

## Topics/Questions for Conference 2011

### Committee No. 1

#### 1. Would Conference share experience of dealing with the newcomer to a Group? Make recommendations.

##### *Background*

Big Book Chapter 7: "Working with Others".

With the improvements in communication in recent years, e.g. National Telephone Number, Website, more direct Professional referrals, many groups report that newcomers arrive at a Meeting without having any previous contact with an AA member.

The intention of this question is to encourage Groups to examine their own practice, and to share their best practice and exchange ideas. All members can relate to this topic.

#### 2. Should the selection of questions for Conference be made by a committee comprised of representatives from all Regions?

##### *Background*

Among the collection of responses for Conference 2010, were suggestions that representatives from all Regions should comprise the Committee that selects the questions. This was not in the remit of the 2010 Committees and was therefore not fully discussed. It was however suggested that this question should form a question for a future Conference.

It is felt that the selection of the questions, as well as the "answering" of the questions should be democratic and involve the whole Fellowship.

Could Conference consider the practical and financial implications of forming a body to select Conference questions comprised of a representative from each Region? The following points could be considered:

How to reduce travel expenses by more internet communication.

Having the selection process at April Conference time, when representatives from each Region are already in one place.

#### 3. Review revised Guideline No. 1 'Group Meetings'.

##### *Background*

Revised Guideline No. 1 'Group Meetings'.

### Committee No. 2

#### 1. Would the Fellowship seek a group conscience at all levels of Service on how we as a Fellowship and individual members can best use (or not use) the new social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Live!, In The Rooms, etc..

**What precautions can we, or do we need to take to observe and respect our Traditions and avoid damage to AA as a whole by individual actions.**

**Previous Conferences within the past three years:**

Conference 2008, Committee 4, Question 1 has some relevance to this subject but the issue in 2008 did not

address social networking sites

Furthermore the committee response of Conference 2008, Committee 6, Question 2 made mention of the need for care in using social networking.

Conference 2009, Committee 6, Question 1 addressed issues of personal anonymity in general.

### **Background and the intent behind this topic:**

This issue may have become broader in the past few years. A specific group conscience of our Fellowship as a whole might be helpful to individual members and groups in making their own decisions on how to interact on and within these media.

This subject could be seen as following the 2009 Committee 6 recommendation that the issue of anonymity be discussed at group levels, but now in reference to a specific area of Internet media .

This topic may be seen to be primarily one of individual conscience, but there is the potential to affect AA as a whole, or to draw AA into controversy of apparent endorsement or rejection of specific sites, ideas or institutions.

Much of the what should we keep in mind will be common sense or application of traditions, but there may be Internet or Social Network-specific practices that some of us may not be aware of.

Could we find or decide on more specific email guidelines and etiquette for use of email within service positions. Some emails get rather long threads trailing them over generations of forwards and replies.

The topic has come up at our last three Intergroup meetings. The general feeling is that Guideline 19 is not specific enough on this point and that a wider discussion could be helpful.

### **Questions:**

- How secure are these facilities and what do we need to we keep in mind when using them?
- One could for instance expand on the suggestion in Guideline 19 to use Service email addresses rather than personal addresses. As the questioners understand this, the caution is not so much for one's own concerns for anonymity, but the fact that one may not know where an email will go after it is sent. It could be forwarded endlessly and to a steadily wider 'audience'.

### **References:**

- Social networks like Facebook, MySpace etc., Twitter and In The Rooms, are widely used by younger members on a personal basis and are often seen as a way to carry the message.

- In The Rooms

- There are facilities for file storage at Windows Live among others.

There are also sites that provide services for planning and calendars.

(Windows Live for instance, is used by one Telephone Helpline, but there are others)

- Facilities for finding a common date: <http://www.doodle.com/>  
<http://www.facebook.com/>  
<http://www.intherooms.com/>  
<http://www.live.com/>

Guideline No. 19: 'AA and Electronic Communications'.

## **2. Would the Fellowship discuss and offer guidance about the guideline in the AA Service Handbook for GB, Section 11, Desirable Qualifications for Alcoholic Trustees:**

*“One is maturity or “time in”. Ten years continuous sobriety and previous experience, full term or about to complete, as a delegate to the GSC is essential.”*

### **Background:**

The Conference Charter makes it very clear that attendance at all three Conferences or the attendance at two with their third Conference being imminent is an absolute in relation to becoming a board member.

This could well mean that a member with a consistent service history over the whole of their AA lives becomes automatically excluded from becoming a trustee. In effect this means that someone, who has

worked tirelessly for the Fellowship throughout their AA lives misses out on a form of service because on just three days they were unable to attend one event. This, it seems to us not only goes against the right of participation and the spirit of the Fellowship but it constitutes an injustice.

Acceptable reasons for missing would have to be genuine, but having an operation or a heart attack or giving birth would be, in our opinion, acceptable reasons. Another example would be that due to the Icelandic volcano eruption in 2010 several Delegates (and Alt-Delegates) could not attend Conference 2010. There was no Land - or Air - Transportation possible to come into the UK.

### 3. Review revised Guideline No. 15 'Conventions'.

#### *Background*

Revised Guideline No. 15 'Conventions'.

### Committee No. 3

#### 1. Would Conference consider options on how to proceed with the translation of the *Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* into British Sign Language for the profoundly deaf alcoholic?

Two clear objectives emerged from the feasibility work done previously and feedback from delegates at Conference 2010 and the GSB. Although apparently self evident, these aims need to be restated because reconciling the two is challenging in the present economic climate.

1. To translate the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions into British Sign Language.
2. To adhere to the Concepts for World Service in terms of consultation, deliberation by Conference and prudent financial principle, ie ... *'sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle'*

The quotations received to date would be prohibitive for the work to be commissioned in one financial year. Depending on revenues, it would require that the work is spread over a number of years.

It is therefore important to ensure that our strategy is the right one and that we consider what options are available to deliver the best value outcome to the fellowship.

#### **Options**

1. To proceed first with the Big Book and thereafter with the Twelve and Twelve in BSL based on the American Sign Language model which also incorporates a sound track (voice over) and subtitles.

This is the model on which we based our feasibility study costs and which would require a financial investment over a number of years.

2. To proceed as before but as a BSL only production (no soundtrack or subtitles). The rationale for this suggestion is that profoundly deaf alcoholics cannot hear or read. This would deliver significant savings and therefore ensure that the project is completed sooner. (Adding subtitles and/or soundtrack at a later date is also a possibility.)

NB The above options indicate the issues which could determine the most cost effective approach. However, an insensitive translation, regardless of cost, cannot represent good value and it is suggested that each 'bidder' is asked to provide a five minute sample (perhaps the first few pages of the Big Book) which can be compared and assessed.

This leads on to the need to have a profoundly deaf member in the team making the assessment so that an informed decision can be taken.

Quotations were invited from four well established British Sign Language providers. Three of these were

returned ranging in price from £12800 to £50500. At the time of writing only one of the companies has returned a sample of their translation of the Big Book as requested in the invitation letter.

Background: BSL Board Report to Conference 2010.

**2. Would Conference consider issuing guidance on how to carry the message to both profoundly deaf alcoholics and those who are hard of hearing?**

***Background***

It was agreed at Conference 2010 that further research would be undertaken to consider the difficulties faced by deaf members and that competitive quotations would be invited for producing the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in British Sign language for profoundly deaf alcoholics who cannot hear or read the written word.

The research has identified a range of suggestions which would facilitate fellowship for deaf and hard of hearing members:

- Setting up a National Twelfth Stepper list of members able to communicate in British Sign Language with profoundly deaf people who approach the Fellowship in search of sobriety.
- Allowing profoundly deaf members to attend meetings accompanied by a family member or close friend who can interpret (sign) for them.
- Encouraging groups and conventions to establish whether a hearing loop is available in their hall or venue which would greatly assist those members with hearing aids with loop settings. This provision could be highlighted in the *Where to Find*.
- Setting aside some seating at large meetings and conventions near the platform for deaf and hard of hearing members.

**3. Review revised Section 10, AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.**

***Background***

Revised Section 10, AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.

**Committee No. 4**

**1. Would Conference share experience of how individual members and Groups can become more involved in Public Information work? Make suggestions.**

***Background:***

At a recent Service Workshop a member shared how she had distributed posters and leaflets to Doctors surgeries, Community Centres and the Library of her local town. This was felt to be a good example and generated a lot of discussion.

Guideline No. 7: 'Public Information'.

The intention of submitting this question is to generate discussion in Groups. This is a topic which all members can relate to. By discussing this some groups may be inspired to do more than they do at present; and we should be able to share experience from across the Fellowship, and learn some new initiatives.

**2. Can Conference make suggestions on how Groups and Intergroups can work better together to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic?**

***Background***

The Concepts (particularly 5 and 12).

Traditions 1, 4 and 5.

Guideline No. 4: 'Intergroups'.

There is evidence that strained relationships between some Groups and Intergroups could be inhibiting the effectiveness of our primary purpose. The intention of this topic is to encourage discussion on how to address this in the spirit of unity within AA.

### **3. Review the reconfigured draft Structural Manual.**

#### **Background**

The reconfigured draft Structural Manual.

### **Committee No. 5**

#### **1. Would Conference please consider how service can be made more attractive to AA members to increase participation?**

##### ***Background***

1. Our home group has a regular attendance of approximately 40 AA members on a weekly basis. Despite the number of group members of up to 13 or 14 there are only 6 or 7 group members that attend regularly that are willing to participate in service at group level. As a result the rotation of officers and those doing service is limited, and often the same people move round. For established AA members in recovery, especially, this may not be bad in itself, but in time we believe it can result in a group and thus its meeting becoming stale and less attractive to the newcomer. Whilst the group is very proactive in raising awareness on a weekly basis of the benefits of service through regular announcements; shares etc, encouraging people to get involved can often be really difficult. Also, the dates of Intergroup meetings are regularly announced where members are invited to attend as visitors to see how AA operates. Again, not many AA members are forthcoming of taking advantage of attending Intergroup.
2. With support from the Intergroup officers, visits to other groups in the Intergroup have been made to raise the awareness of Intergroup and the benefits of service and to encourage more groups to send GSR's to represent their groups. Whilst this has been beneficial and encourages some new members to attend intergroup meetings, not many are forthcoming and are willing to take on some of the service positions. Again, this leaves gaps in the service structure and makes it more difficult to pass the message to the still suffering alcoholic.
3. It is also apparent that the Intergroup is struggling for telephone committee members and 12 steppers. Without people coming forward for the telephone it is becoming increasingly difficult to get all the shifts covered. It is also difficult to pass on a call due to the limited number of 12<sup>th</sup> steppers in the specific area where the still suffering alcoholic is calling from.
4. Similar positions are also vacant at Region meetings, where I attend as delegate for my Intergroup. It seems like the problem originates from the grass roots i.e. the group – i.e. if there is a reluctance of getting people to come through the service structure to serve AA, the less likely we are to get more experienced AA members, with the appropriate service history that would be suitable to fill such positions.
5. I have also recognised that some people are reluctant to share the benefits of service because they may believe that other AA members could perceive them to be 'showing off' or that it is about a 'big ego'. How does one encourage members to share with humility the true and real benefits of service?
6. There are many methods in which AA tries to encourage participation of members into service i.e. AA service news; regular public information newsletters; service workshops at conventions, etc, and yet there are still great gaps in service positions being left vacant. Why? When the true benefits of service are

realised once a member takes up a service position? Few members, once having tasted the undertaking of service roles, seem to continue their involvement. However, getting them interested in the first place is the challenge.

7. Finally, the more people are involved, the less the burden on each one of them individually - a problem shared is a problem halved?
2. **Within our Tradition of group autonomy, would the Fellowship discuss and give recommendations on how we can promote unity at business meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, always remembering to place principles before personalities.**

**Intention behind the question:**

*“Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together?” Big Book page xviii.*

I have been to many business meetings at various levels of the triangle where the atmosphere was less than serene! I have seen verbal fights, veiled or overt insults, gossip, temper tantrums, and politicking to name just a few.

I have had newcomers tell me that they never wanted to go to a business meeting again after witnessing some of these shenanigans, I have also had old timers tell me that they did not participate in business meetings (IG, Region etc) because it “negatively affected their serenity”. Whilst I do not personally agree with these views, I think that we as a fellowship need to consider how we are attracting people into service. I do feel that incidents of this nature divert the business meeting from our primary purpose of focusing on how to help the still sick and suffering alcoholic.

One specific incident occurred which inspired this topic, and I think it serves as a good example. We had a group quit our IG because of personality issues between some of the members; we then had to have a long argument about whether or not to take the meeting off of our IG meeting flyer which we use for PI. The newcomer does not care about all this nonsense – they just want to find a meeting! Taking the meeting off may hinder someone being able to find recovery.

**Specific background material:**

This question has not been discussed during the last three years of Conference.

Traditions 1,2,4,5,9

AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Section 4 – Leadership in AA : Ever a Vital Need, by Bill W. Guideline No. 17: ‘Personal Conduct Matters’.

**Benefit to the Fellowship:**

Attract more people into service,

Allow trusted servants to practice these principles in all our affairs, helping strengthen our own sobriety.

**How does it support our primary purpose:**

Incidents of this nature divert the business meeting from our primary purpose of focusing on how to help the still sick and suffering alcoholic.

3. **Review the draft ‘Role and Function of Conference’.**

***Background***

Draft ‘Role and Function of Conference’.

## Committee No. 6

1. **Would the Fellowship consider it appropriate that the position of Editor of SHARE Magazine carry with it the right and responsibility to attend the annual Conference thus providing continuity of attendance and the right of participation on behalf of SHARE?**

### *Background*

The Share sub-committee like all other committees in AA is always in an “ebb and flow” situation because the tradition of rotation is practiced. This means that in any year the sub-committee may include some members, who for a variety of reasons are ineligible to attend Conference.

Past experience has shown that, for a variety of reasons, the Share sub-committee has been unable to send a member to Conference. The last time this occurred was in April 2010. Given the importance of Share as a method of “carrying the message” it would seem unfortunate that it is, on occasions, denied a voice at Conference. As Share is a national magazine it would seem feasible to give the Editor of Share the right to represent Share at Conference irrespective of whether or not the Editor has already been a delegate to Conference.

### **The Conference Charter – Great Britain**

Adopted by the General Service Conference, Great Britain, 1995 on the subject of composition states:

‘The Conference (Great Britain) shall be composed of six delegates from each Region and the Trustees/directors of the General Service Board ex officio, and one delegate each from the Share and Roundabout committees’.

Clearly for reasons given above this does not always occur.

2. **Would Conference consider the possibility of producing an edition of the Big Book which includes a selection of personal stories relating to recovery in Great Britain?**

### *Background / Reason for Question*

Most of the stories in the Big Book have been written by members who have recovered in the USA. Even though the illness is the same, there are cultural and language differences between the United States and Great Britain. It may therefore expand opportunities for personal identification, particularly for the newcomer, if a selection of stories from members in Great Britain was made available.

3. **Review new Guideline No. 21: ‘Armed Services Guideline’.**

### *Background*

New Guideline No. 21: ‘Armed Services Guideline’.