

GUIDELINES for AA in Great Britain
From the General Service Office, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York, YO1 7NJ

Conventions

[DATE]

No. 15

A Convention offers the opportunity for a number of members to gather and share their experience, strength and hope.

“Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers” (Tradition 5)

Separate social events may add to the enjoyment of a Convention.

The following guideline suggests the basis for all Conventions and contains a planning checklist in Annex A.

ORGANISATION

The decision to hold a Convention ought to be made by the group conscience of the appropriate Intergroup or Region (the sponsoring body). A committee should be elected for the purpose of planning, organising and running the event. The Convention Committee should have overall responsibility and be accountable to the sponsoring body for financial and all other matters. It should bear in mind the need for Conventions to be self-supporting.

Intergroups and Regions are advised to appoint a chair or convenor. At national Conventions the committee elects its own chair or convenor from experienced members. A local General Service Board (GSB) member serves in an ex-officio capacity on the committee of each National Convention, ie Northern, Scottish, Southern and Welsh. (GSB suggests that Trustees attend at least two meetings as agreed with the committee.)

The normal principle of rotation should apply to all trusted servants on Convention Committees.

Children and babies: Conference recommends that accompanied children should not be excluded from Conventions. Organisers must therefore be mindful of relevant health and safety issues.

FINANCE

In all financial matters Tradition 7 should be adhered to: “Every A.A. Group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions,”

Where it is felt necessary to charge a registration fee, the organising committee should have the final decision. At the planning stage it is sensible to cover all projected costs through the registration fee, remembering that the “Pot” is traditionally AA money.

Funding of the Convention: The sponsoring body should provide the committee with sufficient funds to start the Convention organisation. Registration fee income should be used thereafter. If excess funds are generated, the sponsoring body may wish to consider retaining a prudent reserve to fund the next Convention.

CHAIR AND SPEAKERS

Usually Conventions invite the chair and speakers to participate well in advance. When planning the programme, Committees may wish to consider the various types of AA meetings

outlined in Guideline 1 (Group Meetings) and consider shared platforms thus inviting speakers from Al-Anon and Alateen.

The Chair should bring Tradition 11 to the attention of the audience at all meetings by reading the AA anonymity announcement for meetings open to the public: "There may be some here who are not familiar with our tradition of personal anonymity at the public level: 'Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press radio and films.' Thus, we respectfully ask that no AA speaker – or any AA member – is identified by full name and that no photograph is published or broadcast in reports or our meetings. The assurance of anonymity is essential in our effort to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us. And our Tradition of anonymity reminds us that AA principles come before personalities."

LITERATURE

Literature stalls should be attractive and well stocked with AA published literature. The sponsoring body is responsible for ordering and for payment.

It is advised the practices and procedures relating to sale or return from GSO are followed. Ideally, orders should be received at GSO at least one calendar month before the event. Final payment should be made within the same period after the event, after which the return element in the arrangement will be considered null and void. Stock returned damaged or any surplus not returned will be charged for.

When considering the sale of literature, the sponsoring body should be aware of the importance to AA finances of revenue from the sale of Conference-approved publications. If non-AA material is to be sold, separate facilities should be provided for its display: AA money should not be used to purchase this material.

AUDIO TAPES AT CONVENTIONS

The sponsoring body and the organising committee should decide whether to tape the Convention; they should consider legal and financial issues and bear in mind that recording can be a difficult, expensive and time-consuming task; a high level of expertise is required. No videotaping should take place.

Advance publicity should indicate the Convention will be taped and chairs, speakers and reserves should be advised individually of the taping well in advance of the Convention. A thorough briefing of each speaker is vital to ensure that no inadvertent breach of anyone's anonymity occurs.

The sponsoring body and the organising committee have the right to edit tapes.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is strongly recommended that all applicable health and safety regulations are adhered to.

CATERING ARRANGEMENTS

Convention organisers should elect an individual and form a sub-committee to deal with catering.

Where food or drinks are supplied, costings should be obtained and prices displayed.

Where outside caterers are used, it would be prudent to establish provisional costs. Some Conventions invite participants to bring their own lunch.

ANNEX A

CHECK LIST FOR CONVENTION COMMITTEES

The following list is not comprehensive but it is intended to be an aid to cover all Conventions from mini one-day to national:

- Validate all decisions against the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of AA
- Gain support of the sponsoring body and establish a regular system for reporting
- Define broad principles, venue, cost and theme
- Investigate the facilities available at the venue
- Set target dates for task completion and try to stick to them
- Set budget business plan and theme
- Transport details
- Publicity
- Agree a detailed plan on:
 1. AA meetings and workshops
 2. Entertainment
 3. Al-Anon and Alateen participation
 4. Printing and publicity fliers, possibly including a location map
 5. Convention details to SHARE and/or Roundabout
 6. Health and safety implications, fire precautions
 7. The security of the Pot, literature money and books overnight
 8. Raffle tickets in accordance with the gaming laws
 9. Convention design: banners, top table arrangements
 10. Registration area
 11. Accommodation and refreshments
 12. How and when the Pot is to be passed.
 13. Literature stands
 14. Archives and security
 15. Raffle ticket sales and display of prices with security
 16. Information stand
 17. Technical systems: communication, light and sound systems
 18. Access and facilities for the disabled

ANNEX B

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONVENTION COMMITTEES

Convention Committees are formed by Intergroups and Regions to plan and execute Conventions in accordance with the recommendations of the General Service Conference. The following terms of reference may be adapted for use by all Convention Committees.

1. Convention Committees comprise delegates elected from the Regions or Intergroups that sponsor the Convention. Their objective is to prepare and provide for a Convention to promote our primary purpose within an agreed budget and according to Tradition 7.
2. These committees are accountable to the sponsoring Intergroups and Regions, which exercise their responsibility for the Convention by the provision of elected delegates for the committee and through the regular reporting back of these, at their assemblies.
3. An appropriate number of members are elected as delegates to serve for three years on the Convention Committee. The committee elects its officers from these delegates to serve for a suitable term, ensuring the principle of rotation.
4. Committee officers rotating out of service are ineligible for re-election during the next three years. Other delegates rotating out are ineligible for re-election during the next twelve months.
5. Delegates who miss two consecutive meetings without adequate explanation, or who miss three consecutive meetings, are deemed to have resigned.
6. The frequency and location of committee meetings is at the discretion of the Committee, but costs and cost-effectiveness should be borne in mind. All expenses should be approved.
7. Dates proposed for Conventions by the Committee ought to be checked for possible clashes with other significant AA events.
8. All meetings should be reported, and copies of minutes sent to the secretaries of the sponsoring bodies and to GSO.
9. All Conventions should be run in accordance with this Guideline.