

Alcoholics Anonymous cooperation with Glasgow Alcohol Court

Background

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) involvement at the Alcohol Court started at the invitation of Sheriff Fleming following an Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness Event at The Scottish Parliament in 2018. The event had focused on members of AA sharing their experience of how they had been involved in Prison Service in Alcoholics Anonymous. Experienced was shared how engaging and attending AA in Prison had altered the behaviour of previous offenders and subsequently finding sobriety and a new way of life in AA on release.

Referral to this Court is through assessment by social work, who look at offending behaviour and alcohol use to determine suitability for participating in the Alcohol Court.

Although a fully functioning court, Sheriff Fleming has described it as a 'talking court' where extra time and encouragement is given to court users to try address their underlying difficulties. However, if new offences take place the offender will face find themselves at regular court disposal.

Committee Process

The AA Glasgow Courts Committee was formed and now provide service at the Alcohol Court in Glasgow with the hope of 'carrying the message' to those who find themselves at the Courts disposal.

The Court takes place every Monday and AA members from the local fellowship attend and give information to the people in court for alcohol related crime, let them know where local AA meetings are and offer to help these court users get to a local AA meeting.

The AA members are split between the public gallery and the outside waiting area, they speak with the court users as they wait or after they leave the court. If the court user is receptive the AA member shares their experience, offering identification which is crucial in letting the offender know they are no longer alone and that they do not have to keep living the way they have been.

As there is no official referral to AA the court user is not under pressure to comply. This allows the court user to engage voluntarily on a basis of shared understanding.

As court users are required to attend on a 3- or 4-week cycle, this gives them an opportunity to get to know some of the regular AA committee members and build up a relationship with them.

This cooperation with the Alcohol Court in Glasgow has been successful in giving several court users the opportunity to find a new way of life, achieve sobriety and help break the merry go round cycle of alcoholism and offending behaviour.

The following links provide additional information:

<https://justiceinnovation.org/project/glasgow-alcohol-court>

<https://www.slab.org.uk/guidance/glasgow-alcohol-court-and-other-problem-solving-courts/>

<https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/scs-news/2018/02/19/pilot-alcohol-court-at-glasgow-sheriff-court>

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