0800 number. Calls to the free phone line increased by +10.4% whereas calls to the 0845 number declined by 10.5%.

Calls from mobile phones exceeded the number of calls from landline phones. Whereas 5,413 of the 13,463 calls to AA in Q1 2015 were from mobile phones (40.21%), the figure rose dramatically to 10,099 of the 18,880 calls made to AA in Q1 2016 (53.49%).

Mindful of the fact that AA pays the entire cost of each call to our new 0800 helpline number (whether from a landline or from a mobile phone), the average length of each call fell slightly from 5.3 minutes in Q1 2015 to 5.2 minutes in Q1 2016.

Bob S.

National Statistics	Q1 2015	Q4 2015	Q1 2016
08457 697555	11,659	1,460	1,306
0800 9177 650	-	13,027	14,383
Total Answered Calls	11,659	14,487	15,689
Ineffective Calls	1,804	3,233	3,191
Total Calls	13,463	17,720	18,880
Landline Calls	7,929	8,464	8,589
Mobile Calls	5,413	9,113	10,099
Other Calls	121	143	192
Total Calls	13,463	17,720	18,880

NTSC Treasurer News

As most of you are well aware as from 1st of March 2016 the GSO took over responsibility for paying the monthly helpline telephone bill and our entry into the BT white pages telephone book.

What this means for all regions is that the NTSC no longer require any annual contributions.

Looking at our bank statement for the month of March 2016 only one region was still paying a monthly direct debit into our inbound services account and I believe that is because the region will be appointing a new treasurer at their next meeting and hopefully this will resolve this overpayment. Speaking of overpayments there were six regions who overpaid their annual contribution from the beginning of March 2015 to February 2016; these overpayments vary from £20 to £400. It is the intention of the NTSC that any region who has overpaid their contribution for 2015/2016 will get all money refunded to their regional treasurer and hopefully this will be done before or at our AGM in August and thereafter any remaining funds held in our inbound services account will be transferred to the bank account of the GSO .

Can I take this opportunity to thank all regions for their monetary contributions these past three years and I look forward to seeing you at our telephone helpline seminar in August.

Davie D.

When sending contributions to the Newsletter or Regional and Intergroup reports, please send to:
telephonesubcom@aa-email.org.uk

Regional News

Southwest Region

Down in the South West, we continue to operate a busy phone line.

For those of you not fortunate enough to be familiar with the Sunny South West - we are made up of 10 Intergroups:

Guernsey and Jersey have their own telephone service, with their own phone number, and do a fine job of providing support to our members and the suffering alcoholic in the Channel Islands. (They operate a service from 8am-10pm).

The 24hr Devon and Cornwall phone service is provided by the Cornwall, Devon Central, Plymouth, & South Devon intergroups. There have been a few TLO changes here over the last few months, and hopefully I can give you some more news from here in a future update.

There is also the Dorset & Somerset Telephone service (also 24 hr)- which is made up of the Poole, Bournemouth, West Dorset and Somerset intergroups. We held a meeting of responders and TLO's for this phone line in March. For the last few years, Jackie from Swanage has provided sterling service in co-ordinating the intergroups, keeping us up to date and arranging information for responders. The time had come (and gone) for her to rotate out, and we are pleased that Paul A has stepped up as the new co-ordinator. He can be reached at coordinator@dorset-somerset.uk

Many of the TLO's (and myself) are looking forward to the Telephone Service Workshop for all Regional and Intergroup TLO's in York 12th 13th August 2016. Hopefully we shall meet a few new colleagues there!

Take care all.

Marc H.

South London Region

It has been a positive years for the Region. The London phone service moved location to Lafone Street, which is the new Southern Service Office of AA, near to the Tower of London. Both North and South London Regions share their phone service in the office. Combined with the new 0800 number, it has been a positive year through supporting these changes - our volunteers acclimatising quickly and always maintaining an excellent service. Attracting volunteers and organising them for shifts is always a challenge, but we always manage to have enough to provide a service every day of the year with the valuable support of Miranda, and all the intergroup representatives. We have been supported in this by the wise guidance of the London Telephone Committee Chair, Keith, who has now passed this onto Deanne, a long standing volunteer and intergroup representative. Our secretary Charlotte has also provided invaluable service and support.

This has all enabled over 27000 calls to be taken by the service in 2016, 4000 more than the previous year. After a number of years of decreasing call number, albeit still very high, this is a real positive. This included 1508 12 steps so the message continues to be carried effectively to those in need! A number of South Region intergroups have found that local telephone service workshops have been helpful in attracting volunteers and hopefully this may be effective in other regions.

Bill D.

Eastern Region

A Responder of about three years experience, I was co-opted onto my Intergroup Telephone Service Committee and in what seemed a very short time, became the next TLO (the only eligible committee member!). My experience of working as part of a Service Committee has given me a firm belief in their value, especially to the Telephone Service. Being Intergroup TLO is very hands on, as barely a week passes without something cropping up and the support of a dedicated Committee to shoulder some of the jobs is a real help.

Our Committee comprised 6 or so Responders (each from a different part of our large rural Intergroup area), the Intergroup Treasurer, the previous TLO (for 1st year of incoming TLO as advisor), and the TLO. We met centrally 2 - 3 times a year to plan workshops, co-ordinate updates and any new information for Responders not covered in the quarterly Newsletter.

The main role of the Committee members was the training of incoming Responders and as an additional contact for Responders' queries. They promoted the Telephone Service at their local meetings and were the sponsoring body for the next TLO (ratified in post by Intergroup).

They sponsored me into the service, shared their experience, gave me the strength and hope to serve to the best of my ability and became my valued friends. To any Intergroup TLOs reading this who do not yet have this support and are thinking about it, why not? You have nothing to lose, and, maybe, everything to gain.

Allie F.

S.C.E.N.E (Scotland, Central, East & North East)

The Scene Helpline covers the east of Scotland from the borders up to the Banff area. It is operated by two Regions: Scotia and East of Scotland and covers nine Intergroup areas. We operate a 24 hour, 365-day service. At the time of writing we have 75 active Monitors. As well as this we maintain a list of Monitors who have been postponed for various reasons such as holidays, illness, moving home, etc.

The rota is made up each month by the same committee member. Other members carry out jobs such as training, maintaining the database of Monitors contact details, Pack maintenance, sending out the rota and Pack, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.

We used to post out Pack amendments and the rota to Monitors every month but we decided to offer Monitors the opportunity to have this emailed to them instead. This has been very successful but some Monitors still prefer to receive a printed Pack and amendments. We're quite happy to send out whichever type they prefer.

Although SCENE covers nine Intergroups, we currently only have six Intergroup Telephone Liaison Officers. Maintaining accurate meeting lists and 12 Stepper lists for the three vacant areas is therefore quite difficult.
Neil.

Wales and Borders Helpline

I have recently taken over from Jonathan P as Regional Telephone Liaison Officer for Wales and Borders. Jonathan has past on a phone service that is in good nick: consisting of 28 responders and 6 emergency responders. On average we receive about 3 calls per shift and up to 28 call per week. Calls have increased since the introduction of the 0800 number.

If you had asked an outdoor person like myself some time ago if he would consider an office based job, the answer would have been a resolute NO. Although the post requires more work than anticipated, to my surprise I am really enjoying it.

The Telephone Liaison Officer posts for Swansea and District, and for West Wales remain vacant. Another issue we face from time to time is the difficulty of getting hold of a 12 stepper during the duration of our shift, and when we do get through, it feels like we have interrupted them in the same way as an unexpected salesman might come knocking at your door. Therefore I am considering to look at a way of improving our service by obtaining times of availability and inconvenience for each 12 stepper.

Finally, I would like to give a big thank you to everyone that is involved in the Wales and Borders helpline for the support and welcome I have received. It is a great joy to be able to spread my wings across Wales and find like-minded people who have a real love for the fellowship and are committed to giving something back. Very refreshing indeed.

Nico.

Inverness & District

Next telephone helpline turn of shifts for Inverness and District IG commences 23rd March '16. The Annual RTLO's meeting will take place on Friday 12th August, 2016. This will be followed by the Seminar which will take place on Saturday 13th August, 2016 at the Park Inn Hotel York. Please note that GSO will be sending invitations to all Intergroup Telephone Liaison Officer's, I hope to attend in my capacity as the Region TLO and would like to ask intergroup to invite the new TLO to attend on their behalf as I am sure they would benefit with carrying out their TLO duties if they did. As I have now completed 3 years in this post I will be rotating out of the post at this meeting and I would like to thank all our members who participate with the telephone service. I want to take this opportunity to wish whoever steps into the post well and would be happy to answer any questions they may have. Both John M and I are currently still trying to complete and provide all responders with an updated version of the 12th step list for this Intergroup. My thanks go to everyone who has provided local information to assist with this.

Steve H.

Highlands & Islands

With regards to the AA helpline during my time in AA. I have taken part in this service as a responder, shift operator, as well as serving as the Telephone Liaison officer for both the Inverness & district Intergroup as well as the Highland region. These positions are all vital links in providing the telephone helpline service. My own experience in getting introduced to AA was someone being at the end of the telephone when I called for help, which helped me get to my first meeting. None of these positions were without challenges for me but each has brought its own reward. Initially I doubted myself and was apprehensive when I became a responder but this soon disappeared after a few turns at taking calls and getting someone to phone the person back. I recognised quickly that the person at the other end of the phone was probably desperate for help. Taking these calls rekindled the memories I have of when I made that first call to AA and it always made me feel grateful for what AA has since given me. I also felt that I was a part of a team carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Most calls I took were from people who genuinely sought help and the occasional call which wasn't genuine didn't deter me as I grew in confidence in being able to handle any type of calls. When I became a shift operator I became responsible for switching responders "on and off" shift. Again I grew in confidence especially when I had to respond Ad-hoc when someone called off their shift and a replacement had to be found at short notice.

When I became Intergroup TLO this meant attending Intergroup to submit a report which enhanced my sobriety and feeling of involvement. Having the responsibility of ensuring that our Intergroup could fulfil its agreed turn of manning the helpline meant phoning upwards of thirty people to get the roster covered. This helped me develop my organisational skills, and meant I had to speak to lots of members which had the mixed results of helping my confidence when requesting their help but also being less sensitive when it wasn't forthcoming. I recently rotated out of this position and enjoyed sponsoring someone into the post simply by explaining the duties and some of the mistakes I had made hoping to encourage them into trying the role.

I am now the Highlands and Islands Region TLO and attending Region meetings and also occasionally going to York for workshops or seminars has against increased my circle of friends and fellowship.

I have tried to describe some of the benefits and also the personal growth which holding these positions has given me, however I can't forget my primary purpose or my recognition of the importance the Telephone Helpline still has in carrying the message to anyone who needs help and wants to find AA. Whilst new ways have been found to offer help, the telephone service remains vital. If you are considering getting involved with the Helpline service please try it (that's all we are asked to do is try), and hopefully you will experience the same rewards I have. All that is required is giving a little of your time and effort enjoying more fellowship and ever increasing new friendships along the way.

Alex P.

Operator Headsets Part Two

During February and March, the operators on the Manchester Alcohol Helpline tested over ear headsets. As expected, the response from operators that actually tried using headsets was all positive. Operators experienced a much more comfortable and intimate communication with callers. The ability to identify the current state of the caller was much easier to recognize.

One operator stated that, the freedom, having both hands free, to access 12 stepper information, other telephone services and being able to use the computer to find national meetings for the caller, was a great help.

For the home responder, having both hands free to access information from the responder pack, and access to a computer will be beneficial.

Overall, just trying using a headset, can definitely benefit the operator. Telling the caller, that you are going to switch to headset, to allow you to access information, would take a few seconds, but would allow you a much better service to the still suffering alcoholic.

Most mobile phones have earbuds, and a line microphone. These headsets offer extremely clear two way conversation. They are inexpensive and could be kept with the operators responder pack, so you always know where they are.

Tim W. (Manchester)



*"I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."*