



## GUIDELINES for AA in Great Britain

From the General Service Office, P.O. Box 1, Stonebow House, Stonebow, York YO1 7NJ

Group Officers

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**This Guideline is based on the pamphlet *The AA Group* which shows for new officers, new members and other interested AAs many of the good and proved-by-experience ways other members have used in their Groups to fulfil our primary purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”.**

All sorts of jobs have to be done to service an AA Group and to keep it going; this is why we need officers. Tradition 9 states that “AA as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

The officers or trusted servants needed within the Group are usually chosen by the Group members for limited terms of service. The jobs they do may have titles but titles in AA do not bring authority or honour; they describe services and responsibilities. These are ways of *carrying the message*. They are forms of Twelfth Step work an AA member willingly undertakes, primarily to help personal recovery. Many AA members have found Group duties an excellent way to strengthen their sobriety.

The various jobs or services requiring to be done to run a Group successfully can be allocated over the responsibilities of Group officers as set out and outlined below: two or more services may be combined under a single officer when the Group is a small one. For example, an ideal Group may have the following officers:

- **Chair**
- **Secretary**
- **Speaker Secretary**
- **Treasurer**
- **Literature Secretary**
- **SHARE / Roundabout Representative**
- **Refreshment Helpers**
- **Group Service Representative**

Each Group, being autonomous, selects the officers its members feel are necessary for the smooth running of the Group. Group officers usually serve for a year, since the principle of rotation of officers is important in order that each member should be given an opportunity to serve should they be willing. Each nominee is usually approached by other members in the Group and, if he or she agrees, that name is put forward at a business/service meeting, so letting the Group conscience decide the election.

### QUALIFICATIONS FOR GROUP OFFICERS

Most Groups make sure that their officers have had a known period of continuous sobriety, at least one year, and have shown themselves willing and available to give dependable service through regular attendance at meetings. It has generally been found that giving a member a job solely to help that member stay sober does not work. The Group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers and in this sense, a mention of Traditions 1 and 2 is helpful at election times as is also an appreciation that familiarity with the *12 Steps, Traditions* and *Concepts for World Service* helps officers to do a better job.

### CHAIR

While one year's continuous sobriety may be sufficient to undertake some other duties, the Group's principal officer, i.e. Chair or Secretary should have at least two years' continuous sobriety and have had other group experience.

- Co-ordinates Group activities, preventing confusion or misunderstanding in Group affairs
- Opens all regular Group meetings then turns them over to a speaker who is leader for that session only
- Has final responsibility for the smooth functioning of the Group and also conducts Group Conscience and Business Meetings.

Some Groups have no Chair because the Secretary serves as the Group's principal officer. In practice, it doesn't seem to matter which Group officer does which job as long as they all get done without confusion or conflict. It is however very important for everybody to understand who does what.

### **SECRETARY**

- Arrives some time before a meeting is due to start in order to arrange the room, usually with the help of other members and the refreshment helpers
- Encourages the meeting to start punctually
- Makes any AA announcements at the end of the meeting (e.g. news of conventions, new meetings, new literature)
- Practises Tradition 7 by passing the pot and then asking the speaker or Chair to close the meeting with the *Serenity Prayer*
- Keeps a confidential list of those members willing to do Twelfth Step work and passes on any calls for help
- Ensures, with the Treasurer's help, that the rent is paid
- Helps the Treasurer to count and keep a record of the Group's collections
- Informs the Intergroup Secretary and GSO of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Group officers, together

with up-to-date Group telephone contacts and of any changes in these or in the Group's venue. In this way the correct information is always available for inclusion in *Where to Find AA*

- Provides safe keeping for such Group records and correspondence that exist, thus preserving anonymity at all times. In addition, the Secretary, as well as other Group officers, has a special responsibility for seeing that newcomers get help, are made welcome on arrival and receive a starter pack on departure

### **SPEAKER SECRETARY**

- Finds suitable speakers for each meeting who have a known period of sobriety, books them well in advance and informs them of the time, date and address of the meeting
- Explains to the speaker the usual format of the Group, e.g. length of the share or discussion and what time the meeting ends
- Tries to visit other Groups in order to book ahead a variety of speakers who are able to present a good cross-section of AA recovery

### **TREASURER**

- Collects the money obtained from passing the pot at Group meetings, counts this with the Secretary's help and enters the amount into a cash book or balance sheet in the Group accounts book
- Following deduction of Group costs and expenses and retention of a prudent reserve sends the balance of pot collections via the Intergroup Treasurer to GSO
- Makes regular reports to the Group showing how the money has been used - i.e. apart from contributions to GSO, it has to cover the cost of rent, light and heat for the meeting place, refreshments and

miscellaneous expenses and also covers the purchase of AA literature and subscription payments for *SHARE* and *Roundabout*

- In effect, covers the cost of all legitimate Group expenses from Group funds, but does not use funds to reimburse members' expenses in relation to direct Twelfth Step work

The Treasurer should keep the Group's funds in a separate Group bank account, which requires two signatures on each cheque. AA experience clearly shows that it is *not* a good idea for a Group to accumulate large funds in excess of what is needed for monthly rent and bills. It is strongly recommended that, apart from a prudent reserve, all surplus money be sent promptly to GSO via the local Intergroup Treasurer.

#### **LITERATURE SECRETARY**

- Ensures that the Group has available its own copy of the *Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous)*. Orders and keeps the Group supplied with books and pamphlets published by AA and available from GSO
- Puts together selected packs of literature for newcomers and makes sure stocks are replenished
- Ensures that literature is on display and available to members at Group meetings, encouraging members to buy from the collection
- Makes available the current edition of *The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain*, especially at business meetings
- Passes any accounts for payment of literature to the Treasurer
- Helps the Secretary to circulate *AA Service News*, convention flyers, notices from GSO, etc.

#### **SHARE/ROUNABOUT REPRESENTATIVE**

- Is responsible for promoting *SHARE/Roundabout*, by ordering sufficient copies for the Group members. Displays and sells copies as they arrive and encourages members to submit articles for inclusion in future issues

#### **REFRESHMENT HELPERS**

- Many AA members have reported they get almost as much good out of coffee and conversation before or after a meeting as they do out of the meeting itself. AA members consider sharing over coffee at these times a vital part of AA routine
- Often AA members say they first felt they belonged when they began helping with the chairs, tidying the room, making the coffee and tea or doing washing up. Some newcomers find such activity helps them to talk to other members. For many of us this experience is our first contribution to AA service
- Any expenses for refreshments may be reclaimed from the Group Treasurer
- After each meeting the room should be left clean, tidy and in proper order

#### **GROUP SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (GSR)**

The GSR's responsibilities are fully explained in *Guideline 3*.

Bill W said "The strength of our whole structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative that the Group elects. By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR a Group helps its own future and the future of AA as a whole."

To be chosen to represent a Group is to be given the opportunity part in AAs Third Legacy, that of service, and to have the chance to become a trusted servant. The GSR should

have at least two years' continuous sobriety and should serve for a minimum of two years.

## **THE TRADITIONS**

While the above sets out how an ideal Group may operate, the conscience of each Group decides for itself how much it will do and the best way of getting it done. There are many ways of living up to Tradition 5, which says "Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Tradition 2 reminds us that "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."