**Committee No. 1**

1. **Would the Fellowship share experience and then make recommendations whether to recognise online groups?**

***Background***

* The General Service Office does not register online groups, and for example, online meetings are not included on the *AA Meetings* section of the alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk website
* Over the last years, or maybe decades already, there is mounting and convincing evidence that groups that only meet online, effectively serve our primary purpose, just as regular *face-to-face* groups
* The Continental European Region (CER) recognises online meetings (<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.eu/country_map.php?Where=AA+On+Line+Meetings>). An online Intergroup is currently being considered
* Some of the online groups that are associated with Continental European Region have existed for multiple years now. Not only are regular group meetings held online, but so are business meetings. Experience shows that a loving God does not recoil from expressing Himself in our group conscience through an Internet connection. Also the online collection of the Seventh Tradition has been worked out satisfactory
* For a growing number of AA members, online meetings are their only realistic option for attending a meeting. Some examples: People that are housebound; parents with small children; people who cannot afford public transport to the nearest town with a meeting; people who desperately need a meeting at a time when there isn't a face-to-face-meeting at hand
* Probably more so than face-to-face groups, do online groups depend on their groups and meetings being included on websites like alcoholics-anonymous.co.uk, pressing the need for recognition by GSO
* Article in the July 2012-issue of *Share* about the First164YP Group (associated with Continental European Region).

2. **Multiple Home Groups**

**What are the pros and cons of having more than one home group?**

***Background***

Leaflet “The AA Group”

Book “The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA”

**Committee No. 2**

1. **Would the Fellowship discuss if it would like to adopt the Young People’s Liaison Officer (YPLO) position, to be incorporated into the Service Structure of AA Great Britain in line with the proposed role description outlined below.**

***Background***

Committee 2 at Conference 2013 recommended that ‘Intergroups and Regions may, where appropriate, appoint a Young Person’s Liaison Officer’.

Since then there have been regular enquiries from members around the country seeking clarification about eligibility for the YPLO role and what the position entails.

Concurrently the General Service Board has been running a Young Peoples (YP) Project and has recruited a team of motivated younger members to further develop the YP agenda. The aims of the YP Project are:

* To attract young people with alcohol problems into **recovery** in AA**.**
* To engage them in the **unity** of the Fellowship.
* To encourage them into **service** via the service structure.

To develop the Conference 2013 proposal, a job description was reviewed by the Young Peoples Project Team. This was originally drafted by a YPLO in Continental European Region where the position has been held by a succession of young service active AAs for over ten years. It was therefore based on experience.

More recently, after consideration by the GSB and the Young People’s Project Team, the following draft job description was proposed.

***Role Description***

The Young Persons Liaison Officer (YPLO) is a full service position recommended for Intergroups and Regions with voice and voting rights equal to other service positions.

The YPLO service position is recommended to run for a term of three years.  It is suggested that each Intergroup and Region create a maximum of one YPLO position with voting rights at their respective assembly.

One fundamental aim is to get more younger members into AA and involved in service generally. YPLOs should strive to be of service to AA in other disciplines, especially after rotating out of service as YPLO.

***Qualifications****:*

* Having come into AA at the age of thirty or younger
* Having a minimum of two years continuous sobriety for Intergroup YPLO
* Having a minimum of three years continuous sobriety for Region YPLO
* Having a good working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,

The YPLO is a contact and conduit for young newcomers with a desire to stop drinking. The YPLO receives and answers referred email and phone enquiries about AA from young people. This gives young people someone to talk with who has sober experience in Alcoholics Anonymous and who can share experience, strength and hope about getting sober at a young age.

A YPLO will be available to assist the Public Information Liaison Officer (PILO) with public information talks where the audience is anticipated to be of a younger age, such as schools, universities, young offenders’ institutions etc. The YPLO could also be of assistance offering perspective to PILOs when creating PI presentations and other PI work in relation to carrying the message to young people.

 A YPLO should develop a contact list of members of AA who got sober at the age of thirty or younger who are available and willing to be of service for PI talks and 12-step calls.

All YPLOs are welcome and encouraged to participate on the Young Peoples Project Team of the General Service Board, for as long as that team is convened.

In the spirit of unity and fellowship YPLOs are encouraged to support other Intergroup and/or Region activities concerning young alcoholics. Such activities may include workshops, PI events and Conventions targeting younger AAs.

A YPLO should encourage younger members of AA to get involved in all aspects of service where the recommended qualifications for sobriety are fully met. Younger AAs are needed in all disciplines e.g. Literature, Electronic Communications and PI to ensure the perspective of young people in AA is represented.

2.  **Retention of new members.**

**Could Conference share its experience with regard to how better to encourage Newcomers to ‘keep coming back’, to attend subsequent meetings and thereby improve their chances of long term sobriety and recovery? Make recommendations as to how this experience could be communicated effectively to the Fellowship as a whole.**

***Background***

Much worthy effort and considerable financial resource is expended in attracting new members to the Fellowship, through widely diverse PI initiatives at all levels, commercial advertising, the web site, etc.

Committee 1, Conference 2011 produced numerous ‘best practice’ recommendations as to how Newcomers could be welcomed to their first meeting by groups, particularly those who arrive without having had the benefit of a formal 12th Step call.

Despite these initiatives, the evidence is that many Newcomers attend just one meeting and are never seen again. There may be many reasons for this, but some groups are clearly more successful than others in encouraging returners.

***Intention***

The Fellowship as a whole might benefit from learning from successful groups how to improve its retention rates. A list of best practices would give groups the opportunity to consider, at their conscience meetings, ways in which their own Newcomers could have a better chance of achieving recovery, always accepting that local discretion will apply.

**Committee No. 3**

1. **Would Conference discuss the idea of adding a "chat now" messenger service to the AA UK website?*****Background:***

There is an increase in people worldwide using chat rooms and messenger services.

An AA member could act as a responder to this chat/messenger service.

It could be added as toolbar with "talk to someone now" slogan.

Working under the same principles and guidelines as the telephone responders only an online version.

The AA Great Britain Online Response Service reports:

Total emails during 2014 Jan to Aug = 5803 (8 months) which is 10.5% up on 2013 for the same period.

The total emails for the year of 2009 was 4257 compared to 7983 emails in 2013 an increase of 51% over 5 years averaging an annual increase trend of 10%.

2. **Would the Fellowship discuss and make recommendations on how the national ‘Directory of Intergroup and Regional officers Great Britain Continental Europe and the General Service Board Great Britain’ is updated, published and distributed?**

***Background:***

The Directory is a printed booklet sent to Region and Intergroup officers once a year, which contains contact details for people doing service as officers at Region and Intergroup level in Great Britain. We suggest two changes should be considered:

* Should the Directory continue to be published in print form? One drawback of this is that the details in the Directory can quickly go out of date; an electronic record could be kept updated more easily. Would it be better for the Directory to be sent as an electronic document with password protection, with printed copies available on request?
* GSO maintains the Directory, and there is a policy that if an officer does not provide a postal address for their listing, then their name is left out of the Directory altogether. In these cases, it can look like the position is vacant and those wishing to make contact may assume there is no one to contact in that Region or Intergroup (although you can request that it’s listed as ‘Refer to Secretary’ or sent to a ‘care of’ address). As most initial contact between officers these days will take place by email rather than by post, we do not find this policy helpful. It should be acceptable for Regions or Intergroups to have officers’ details printed without postal addresses.

**Committee No. 4**

1.  **Would the Fellowship discuss and make recommendations on how we can encourage more members to submit questions for discussion at Conference?**

***Background:***

The most up to date estimate of AA membership is thought to be 40,000 (source GSO York, August 2014), and yet in 2013 the CSC received only 54 questions for consideration to go forward as a Conference question.

At Conference 2010, part of the outcome of committee 2 question 1 was to ‘produce a simple leaflet in plain English giving guidance on submitting questions to Conference’, however the average of 1 question per 740 members may suggest this was not an effective solution.

Conference is the one chance each year when the conscience of the Fellowship can meet to discuss how we can better improve how we operate and how we can more effectively carry the message of sobriety to still suffering alcoholics.

Page 100 of the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 says that the second part of Conference ‘is spent in the consideration of a major subject (or subjects) of importance affecting the Fellowship’ and also that the subjects be looked at as ‘a matter of vital importance affecting our primary purpose to stay sober ourselves and carry the message of sobriety to the still suffering alcoholic’.

Article 3 of the Conference charter says that conference ‘will also be the vehicle by which AA in Great Britain can express its views on all matters of vital AA policy’.

2.  **Would the Fellowship take inventory of the ‘Where to Find’ and discuss improving its effectiveness and make recommendations.**

***Background Information 1***

Committee 6 of the 1984 Conference report Addendum.

A question arose concerning the function of the telephone contacts in “Where to Find” at national level. The recommendation is that they should be prepared to take full responsibility as contacts “with all that this implies” and delegate where necessary.

1985 Conference report; Clarification of “With all this implies”

This implies that such a telephone number will be freely available and that the contact is prepared at any time to:

Accept a call for help;

Give information to a professional;

Guide a family member to the right source for help;

Speak to members of the fellowship enquiring about meetings;

***Background Information 2***

The 2013/14 Edition of Where to Find contains over 700 groups that have no contact number.

***Background Information 3***

Members of the Fellowship who travel and make use of the Where to Find  have expressed frustrations on attending meetings that are listed in the Where to Find but have no contact details only to discover that the meeting no longer exists.

***Background Information 4***

It would appear to be the case that with the increasing use of mobile phones that calls to the helpline can be received from anywhere in the country thereby rendering local where to finds of little use on some occasions. Using Where to Find to get the nearest contact has lead to a group some distance away being contacted as the nearest group to the person requiring help has no contact details listed.

**Committee No. 5**

1.  **Would Conference consider the adequacy of guidance offered to groups (pages 82 – 85, The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013) in situations of persistent inappropriate/predatory sexual/threatening/violent behaviour at meetings and online, by individuals, share best practice and make recommendations (including appropriate amendment to the Structure Handbook) to clarify the onus of responsibility on group members to disallow such conduct.**

***Background information***

**A) Tradition 1** Our First Tradition reminds us that our common welfare must come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity. If any individual is persistently shattering the unity of an AA meeting or service forum then that individual is jeopardising the personal recovery of every member at that meeting.

**B) Regional viewpoint** Our Region considers the guidance offered to groups (pages 82 – 85, The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013) in relation to unacceptable personal behaviour and conduct is inadequate when there are individuals in our fellowship who cannot or will not listen to reason and who *constantly* persist in inappropriate conduct and personal vendettas, notwithstanding frequent police involvement at the request of particular groups, resulting in other fellowship members from newcomers to ‘old timers’ staying away from these groups and other groups visited by these individuals.

**C) Provable experiences** Many groups within our Region area are deeply concerned about the outrageously inappropriate conduct and behaviour, in some cases constant, of a very few individuals in our fellowship. This behaviour mainly comprises loud, aggressive and real threats of violence, sometimes actual acts of violence, sometimes repeated and unsolicited sexual attention and also includes the supplying of personal information such as full names, addresses, post codes and telephone numbers of fellowship members to parties and agencies outwith the fellowship and the reporting of what has been shared in confidence at AA meetings to outside agencies including the police. It should be stressed at the outset this background information takes no cognizance of the occasional or uncharacteristic ‘outburst’ from any person not having a particularly good day. It refers, rather, to those individuals who **persist** in disruption and who constantly react with violence simply on hearing a view contrary to their own. What is of even greater concern, though, is that a great many groups appear not to be tackling these problems as robustly as they should! Our First Tradition reminds us that our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity. If one individual is constantly shattering the unity of any AA meeting or business forum then that individual is jeopardising the personal recovery of every other person at that meeting. Our common welfare must come first. Our First Tradition is frequently ignored, though. Some groups have followed the advice given in pages 82 – 85 of the handbook to the letter and have, on occasions and as a last resort, sought police assistance. Sometimes police assistance has been sought recurrently in respect of the same individual. This police involvement has remedied the situation for that day but the individual has returned the following week even angrier and all the more threatening. These groups have grasped the nettle and told the individual(s) concerned that they are no longer being admitted to that group or its meeting. On numerous occasions, following such positive action, group members have been telephoned at home, or have received letters from, law firms with solicitors asking “on what or who’s authority is (name) excluded from (named) group?” Our Traditions are being outrageously disregarded when individuals are supplying personal information to outside agencies. Perhaps this leads to the false notion, held by many, that groups do *not* have a right (as agreed by group conscience) to debar a constantly threatening individual. Surprisingly too, and sadly, the misguided notion and message from a far greater number of groups is that this measure is completely contrary to AA’s way of thinking and that *‘nobody can be barred from AA’!* Whilst agreeing wholeheartedly that no individual can be barred from AA as an entity, we acknowledge that the supreme authority in AA is the conscience of the **group.**

Repeated and plaintive comments from some groups along the lines of “the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking” and “you can’t bar someone from AA” are less than helpful. Each group and every individual member of that group has a primary purpose - to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. If a group misguidedly thinks it must simply put up with this conduct then it puts lives at risk. We are aware of numerous fellowship members who do not go to certain groups through fear of who may be there. The consequences of this could, ultimately, be tragic. Groups must focus upon their absolute responsibility to consider our common welfare first and foremost as it is through this common welfare personal recovery begins and flourishes.

**D) Extract from document New Hampshire (US) General Service Workshop 2012 – Safety in AA : Our Common Welfare** namely Sec 3 para 2*… “The group conscience should fully empower meeting chairs and make them aware of their responsibilities to maintain order and safety in meetings so that the group as a whole will benefit. Group Conscience discussions should include emphasis on Tradition One and the importance of the unity of the group having precedent over the individual. Some groups include in their opening announcements that illegal and disruptive behaviour is not tolerated; include statements at the start of meetings that announce that abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. Group can set boundaries. Do what is necessary to keep meetings safe. Ban persons who repeatedly engage in disruptive conduct that prevents the meeting from fulfilling its primary purpose. Do what is best for the whole group. Address disruptions when they occur.”* (The full 6 pages of this report can be read online at – http://www. nhaa.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/SafetyInAA\_2012.pdf). A hard copy is available on request from GSO.

**E) Our Region’s unanimous opinion** that the aforementioned extract from the New Hampshire (USA) 62nd General Service Workshop – “Safety in AA – Our Common Welfare. 2012” highlights an appropriate response from groups towards persistent rogue behaviour and it, or similar, should be included in the guidance offered in the Structure Handbook.

**F) No member of the Fellowship** is above the law of the land.

**Committee No. 6**

1. **Would Conference consider ways to raise awareness of the ‘Twelve Traditions Checklist’ in the Fellowship?**

Knowing the importance of the Traditions to our groups, I have found this personal application checklist very helpful. It was published in the 2004 issue of ‘AA Service News’ and sent as a single copy with the booklet ‘AA Tradition – How It Developed’ on 31st March to celebrate AA’s birthday in the UK to all groups.

Can it be made available to all members by including this ‘Traditions Checklist’ for personal application on the literature list in GSO York?

The ‘Annual Traditions Week’ pamphlet is available in the Document Library of the AAGB website or hard copy on request from GSO.

2. **Review the revised Chapter Nine ‘Probation/Criminal Justice Service’ of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2013.**

***Background***

Revised Chapter Nine ‘Probation/Criminal Justice Service’.