

[Final Draft Copy]

GUIDELINES for AA in Great Britain

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7NJ

AA and the ARMED SERVICES

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Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain and Continental European Region has over four thousand AA meetings a week. Ideally there will be meetings close to almost every Naval, Army and Air Force Base where UK Service personnel serve.

Conference 2009 supported the proposal that Intergroups and Regions appoint Armed Service Liaison Officers.

The purpose of this Guideline is to provide practical help for AA members, Groups, Intergroups and Regions who wish to become involved with carrying the message to the Armed Services.

INTRODUCTION

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. It is also important to cultivate similar contact and communication with Community Welfare Officers and organisations such as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and Veterans-U.K.

Familiarity with the local area and a thorough working knowledge of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain are vital before accepting the role of Armed Services Liaison Officer.

MAKING CONTACT

It is suggested that a list of all local service establishments be created and the aims of AA involvement there explained to Groups, Intergroups and, in particular, serving and ex-service personnel in AA who may wish to become involved.

Initial contact with service establishments can be made by letter or e-mail, perhaps followed by a telephone call to seek an appointment. (Intergroups should have headed paper for this purpose). Shared experience with serving personnel suggests that suitable first contacts may be the Padre/Chaplain, Medical Practice Manager/Nurse, Welfare Officer or local SSAFA.

MEETING AN ARMED SERVICE PROFESSIONAL

Our initial role will be to provide information about what AA can and cannot do, always remembering that the Fellowship is committed to remaining non-professional. Our approach is based on our abilities, as recovering alcoholics, to

work effectively with the still-suffering alcoholic and when co-operating with the armed services we should always adhere to our Traditions.

There is a requirement when visiting Armed Service establishments that we take photo ID with us, e.g. a driving licence or passport. Prior to our visit we may also need to inform the establishment of the names and vehicle registrations of AA members who will be attending.

It is suggested that we:

- arrive punctually, suitably dressed
- politely introduce ourselves
- take writing materials and record items relevant to our Intergroup/Region
- do not engage in debates about outside issues [Tradition 10]
- never commit Alcoholics Anonymous or its members beyond our Traditions.

CONDUCTING AN AA PRESENTATION

It is suggested that we:

- communicate the aims and the primary purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous
- explain what happens at AA meetings, provide the National Helpline number, national and local website addresses
- do not talk too long about our personal experience
- allow ample time for questions
- remain, if possible, after the presentation should someone wish to talk in private.

CO-OPERATING WITH THE ARMED SERVICES

Alcoholics Anonymous receives invitations to attend Health Fairs organised by the Armed Services: AA participation usually requires a display stand with a table-top selection of AA literature. Experience has shown that since many other organisations are often also involved, Health Fairs are ideal opportunities for 'networking'.

The Fellowship also receives invitations to attend Armed Services presentation events - equally effective for making good contacts - at which AA representatives need to be prepared to just sit and listen. During breaks or at the end of an event are the times to introduce ourselves and talk about AA.

INTERGROUP ARMED SERVICES LIAISON OFFICER (Refer to Guideline No. 4: Intergroups)

An Armed Services Liaison Officer is responsible for establishing local links with the Royal Navy, the Army, the Royal Air Force and any other organisation that is connected with the Armed Services.

These trusted servants should have an established period of sobriety, ideally not less than two years and a good working knowledge of the AA Service Handbook. It is recommended that they should serve for not less than two years and not more than three years.

It is through the Intergroup Assembly that the Intergroup ASLO is elected and to

which he/she subsequently reports. An important task of the Armed Services Liaison Officer (as with all other trusted servants) is to keep Intergroup informed of events on a regular basis.

It often takes a long time to establish a good working relationship between AA and the Armed Services. In order therefore to safeguard progress to date and ensure continuity should another member need to take responsibility at short notice, it is good practice for the Intergroup Public Information Officer to have access to all relevant Armed Services material, contacts and details of forthcoming presentations.

REGIONAL ARMED SERVICES LIAISON OFFICER

(Refer to Guideline No 5: Regions)

It is recommended that trusted servants should have at least three years continuous sobriety, a good working knowledge of the AA Service Handbook and serve for a maximum of three years, confirmed annually.

It is through the Regional Assembly that the Regional Armed Services Liaison Officer is elected. He/she should ideally have some experience at Intergroup level, though this is by no means essential.

The task of the Regional Armed Services Liaison Officer is to communicate with, and to collate information from, the Intergroup Armed Services Liaison Officers within their Region. This information is passed on to Region in the form of a report given at each Regional Assembly.

Another function is to encourage Intergroups where activity is slow or non-existent.

Experience has shown that Workshops offer a forum where Armed Service Liaison Officers can share their experiences and encourage others into service.

EXPENSES

(Refer to Guideline No 12: Finance)

The payment of expenses depends upon the Group Conscience of the Region or Intergroup, always bearing in mind our Tradition of self-support.

In principle, any member elected to a service position should not be prevented from fulfilling the role for financial reasons. Therefore, when carrying out an Intergroup or Regional function duly authorised service workers may be offered the option of claiming expenses. For a variety of reasons Regions and Intergroups will probably differ in their approach to this question; although there may be no uniformity, there need be no controversy if decisions are taken with common sense and in the spirit of AA.

Service is defined as that which makes the Twelfth Step possible.

Expenses should not be claimed for individual 'face to face' Twelfth Step work.

RECOMMENDED READING/LITERATURE

Twelve Traditions
AA Service Handbook for Great Britain

AA and the Armed Services
A Message to Professionals
Speaking at Non-AA Meetings
How AA Members Co-operate
Who Me?
AA at a Glance
44 Questions
AA Service News
The AA GB Website.