

Topics/Questions for Conference 2012

Committee No.1

- 1. Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations on how to make AA more visible to the general public, particularly by increasing awareness and understanding of how the AA programme works?**

Background

1. According to the 2010 membership survey of AA in Great Britain, 31% of members heard of AA from an existing member. According to the AA Census published by the GSO in Great Britain, in 1997 4.1% of AA members reported that their point of entry into AA was media. By 2002, that number had dropped: only 1.6% of AA members listed media as their point of entry into AA. In 2005, 5% of members indicated that they came to AA because of radio, internet, newspaper adverts, or tv. In 2010, 4% of members first heard of AA through radio or newspaper (tv was not listed as a category). A further 6% listed the internet; however the internet may not be available to as many people as newspaper, radio or tv.

In figures taken from the GSO website for Great Britain (www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk), there are 34,000 AA members (from the 2005 AA Survey). (The 2005 survey was used because the 2010 survey online did not indicate numbers of members.) This means that 0.056, or nearly six-hundredths of a percent, of the population of Great Britain is a member of AA. According to the AA Fact File on the GSO website, there are "approximately 4,400" AA groups in Great Britain. Based on a population of 60,000,000 (source: wikipedia), that means there is one AA group for every 13,636 people.

Given the relatively low percentage of AA members in Great Britain (0.056 percent), the chances of a person with a drinking problem are also relatively low. (A person only has a six-in-ten-thousand chance of personally knowing an AA member), national-level press could be one vital means of ensuring that the public at large is aware of the existence of AA and that it offers a program of recovery from alcoholism that has worked for many.

Mindful of all the good work carried out by PI at all levels of the Fellowship, all too often the media tend to focus on the problem rather than the solutions. It is the hope of this question that Conference might consider whether there might be more that can be done at the national level of AA in Great Britain to reach out to national-level press in order to increase the awareness of AA among the public as a whole.

Establishing a committee to study this question, perhaps including outreach to GSOs in other regions of the world to learn about what methods they are using for press outreach and whether those have been beneficial, might be a prudent approach to examining whether additional public information efforts by GSO in Great Britain could be an effective means of ensuring that there is greater public awareness of the existence of AA in the UK.

2. Section 17, AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, 'Public Information'.
3. "We believe that there are opportunities for all members to participate in PI activity, and that carrying the message is every member's responsibility". (Conference 2011, Committee 4, Question 1).

2. **Would the Fellowship ask itself the question: “Are there too many meetings and not enough groups?”**

Background

Traditions 4, 7
Pamphlet ‘The AA Group’
The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA

Committee No. 2

1. **Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on how the Telephone Liaison Service and its relationship to Twelfth Step work might be further improved?**

Background

At a recent TLO workshop responders declared that they did not offer to arrange a twelfth step call (visit) and were unsure of how they should respond and what actions to expect of the person carrying out the twelfth step call. This combined with the high turnover of responders, and the constant updates to the twelfth step list, suggests that more frequent workshops would be of great benefit to new members and the Fellowship as a whole. Clarification and experience should be shared and guidelines explained.

- A twelfth step call – Visiting an alcoholic who has asked for help and explaining the twelfth step programme – AA pamphlet, Questions and Answers on Sponsorship – page 8,
- Bill’s first visit to Dr. Bob. As a result of *Manna from Heaven* call by Bill Wilson to Henrietta Sieberling. Pass It On chapter 7 page 142.
- Our growing experience is that successful telephone service concentrates on putting the suffering alcoholic in touch with an individual or local AA group. It is the responsibility of the local group to carry out necessary twelfth step work, to provide a welcome for the new members and to share experience, strength and hope with them thus setting them on the road to recovery. AA Telephone Services, Service Handbook for Great Britain Guideline 6.
- Alcoholics Anonymous Working with Others – this chapter emphasises the importance of visiting the still suffering alcoholic – one alcoholic talking to another.

2. **“In view of the need for AA to find further cost savings, would Conference consider...**

A) ...whether Service News, Share and Roundabout should be amalgamated into a single paid-for magazine, integrating recovery and service topics.

B) ...if Service News should remain a stand-alone publication, then it should be by paid-for subscription, like Share and Roundabout.

C) ...if Service News is to remain “free”, then it should be distributed primarily by email/online, and mailed by post only on request.

Background

Vital although Service News is to our open communications within AA, the costs of distributing Service News in its current form should not be considered above review.

In an ideal world, we would have a separate publication about service, mailed freely to all officers and GSR's. But in reality, of course, Service News isn't "free". A large proportion of the copies mailed out may never get read. Many will not even be opened. The waste of print, postage and administration must be considerable. Groups and Intergroups are not always prompt in notifying changes of officer posts and address details to GSO, hence the mailing lists used will inevitably contain many out of date or duplicate details. Because Service News is "free", recipients have little incentive to take responsibility for the cost, which is one reason why groups are not particularly motivated to update GSO promptly about changed officer details.

Share/Roundabout and Service News were conceived to fulfil separate roles:

Share/Roundabout is mainly on the topic of recovery; Service News is obviously mainly for disseminating news on service. That distinction may now be working against our need for Unity. To have separate publications perpetuates the misconception that Recovery can exist alone and apart from Service. A common problem we have across in the fellowship is that Service is little discussed at regular meetings - if Share is truly 'our meeting in print', then perhaps it should show that meetings need to deal with Service matters as well as Recovery, and combine the two legacies in a single combined journal. The overlap is already recognised to some extent: Service News contains many stories of how AA's have strengthened their recovery by doing service. There is also some duplication of service-related news already: Share/Roundabout already contains some bulletins about meeting venues, conventions and service vacancies, which are repeated in Service News.

On whether Service News should continue as a 'free' publication, there is an argument that to charge for Service News would infringe Tradition 3 – as the only requirement for membership a desire to stop drinking, not access to cash. On the other hand, under Tradition 7, we also need to be self-supporting through our own contributions. We might consider how these two Traditions are met in other matters: we expect to pay and reclaim from our groups for other essential service literature – for example, every group and officer should have a copy of the Handbook and guidelines – which are not 'free'.

There is a risk that if Service News was paid for, then fewer AA's might read it, resulting in more service vacancies. On the other hand, Service News currently appears to preach to the converted - read mainly by those AA's who are already interested in service and who already take responsibility for their own growth in service. Perhaps, if we want carry the message of the joys of service to those not yet involved, then the better vehicle for that message would be an attractive, colourful, well-designed magazine that even newcomers to service would want to read – along the lines of, or as part of, Share and Roundabout - which we are content to pay for.

Committee No. 3

1. **Share experience and make recommendations on involving members without computers in liaison service work e.g. PILO, ELO, HLO.**

Background

1. One Member's Experience

I was two years sober and going along fine in my sobriety. I was doing service at Group and Intergroup. All of a sudden at Intergroup they were talking about e-mails and computers. This scared me. I thought, "I don't have e-mail and know absolutely nothing about computers." I thought, "Well, I'd better get out of here as I don't know

anything about these things". I didn't, but the fear was there that I would not be able to do service at Intergroup and Region. I hadn't thought about it beyond that yet, so we must let our Fellowship members know that they don't need e-mail, computers and loads of other gadgets to be able to do service in AA, but they are all very helpful now.

2. The use of information and communication technology in the field of AA service is increasingly reflecting its usage in the wider society. Its usage is seen in the production of reports for Intergroup or Region, for the exchange of information between members involved in similar service, in communication with members of the professional community and in the preparation and delivery of presentations. Some members, who would otherwise be willing to be involved with public information and co-operation with the professional community, feel disadvantaged because they either don't have access to a computer or the use of computers has not been part of their experience. This, they consider, would make it difficult for them to take up a liaison officer position at Intergroup or Region.

3. Extract from Guideline No. 19:

'Although there can be many advantages to using electronic communications, we must always remember that there can also be disadvantages. Care must be taken to ensure that no member is disenfranchised through lack of a computer or internet connection'.

2. **Would the Fellowship review and re-affirm what constitutes an AA Group, within the Fellowship in Great Britain with specific reference to Traditions 4 – 6?**

Background

The Traditions
Preamble
Concepts

Committee No. 4

1. **Review the draft Structure Handbook.**

Background

Draft Structure Handbook

Committee No. 5

1. **Inventory Question**
Are we using and responding to reports by the General Service Board and Conference to the best of our abilities and for the utmost good of AA as a whole?

Background

1. *Alcoholics Anonymous comes of Age*, page 217-218:
On their first day, the delegates inspected our Headquarters, got acquainted with the service staff, and shook hands with the Trustees. In the evening there was a briefing session under the name of "What's on your mind?" We answered questions of every

description. The delegates began to feel at home..... They were proving as never before that A.A.'s Tradition Two was correct. Our group conscience could safely act as the sole authority and sure guide for Alcoholics Anonymous. As the delegates returned home, they carried this deep conviction with them."

2. Issues have been raised in the recent past regarding the content of Conference questions, and a possible lack of interest within the Fellowship at large pertaining to Conference questions.
 3. Concept 1, Traditions One, Two and Five.
2. **With specific regard to the history of our AA service structure, can the Fellowship share experience on how we can best strengthen unity by trusting and valuing the decisions of the group conscience at all levels of the Fellowship?**

Background

'The unity, the effectiveness, and even the survival of AA will always depend upon our continued willingness to give up some of our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. Just as sacrifice means survival for the individual alcoholic, so does sacrifice mean unity and survival for the group and for AA's entire Fellowship'.

AA Comes of Age, pp. 287-288 (Quoted in As Bill Sees It, p. 220)

Committee No. 6

1. **Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make practical suggestions as to how we can highlight the importance, effectiveness and value of Sponsoring into Service?**

Background

The main reason for this question is the many gaps to be found in the Directory of Intergroup & Regional Officers, indicating that a significant number of Service positions are not being filled.

References:

General Service Conference Report, 1983, Committee 1
Directory of Intergroup & Regional Officers, 2011/2012
Leaflet "Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered"
The Service Handbook

2. **Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations on how a greater understanding of the Traditions and Concepts of AA might be increased among the Fellowship?**

Background

Recommendation of Conference 2011, Committee 5, Question 2
Reports of disunity in some areas of the Fellowship
A noticeable lack of AA members to fill service positions at all levels
The Declaration of Unity