

Proposed text for a leaflet

Role and Function of Conference

This is intended as a summary of the Role and Function of Conference as requested by Committee No. 3, Conference 2010. For a more comprehensive guide read Chapter 4 of the *Structure Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain* (Draft being reviewed at Conference 2011). This includes 'Conference Charter – Great Britain' adopted by General Service Conference 1995.

What is the purpose of Conference?

The General Service Conference (Great Britain) of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of the services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of AA in Great Britain.

Tradition Two states that the only authority in AA is that which expresses itself through the Group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants who do not govern. This Tradition is the basic authority for all AA services, whether for Groups, Intergroups, Regions or for the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Conference therefore begins with the Group conscience. It also leads back to the Group, since the Group has final responsibility not just for initiating, but for implementing the decisions agreed upon by Conference. The General Service Conference is the practical means by which the Group conscience in Britain can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole. The existence of Conference is moreover a guarantee that the Fellowship will be able to function under all conditions. It is, in effect, the successor to the founders of AA, ensuring the continuity of the work within the framework of the Twelve Traditions.

Composition of Conference

The Conference (Great Britain) is composed of:

- The Chairperson of Conference
- Six Delegates from each of the 16 Regions
- Trustees of the General Service Board
- One Delegate each from the Committees of *SHARE* and *Roundabout*.
- Non-voting foreign observers may be invited
- The General Secretary and other staff attend and help to run Conference but do not vote

Conference Delegates serve for a maximum of period of three years.

Conference expenses are charged to the General Service Board other than hotel and travelling expenses of delegates which Regions pay.

What happens at Conference?

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1. Delegates listen to reports given by the Board Trustees including a financial report from the Honorary Treasurer.
2. Delegates vote to accept or reject proposals put forward by Trustees.
3. Much of the delegates' work is done in committee. There are six committees with one Delegate from each Region plus Board Members and possibly observers.
4. Committees discuss and agree a response to topics/questions from the Fellowship.
5. Committees present their response to the whole Conference.
6. Conference accepts or rejects the response.
7. A simple majority vote by Conference constitutes a recommendation to the Board to take any necessary action; and a proposal which is carried by a two-thirds majority of those voting at Conference is binding on the Board, provided that in each case the Board is legally competent to act.
8. There is a plenary session where any delegate may make a comment or ask a question.
9. The Chairperson of the next Conference is elected by the whole of Conference and the Committee Chairpersons and Secretaries (6) for the next year are elected by their committees.

Who organises Conference?

The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) which comprises:

- a. The annually elected Conference Chairperson acting as Chair
- b. All the annually elected Committee Chairpersons (6)
- c. Two Board Members for guidance, support and continuity
- d. General Secretary (non-voting)
- e. Conference Co-ordinator (non-voting)

The CSC meets 4 times in the year preceding Conference. Its remit includes:

1. Review the Terms of Reference by which they work.
2. Review the timetable and running of Conference.
3. Decide which topics/questions submitted by Fellowship members will be discussed in Committee.
4. Consider any further resolutions from individuals, Groups, Intergroups or Regions which must be submitted at least two months before the Conference for possible inclusion in the final agenda.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference are reviewed annually by the Conference Steering Committee, being mindful always to observe our Traditions, Concepts and Warranties. They are distributed to the Fellowship with *AA Service News* and published on the AA GB website. .

Topics / Questions for Conference

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- Submissions to Conference can be made by individual members, Groups, Intergroups, Regions or Board Trustees
- All items are passed to the CSC with no information about who sent them in
- Items from an individual member or Group/Intergroup/Region are treated the same

Items which are accepted together with support material and background information will be distributed by the end of December to:

- Conference Delegates
- Regional Secretaries and Chairpersons
- Intergroup Secretaries
- Trustees

The accepted topics/questions will be published in *AA Service News* and on the AA GB website.

This starts the process of individuals, Groups, Intergroups and Regions discussing the topics/questions, the outcome of which is taken to Conference by the Conference Delegates.

Conference Report:

It is the responsibility of Conference Delegates to report back on Conference. A full report is sent out to:

- Groups
- Intergroup Officers
- Regional Officers
- Conference Delegates, who are responsible for reporting back to Regions
- Trustees

This report will also be available on the AA GB Website.

The report includes:

- A record of delegates attending, which includes Conference Chair, members of the General Service Board, General Service Office staff, representatives from *SHARE* and *Roundabout* and the Conference Delegates who make up the six committees
- Chairperson's opening and closing remarks
- Trustee presentations of Service Board Reports
- National Conventions Update
- Report from Open Forum
- Conference Steering Committee Report
- Committee responses to Conference Topics/Questions, and the results of voting on the outcome of these and proposals brought to Conference
- Names of next year's Committee Chairpersons and Secretaries
- Election of next year's Chairperson
- Ratification of Board Members-Elect

Implementation of recommendations

- The General Service Board shall be responsible for taking any action that may be required arising from the resolutions adopted by the Conference, and a report on such action shall be presented to the General Service Conference the following year
- The Fellowship shall be informed of action that may have been taken by means of publication in *AA Service News*
- The CSC should monitor progress of Conference recommendations in accordance with its Terms of Reference

If you would like to know more then refer to Chapter 4 of the *Structure Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain.*