

## Summary of Question not accepted for Conference 2017

1.

Being in the network and security field as my profession, a few questions have popped up looking at the current direction of things.

The traditions tell us how to act as a group. They were formed a long time ago, yes, and things do change.

Knowing there is a lot of work being done about apps, webpages, and so on. In this work, how is Tradition 11 and 12 being honoured? Press, radio and film. Isn't that what internet is today?

Anonymity, spiritual foundation, doesn't that then tell us that we should do all that we can not to track our members, and others that chose to visit our homepage? Doesn't the same principles apply when we build apps for phones? Shouldn't the same basic principles be used in the design for our online meetings?

Looking at what a few of the major "free" platforms are supplying, let's say Facebook, Google for example.

There are many more, but just for starters, use these. They sell the information they gather to other parties, that's what they do as a business model. Are these compatible with the current terms of use for their service, and then looking at Tradition 11 and 12? For a basic understanding of what we truly sign up for, this might be something to watch and start discussion from. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2084953/>

Are these questions being brought up in the forums that discuss the internet future of our fellowship?

Based on

Tradition 11. 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.

Tradition 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Long form

11. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Already covered in existing literature.

2.

**I want to know if AA in Great Britain should recommend saying The Lord's Prayer at the end of meetings. The full version of the Serenity Prayer is a much more religious prayer and seems to be well accepted.**

***Background***

**Bill W was in favour of Lords Prayer and said in most meetings in USA.**

Terms of Reference No. 6/7      Insufficient background material and that each group is autonomous.

3.

Would Conference consider adding a paragraph about the origins of the yellow card and its purpose to the pamphlet *Understanding Anonymity*?

**1. Background**

The words "Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here" are printed on the yellow card issued by the UK General Service Office in York. The card appears on tables at AA groups all over the UK, and when winding up meetings secretaries often say, "Please remember the Yellow Card (reciting the words). Lets make this a safe place to share." As the statement did not originate in Alcoholics Anonymous, some people find this fact offensive. Documentaries about the Manhattan Project have shown the slogan "Whom you see here. What you hear here. When you leave here. Let it stay here" posted in the factories.

The Manhattan Project (1941-1946) was the top secret World War II project in which the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom worked together to produce the first atomic bomb. Research took place at over thirty sites in the United States, Canada, and United Kingdom. If this was a Manhattan Project slogan, it seems likely that it was them who invented it, Al-Anon then adapted the slogan for their use. The Al-Anon anonymity statement (as used also by many AA groups) reads: "Whom you see here, when you leave here, let it stay here. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our programme." If taken literally it means that we should not carry the message outside the meeting and it encourages secrecy and shame, and helps perpetuate any stigma of alcoholism within our own Fellowship. What it really means to say is: DON'T GOSSIP!

Conference 1986 (Committee 4) answered the question "How is anonymity treated within the Group, Intergroup, Region? Are we being too anonymous within the Fellowship?" The Committee felt that every effort had to be made to ensure the protection of the newcomer, especially at Group level. Many Groups practise reading the yellow card (What you see here etc. etc.) At Intergroup and Region, anonymity was better understood and practised. Are we being too anonymous within the Fellowship? Yes. The feeling expressed by the Committee was that in some areas it may be necessary to break anonymity for communication purposes.

Conference 1997 (Committee 1) answered the question "Would not the Anonymity Notice be more appropriate and less ambiguous/confusing than the current 'who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.' This is short, and to the point and more readily leads into the Traditions." The Committee recommended and approved that both cards be made available to the Fellowship and be used according to Group Conscience.

It is suggested that this ambiguity of the yellow card and its origins is addressed as an additional paragraph in *Understanding Anonymity* as the following situations have occurred in Alcoholics Anonymous for which clarification is required:

- ☐ If a newcomer is asked by a member whether they saw somebody do service at another meeting they may be confused on whether to answer the question or not as this could be seen as a breach of the yellow card.

Clarification that if the hypothetical situation arose where criminal activity has been shared in a meeting then the withholding of evidence is a criminal offence regardless of whether

this is heard in the rooms by a Police Officer, Tax Inspector, or any other member. If it could be proved that someone withheld evidence of a serious criminal offence there would be a fair chance that the person would be charged with 'withholding information'. In essence the yellow card does not place any member above the law of the land.

- ☐ If a member is known to be violent at meetings shouldn't all other groups be made aware of who this person is? Would this be a breach of the yellow card?
- ☐ A member is known to do offensive chairs. Should other members/ groups be made aware of this?
- ☐ If a member shares in a meeting that they are struggling can people in the meeting tell that person's AA friends who were not at the meeting that they need support? Would this be breaching the yellow card?
- ☐ Can a good message of recovery heard in a meeting be passed on to members who were not at the meeting?
- ☐ On the other hand some members say that no member should divulge a person's presence at an AA meeting to anyone else. The yellow card gives members a sense of security needed to keep coming back.

"Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here" means that nothing heard at a meeting should be repeated in such a way that the anonymity of the person who said it might be compromised. This makes sense as there wouldn't be much point in going to meetings if nothing anyone said could in any way "leave" the room in which it was said. Most of the "classic" programme lines, anecdotes and stories would be totally unknown if this was to be taken as rigidly and literally as one could possibly take it.

As stated in *Understanding Anonymity* if a reminder about this has to appear at a meeting then the 'Anonymity Statement' coming out of the Office in New York since 1993 may be more preferable than the yellow card. "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions. Please respect this and treat in confidence who you see and what you hear."

Page 125 of *Alcoholics Anonymous* states that families of Alcoholics Anonymous "do talk about each other a great deal, but we almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance ... Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve." Perhaps this principle could be stated more clearly in *Understanding Anonymity*.

2. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 125, p. 562; *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 181-183, p. 187, p. 189, p. 190, pp. 191-192; *Alcoholics Anonymous comes of Age*, p. 25, p. 43, p. 75, p. 117, p. 129, p. 132, p. 133, p. 135, pp. 136-137, p. 198, p. 203, p. 208, pp. 286-294; *Understanding Anonymity; The AA Group*, p. 23, pp. 31-34; *As Bill Sees It*, p. 120, p. 198, p. 241, p. 278; *AA Tradition: How it developed*, pp. 35-36; *The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain*, p. 40, p. 48; *AA Grapevine*, Jan 1946, March 1946, November 1960; Conference Committee 4, 1986; Conference Committee 1, 1997.

5.

**Should we completely abandon the Conference as a whole and/or the yearly sending out of questions? Only sending out single important questions every few years, as they arise perhaps.**

**Should we fundamental re-form how this takes place and more importantly re-focus on what the purpose of this whole process is meant to be for and re-design it with that in mind?**

**Should we now row this whole conference/questions process back in to a level where it is useful and functional but restores the balance of AA back to the groups and Tradition 5?**

***Background***

**AA is meant to be driven from the groups upwards, but each year groups and GSRs are pressurised from "above" to participate in "Questions For Conference". Taking us away from Tradition 5 and reversing the idea that AA is driven by the groups and membership**

**The questions are increasingly trivial, matters that should be for groups themselves or questions that are so generic (Is AA a good thing - discuss) as to be ridiculous.**

**Most of the questions simply do not warrant mass discussion, but each year they are churned out as though to stop would somehow be a major disaster.**

**In 2016 I have seen, more than ever before, majority disinterest in these questions and in taking part in this process and increased berating of GSRs and group members who choose not to participate in what has become a "Tail wagging the dog" process.**

**One question this year even hints that may be becoming the case.**

**If Conference and GSO have listened carefully to ALL the responses this year, including those that chose not participate, they would have heard an overwhelming silence, reflecting the majority view that this process is broken.**

Terms of Reference 6/7

Insufficient background material and the role of the charity requires an annual AGM of the General Service Board.

6.

**Tradition 7 (long form) specifies that each group should aim to be fully self-supporting for the contributions of the group's own members. How does it square with Tradition 7, then, for the pot to go round at most meetings soliciting money from those attending, whether they are home group members or not? Is it not ironic that Tradition 7 is (mis)quoted at many meetings ("every AA *meeting* should be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions") as a pretext for requesting outside contributions from AAs visiting from other groups? This question is not just a matter for individual group conscience: it affects other groups and AA as a whole: it is very hard to visitors from other groups to go against the flow and not contribute to a pot when it goes around.**

***Background***

**Tradition 7 (short form and long form).**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Any Tradition can only be amended by the whole of AA worldwide.

8.

To what extent would we better carry our message to the still suffering alcoholic if we redirected some of the effort we put into organising inward-facing events (eg, conventions) into outward-facing public information activities instead? Compared with PI, how well do conventions reflect our primary purpose?

*Intent*

Alcoholics Anonymous remains neglected and misunderstood by much of the public and professionals whose co-operation we need to reach the still suffering alcoholic. The need is for an outward-facing approach, to carry our message outside of the fellowship and to attract those alcoholics whose lives depend on us. Much of our effort, by contrast, seems to be taken up by the inward-facing activity of organising conventions – it is evident from the leaflets on meeting room tables that we put more energy into conventions than into service and PI events, and organising conventions sometimes consumes a large share of scarce intergroup discussion time, people and service hours. Conventions are of course fun and fulfilling for those AAs who like to attend them, but it is unclear how effective they are in carrying AAs message to the still suffering alcoholic: most still-suffering alcoholics are not yet in the rooms of AA, let alone likely to attend AA conventions. Perhaps if some of the time and energy currently engaged in organising conventions were redirected more directly to fulfilling our primary purpose, at trying to carry our message outside of the fellowship, then we would save more lives.

*Background*

Step 12; Tradition 5; Tradition 6.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Significant work is already being done throughout the Fellowship.

9.

Should every Intergroup, and every Region, be presumed to need the same set of officer posts? What more could be done to accommodate and support those Intergroups and Regions that feel they need a different line-up of officers?

**Background**

- Traditions 1, 3, 4, 7
- Currently there seems to be a one-size-fits-all attitude to Intergroup and Region officer posts. To illustrate, the AA Officers Directory applies the same template of officer positions to every intergroup (Health Liaison, Employment Liaison, Prison Liaison etc), regardless of local arrangements. Some board reports to Conference contain tables comparing the vacancy/occupancy rates of these standardised officer posts across the country, as if the percentage of posts filled can be taken as an index of success.

The reality is that Intergroups and Regions differ widely in their needs and resources. There are practical priorities – for example, it is probably more important for an Intergroup to have a Treasurer than, say, a Share Liaison Officer. Intergroups with no local prisons can manage well without a Prison Liaison officer. Some Intergroups operate well by doubling up or trebling up responsibilities: for example, health and employment matters can be handled as part of Public Liaison.

The pressure to conform to a national service template can have at least three damaging side-effects: 1) Intergroups too young or too small to fill every predesignated post can feel disheartened, as if having so many 'vacancies' is a sign of failure. 2) Intergroups can feel so pressured to fill 'vacancies' that unsuitable members are pushed into the roles. 3) Intergroups sometimes have elected officers serving in ways that do not fit the national template, but do work locally – 'Where to Find' editor; School Talks Scheduler; Rehab Centre Liaison, for example: without GSO recognition, these can feel like not 'proper' posts.

Tradition 3 (long-form) says that AA membership should never depend on conformity. Within the constraints of AA unity, should Intergroups and Regions rather be encouraged to adopt whatever officer arrangements work best for them?

Terms of Reference No. 7

Intergroups/Regions being autonomous they can decide.



10.

Could groups please share their experience on how and when they decide whether a non-attending home group member can be safely viewed as no longer a member?

***Background***

- Tradition 3 tells us that any alcoholic is a member of AA when he says so. Unfortunately, few alcoholics say so when they have opted out, and it is usually left to the group to take a view. AA unity comes first, so many groups rightly bend over backwards to include housebound, transient, lapsed and other non-regular attenders in conscience and other matters as far as possible. How far to go? If a member stops sending apologies for absence, for example, is that reasonably taken as a signal of non-membership?
- Leaflet: the AA Group: where it all begins
- Traditions 1, 2, 3.

Terms of Reference No. 7

This is group issue.

13.

**The Yellow Card**

- A. Where does it originate from**
- B. When did it come into the rooms of AA**
- C. Why have meetings found it so necessary to stress it**
- D. I would like it removed as it is being misused.**

**This yellow card is not mentioned in the Twelve Traditions. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation....is at the level of press, radio and film. It is our ego which is a danger.**

**Telling each other who was at a meeting is essential to the care and protection of each other's well-being.**

**Gossip is no more or less dangerous to us than any other shortcoming. Large posters, cards, notices to create covert and secret societies is as damaging as the intention behind it.**

**We are ordinary people. The yellow card creates a fear that all kind of imaginings springs forth from.**

**Lets' keep it simple.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

This was approved at Conference 1999 and raised in 2005. There is an alternative available.

14.

**Would Conference clarify subsection 1.4a on page 100 of the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain to ensure there is no discrimination against the delegate who has served as an alternate delegate from becoming Conference Chair?**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Covered in sufficient detail in the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain but the guidelines will be emphasised at Conference.

15.

**Should each Conference committee's terms of reference include a formal review of the implementation of the committee's recommendations made in previous years?**

***Intention:*** every year, each Conference committee devotes much attention to new questions arising each year from the Fellowship, and often makes actionable recommendations. The effectiveness and accountability of Conference might be much strengthened if each committee also took responsibility, as committees elsewhere often do, for considering the progress made in implementing that committee's decisions in previous years. Such an annual review would 'close the loop': it would provide a focussed way for the Fellowship to hold the Board to account; it would enable each committee to accumulate experience of the consequences of its past decisions that would help inform its decision-making in future; and it would generally promote the self-supporting autonomy of Conference committees.

***Background***

**Concepts 1 to 12; Traditions 4, 7 and 9.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Already being done by the Conference Steering Committee and yearly Board reports.

16.

Could a simple, separate, panel “The Prudent Reserve” (or similar) be included in the Annual Report to explain how and why our reserves are as they are? It could explain: (i) what ‘sufficient operating funds’ and ‘ample reserve’ mean; (ii) Why GB UK sets the sum of these at 1¼-years’ expenditure; (iii) the maths to show how this 1.25 multiple links to the relevant expenditure line(s) in the accounts; (iv) what surplus/deficit exists compared against the prudent reserve, and (v) what, if anything, we are minded to do with any surplus, or how it is proposed we make up any deficit.

Could Conference additionally consider whether an upper limit, as well as a lower limit, should be agreed with regard to our reserves, so that we have some agreed accounting measure of what counts as ‘perilous wealth’ (Concept 12).

*Intention:* there is much confusion around the fellowship regarding our ‘ample reserve’, concern about how much AA GB is holding over or under that reserve, and whether we are in danger of holding more or less funds than are required for us to be fully self-supporting while fulfilling our primary purpose. A single, simple box in the Annual Report that pulls together the relevant facts and figures might help clarify matters for non-technical readers. It might also help to allay concerns if a ceiling, as well as a floor, were set on the prudent reserve: while a lower-limit was agreed by a previous Conference, to define ‘sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve’ (Concept 12), there is at present no countervailing upper limit that the same Concept also requires, to ensure ‘conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power’.

**Background**

1. Traditions 5, 6, 7.
2. Concept 12.
3. Annual Report of the General Service Board of AA GB

Terms of Reference No. 7

This is Board business and as such is outside the remit of Conference.

17.

**Would Conference ask GSB to explore whether, in the interests of transparency, the headlines of unaudited interim quarterly or half-year accounts could be made available to the wider fellowship – eg, on the AA GB website or Service News?**

***Intention:*** the questioner well notes the promptness, thoroughness and reliability of the audited financial statements included in the Annual Report of the General Service Board. There may additionally be an opportunity to demonstrate AA's transparency and accountability by making quarterly or half-year interim figures available to the wider fellowship.

***Background***

**Quarterly financial reports are currently circulated to Region Treasurers, but not to the wider fellowship: AA's other than Region officers at present see this information only if they know to ask for it.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Fellowship legally cannot publish unaudited accounts, however Regional Treasurers are regularly advised of the current financial situation so the information is available.

18.

**Would Conference consider asking GSO and GSB to maintain and circulate a Conference Actions Log: a single, simple schedule summarising the outstanding action points arising from previous Conferences, so that future Conferences, and the whole fellowship, can see at a glance what actions Conference has recommended, which committee is actioned against each point, and what progress has been made.**

***Intention:*** This question suggests that Conference should follow the good practice of many other committees and organisations by keeping a simple, consolidated schedule of pending action-points. It is not easy at present to recall all the actionable recommendations of past Conferences and to track the progress of these actions through the commentary pages of board reports. An Actions Log would address this problem, and bring other benefits:

1. It would provide a useful briefing for new Conference delegates, who would easily be able to see the pending actions recommended by previous Conferences.
2. It would visually show the effectiveness of Conference in terms of its practical outcomes.
3. It would demonstrate on whom the workload of Conference decisions tend to fall.
4. It would demonstrate that, contrary to sceptical misapprehension, all Conference decisions are acted upon, or at least duly considered.
5. It would flag up any action points that may have lost momentum or be danger of doing so.

Terms of Reference No. 7

This is already being done.

19.

**Would Conference consider installing a highly visible link for Literature on the Home page of our website (as US World Service site)?**

***Justification:***

**It is quite difficult to get to the appropriate place for this information for a newcomer and sometimes for those not used to navigating websites.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

There is a clear link on the website to the 'Shop'.



20.

Would Conference consider making SHARE magazine available online by Subscription as Conference 2016 revealed through in depth discussion, that the magazine and its distribution is under threat for the future despite pleas for ideas to increase its popularity.

*Reasons for doing so:*

- **Increase readership potentially as many newcomers look online first as a port of call for help, particularly young people**
- **Save printing costs**
- **Save distribution costs**
- **Make it more visible**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Personal information is held on the pages of Share which cannot be published online, however a question has been accepted for the agenda with regard to the Fellowship magazines.

21.

Given the following facts and data, would Conference consider re-structuring back to four (4) committees (Conferences up to 1978 consisted of four (4) committees), probably dealing with a) Internal matters b) External matters c) Finance d) Catch- All material not specifically dealt with by the other three (3) committees?

The mentioned facts and data are appended; however, should there remain a paucity of questions (as shown by the present status –it seems we are never going to go back to each committee dealing with six (6) questions) could not the committee deliberations be directed to those issues of the General Service Board Reports as they affect their specific role (Internal, External, Finance and AOB).

By the very nature of the Fellowship's service structure it is inevitable that many delegates to Conference have probably been involved at some time in areas covered by the respective committees, therefore there would be a wealth of experience available that has not previously been resourced.

Rather than wide ranging discussions being the experience of the committees, there could be a structured approach along similar lines as these:

"What has been achieved to date?"

"By what method was it measured for success/failure?"

"How should the present/future be approached; have we learned anything from previous experiences?"

Conference could endorse/reject the conclusions in the same manner as it usually does.

#### Appendix

Facts and data about Conference structure in the UK: For consideration, data from North American A.A. Conference is included, which is purely for comparisons of representation.

#### Group/Membership representation at Conference

A.A. UK  
96 delegates from 4,420 groups = 46  
Delegates per member @ 15 = 690  
Delegates per member @ 21.5 = 990

AA North America  
93 delegates from 64,694 groups = 696  
Delegates per membership = 14,940

The group population figures for the UK are based on an average attendance of 15 and for consideration with the North American membership figures are based at 21.5 per group.

We can conclude from the above that using a UK wide average attendance of 15 members per group, our Conference delegates are representing individual members, whilst in the North American Conference, virtually the same delegates are representing whole groups vis a vis 690 to 696.

Using data from our own past 15 Conferences, the average number of alternate delegates is 9 for each Conference, which means a likely 10% of the Conference have not had an opportunity to study all that there is to ensure a reliable and worthwhile conclusion is always achievable. If Conference's objective hopes always to achieve unanimity, these figures would not help matters. Over the same period twelve (12) Conference delegate positions were not filled by Regions, proving a fact that fielding six (6) capable Conference delegates, together with six (6) alternates each year is a formidable challenge for many Regions. If Conference is the conscience of the whole Fellowship, we are not fulfilling our responsibility of ensuring equal representation for all parts of the Fellowship. Conference has a duty towards the whole Fellowship of ensuring equal participation for all areas of AA GB.

With Regions being asked to field four (4) delegates, together with four (4) alternates for each Conference, the chances are that there will be much more participation from all the membership of AA GB.

The facts and data have been gleaned from both 'The AA GB CD' and correspondence with a member of staff at GSO New York (both pieces of material are available for Conference Committees review/appraisal).

Terms of Reference No. 7

To reduce the number of committees would reduce the amount of time available to discuss questions. Having 6 committees is more democratic and provides more members with the opportunity to do service at Conference.

23.

**Would Conference discuss the possibility of either reverting back to the old folder for AA structure and service handbook, or endorse the use of the old folder handbook as an option for service officers, with the intention of aiding and simplifying amendment additions. Making the handover of handbooks to successive meeting secretaries an easier task and minimising wasted expense.**

***Background***

**Confusion around expense of handbooks being sold for 1p and being reduced to £3 on literature price list and still priced at £5 at some meetings.**

**Not being able to add amendments to present handbooks.**

**Step 10 "when we are wrong promptly admit it" Are these new handbooks really working?**

**Expense of parcel force costs to deliver 1p handbooks?**

**No 5 of proposed pamphlet , "Have structure and service handbooks on display at all meetings" Meeting secretaries had one handbook on display but now rarely have one or both on display with correct updates**

Terms of Reference No. 6

Insufficient background material to support the question.

24.

**Is the Fellowship in the UK satisfying the need that Bill W recognised below?**

My question follows on from the question in 2015 which asked whether the needs of atheists and agnostics in AA were adequately catered for in the existing literature. Conference 2015 gave an ambiguous answer - it said that those needs were indeed adequately catered for, but then went on to say that AA GB would produce a new pamphlet for this (growing) minority. Conference 2015 decided that the pamphlet would be a “cut-and-paste” made up of existing GSO approved text.

Over the next year it became clear to the Literature sub-committee that a cut-and-paste document added little or nothing to the collection of pamphlets, so it was decided to request original stories from current AA members. Conference 2016 approved the publication of a pamphlet combining the cut-and-paste introduction, plus 8 new and original life-stories.

I want to open out the original question wider. Britain is a secular country. When I do phone service one of the topics that arises almost weekly is the plea from the alcoholic who has tried AA in the past, but hated the “God stuff” and has gone out drinking again.

The Courts in the USA regularly determine that AA is a Christian organisation. Indeed – when I look in the Big Book (BB) and see, among many similar references, such observations as – on page 53 “either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is or He isn’t...” and more than 300 references to God, Him, the Creative Intelligence, the Creator, our Maker, in the first 164 pages, then it seems that the BB is heavily skewed towards a Christian God as the embodiment of the Higher Power. To put this into context I quote from one of many articles and texts written by our Founder, Bill W, in which he seeks to moderate this view.

In 1961 Bill wrote an Article in the Grapevine, headed “The Dilemma of No Faith”, in which he says:

*We much regret that these facts of AA life are not understood by the legion of alcoholics in the world around us. Any number of them are bedevilled by the dire conviction that if ever they go near AA they will be pressured to conform to some particular brand of faith or theology. They just don't realise that faith is never a necessity for AA membership; that sobriety can be achieved with an easily acceptable minimum of it; and that our concepts of a higher power and God as we understand Him afford everyone a nearly unlimited choice of spiritual belief and action.*

*How to transmit this good news is one of our most challenging problems in communication, for which there may be no fast or sweeping answer. Perhaps our public information services could begin to emphasise this all-important aspect of AA more heavily. And, within our own ranks we might well develop a more sympathetic awareness of the acute plight of these really isolated and desperate sufferers. In their aid we can settle for no less than the best possible attitude and the most ingenious action that we can muster.*

Terms of Reference No. 5

Discussed at Conference within the last 3 years (2015).

25.

**Would Conference consider changing the wording of Tradition 11 to:**

**"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, TV and all electronic communications", and updating all relevant literature at the next reprint?**

***Background***

**It is important to keep the Traditions safe, for our wonderful Fellowship to remain healthy, and changes to them should not be undertaken lightly. However, we do need to move with the times and it is equally important to safeguard our members' anonymity at all levels, especially with the current increased use (and misuse) of the Internet.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Conference cannot change the wording of Traditions. Traditions can only be amended by the whole of AA worldwide.

26.

***Does the Fellowship agree that we should try to improve our Response Services for both Callers and Responders irrespective of what communication methods are used by those asking AA for help? Please consider the proposal, after reading the Background information, on how best to achieve this.***

***Proposal***

***Appoint two Joint Response Co-ordinators (one from the National Telephones Sub-committee and one from the Electronic Communications Sub-committee) whose job will be to co-ordinate cross training and joint responder opportunities, thereby promoting a more flexible and efficient service.***

**Background**

The question is raised in order to see if responders can be cross trained, thereby becoming more effective in helping those that ask for us help.

Our Fellowship offers two services at present. They are Telephones and Online Response Service (ORS) and both do a similar job in responding to those that ask AA for help. The introduction of a new Chat Now (Instant Messaging) service was fully approved by Conference 2016 and offers a further means of response from the website.

The Telephone service is well known since the very first days of AA. ORS is a website service which responds to emails that ask for help and has been in operation since 2003 with a growing trend of people using emails in recent years.

Whilst all of the roles are similar in responding and indeed have a common set of training needs, they each have some additional specific skills to be learned. They also operate in different disciplines with ORS responders being organised nationally under the Electronic Communications Sub-committee (ECSC) and the Telephone responders being organised by TLOs from Intergroups and Regions and supported by the National Telephones Sub-committee (NTSC).

The aim should be to work together and offer more flexibility and greater opportunity without changing the basic structure of our Telephones or ORS. This has many advantages, some of which are, as follows;

- Responders can continue to serve in exactly the same way as they do today, if they so wish
- Responders can extend their experience and train in additional areas of response
- The number of Responders would increase with this approach of cross training and with co-ordination between the two service disciplines
- Those needing help will benefit from a quicker and a better coverage of response
- It will generate more referral calls to the Telephone service from ORS
- The chances of getting an Emailer or Chat Now Caller to speak to a recovering alcoholic in person will increase
- It creates a much more responsive service for everyone concerned
- The Fellowship will be better placed to explore and embrace new response initiatives as more and more modern day communication channels open up.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Telephone and Electronic Communications already liaise and have already covered this in the Service Structure.

27.

***Does the Fellowship think that we should update our Literature to include references to the Website and the Online Response Service (ORS) where only the Telephone number is present in pamphlets aimed at those asking for help.***

***Please review the content of all AA approved pamphlets where references are made with respect to contacting AA for help and make recommendations for bringing them in line with the Response services available in order to ensure that we are giving people the best chances for getting into recovery.***

#### **Background**

The reason for asking this question is that I was surprised to see that there is no mention of either the website or ORS in some approved literature when these initiatives are already benefiting many people who need our help. The pamphlets in the examples below should have the website and ORS contact details included as prominently as the Telephone help line number. It should also be noted that some people do not use the telephone preferring instead to email or simply log on to our website.

Also to suggest contacting GSO in York is a circuitous route and so it should be removed in favour of the website and ORS. This will stop people getting re-routed unnecessarily and be less work for GSO staff freeing them up to support the fellowship in other ways.

**Example 1 – A newcomer asks...**

This extract is from the AA approved literature pamphlet entitled 'A newcomer asks...'

The cover should have the website and ORS contact details included also.

Currently it shows...

[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

Call our Helpline 0845 769 7555 (Note the wrong no is listed)

This could be changed to....

Please call our Helpline Free on 0800 9177 650 or

Visit our Website at [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk) or

Email our On-line Response Team at [help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](mailto:help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

Then later on there is the following ....

***How can I contact AA?***

***Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in your local telephone directory; in many places a local AA number is also included in the useful numbers section. These telephones are manned by volunteers who will be happy to answer your questions or put you in touch with those who can. If there is no AA telephone service close to you, write or phone the General Service Office for Great Britain at the address opposite.***

This is very outdated and needs updating in line with the options available because very few people have a local telephone directory anymore much less would look in one.

**Example 2 - Is AA for you?**

Again it has the same very old text...

***Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in your local telephone directory - often in the 'useful numbers' section. If there is no AA service close to you, write or phone the General Service Office for Great Britain at this address:***

***AA General Service Office , P.O. Box 1 Stonebow House, Stonebow, York YO1 7NJ***

**Example 3 - Who Me?**

This has the same problems as Example 1 'A newcomer asks...'

There may be more situations where this, or a similar problem exists.

Terms of Reference No. 7

The Literature Committee are already working on including this information.



28.

AA's Telephone Service responds to telephone calls but our email enquiries are answered by the Online Response team in AA's Electronic Communications Service. Would Conference consider the option of combining its resources to offer a fully fledged Enquiry Response Service? The service would offer a response to all enquiries whether they're made by telephone, by email or through Chat now. It would also enable other available methods of communication to be considered for inclusion.

Discuss and make recommendations.

**Background**

In the current service structure of AA in Great Britain the telephone service is a discipline in its own right. AA's online and Chat now response services, however, form part of a separate service discipline (electronic communications).

We are in a time of rapidly changing developments in both modern communications technology and consumer habits. Younger people especially are more inclined to reach out for help by email or even by text than to make that all important call. They are more likely to find an AA meeting on a website than through the help of a 12<sup>th</sup> stepper. They may eventually call the AA helpline, but their initial contact with our fellowship should surely be made via their preferred method of communication.

AA needs to have a good understanding of how people contact the fellowship for help, now and in the future. We then need to assess the most appropriate communications structure that our fellowship can offer, thereby becoming more effective in pursuit of our primary purpose. The review would include the new Chat now service which was implemented at Conference 2016 and potentially a text response service as is offered, for example, by other charities such as the Samaritans.

A combined Enquiry Response Service would help AA to utilize its considerable resources (a nationwide team of telephone and online responders). The aim would be to maximise the effectiveness of training, documentation and multi-tasking. Working as a combined unit, many responders might take up the opportunity to respond to email enquiries during their telephone shift and vice-versa.

Bill W. indicated his openness to new ideas (As Bill Sees It p.45) when he said that 'we are glad of any kind of education that accurately informs the public and changes its age-old attitude toward the drunk'. No doubt, technology will continue to present new ways of responding to those that need our help and, of course, we want the hand of AA to always be there by whatever means they wish to communicate with us.

Terms of Reference No. 7

The Telephone and Electronic Communications Committees already do liaise and have already covered this in the Service Structure.

29.

## Intention

To Determine if the statements 'Never refuse to do the main share' or in an alternative form 'If asked always do the main share' and similar statements conflict with the AA Tradition and to encourage the use of an alternative statement from a suitable guideline.

### Consideration

Please consider whether you have ever heard statements such as those above in an AA context. In deference to AA's Yellow Card and confidentiality it is not vital you relay your answer to your colleagues, even so it is still entirely possible to process the next items.

### Question

Would statements such as those noted above in the intention be in conflict with the Tradition of AA? Would the following, modified form, of those statements be in keeping with the AA Tradition?

'In sharing our experience strength and hope with each other, at an AA meeting, you may be asked to do the main share, at your option, on the day in question, if you are willing then it is suggested you do so.'

There are other questions in the Background section.

### Further

Last, if the Conference agree that the use of the modified form of statement, or something similar, should be encouraged rather than the original form then how can this be brought about. Could a guideline be issued? Please consider.

### Background

Several AA members from various and separate parts of the UK have considered what their attitudes are to doing a main share and whether to do so is stated as an option or not.

We considered if we hear, sporadically, the statement 'never refuse to do a main share' or something similar in association with AA. We have not needed to state whether we have heard such things. We have, however, wanted to consider, for good reason, whether such statements are reasonable or would conflict in anyway with the AA Tradition. Several principal points and questions arose among many other facets.

We considered those instances where an AA member knows of Yellow Card infringements in a locality. If an AA member knows of gossip occurring she/he obviously has the right to refuse to do the main share? In this instance the statements '..never refuse..' and '..always do..' are just plain wrong?

We considered those AA members who need to recover from both alcoholism and the acute forms of trauma. These members may need some (perhaps many) years of recovery from both conditions before they are happy to lead a meeting and may need to refuse. With the original form of this statement are these amongst us labelled 'second class citizens'? How would such of our members view themselves? As less than? Statements that include wording such as '..never refuse..' and '..always do..' can engender such attitudes?

### Question

In the two circumstances as above is the Unity of the Fellowship threatened in anyway. Is Tradition One compromised? Is there a slant on Tradition Five to put uncompromising responsibility on an individuals shoulders? Do '..never refuse..' and '..always do..' inadvertently place conditions on the membership Tradition Three?

### Appended

Three of us AA's have contributed to this discussion of ours, we have two others in support. I wish to add some small items, verbatim, from my friends writings, these are pertinent also honest.

#### Friend 1,

We believe the phrase (the original statements) is ring endorsed as official AA practice. In its current form it is an instruction not a suggestion. As an instruction rather than a suggestion it is;

- 1) Contrary to the rebellious nature of most alcoholics.
- 2) Potentially detrimental to the recovery of those who are not ready to do a main share. For example, due to having not yet worked through some life trauma with those qualified in methods to do this (we are not clinicians ).
- 3) Potentially detrimental to the recovery of those not in a fit emotional state at the requested time of the share.

Friend 2,

- 2) I do consider that these statements could imply control and cause resentment.
- 3) Yes I believe the modified statement is polite and sensible and could be used.
- 4) Lastly, I believe that if the modified statement was to be used it should be brought about at group conscience level as a suggested guide line issued by Conference. As with all AA teachings it will help me to practise tact, diplomacy, sensitivity of which I can be sadly lacking.

Presumption

Would others would agree that there are many ways of sharing our experience strength and hope, I.E

- 1) Sharing from the floor after a reading or discussion or main share.
- 2) Sponsorship.
- 3) Encouraging reading the AA literature.
- 4) Replying to phone calls from AA members.
- 5) Chatter around the meeting.
- 6) Phone service, prison service, group service etc etc.
- 7) Just being there, regular, at an AA meeting also witnesses to AA effectiveness.
- 8) Doing a main share, certainly.

Possible negative affect of alternative, modified, statement.

We thought of the affect on group secretary's if the modified form of statement is encouraged. Will secretary's suffer more refusals? Will they get less refusals because the rebels amongst us now have less reason to rebel? We just cannot forecast affects. However if the use of the modified form of these statements is encouraged then secretary's need also be supported and by the entire group as per Tradition 5. If they have been unable to obtain a main share, that support from the group will need be realised.

The end of Background, our conclusion

Given that, between ourselves, we raised more questions than we have answers for we thought to try to get a conference question raised regarding this subject. We therefore forward this to you in the hope that it may become so.

A new guideline?

Previously we asked whether a guideline could be issued to cover the options, conference considers, AA members have in carrying out the service task of a main share. If that guideline is issued then need it be extended to cover the situation for our meeting secretary's? For example that guideline to include;

- 1) Indicating that the service task of the main share at a meeting is optional.
- 2) That since there is this option our secretary, or share secretary, are due, under Tradition Five, the groups support.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Outside issue. . It noted that this expression is not seen anywhere in official AA Literature but is something said at certain meetings by individual members. It was felt by the Committee, therefore, that this was an issue to be discussed at group conscience level rather than at Conference.

30.

**Would Conference take inventory of and discuss and consider whether the telephone helpline response system currently in place throughout the Fellowship is as efficient and effective as it could be, and if thought necessary make recommendations.**

***Background***

**It is appreciated and recognised at the outset of this question that the current arrangements for the response helpline are operated by intergroups/regions who are in accordance with our traditions autonomous bodies and staffed by fellowship members who give freely of their time in supporting this vital service.**

**Tradition 4 Long Form.**

**With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount**

**The current Helpline system varies considerably across the country, with some areas operating a home based answer system and others operating a 'call centre' type system from offices.**

**Some areas operate on an human response 24 hour system while others close down their response lines at a specific time and leave a catch all answer machine service to cover hours through the night with any calls received being actioned the following day.**

**As more calls are now being made to the helpline from mobile phones it would appear that due to routing issues outwith our control, there is less chance of a call being received to the area from which it is made, and should a caller decide for whatever reason to call back it is now less likely that they will speak with the initial responder. Indeed they may even experience the confusion of firstly speaking to a responder and then subsequently being asked to leave details on an answer machine.**

**Callers, depending on where their call is received are asked for different details in some areas full details including first and surnames and addresses are required by responders while in other areas a first name and telephone number are all that are required.**

**In some areas responders have only local lists of those who are willing in that area to go to a 12 step call and have difficulty in actioning calls from outwith their own area. In other areas the Where to Find is used to get help to the caller.**

**The above is a representation of some of the differing processes currently in place and by no means an exhaustive list.**

**Would Conference take inventory of how the response system has evolved and if thought necessary make recommendations.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Telephone sub-committee is already monitoring this and making updates / changes where they think they are necessary.

33.

**Would Conference discuss the idea of adding a 'Conference Question Online Feedback Form' to the AA GB website?**

***Background***

The Continental European Region (CER) has developed a 'Conference Question Online Feedback Form' on their website that allows both communication of the Conference Questions to its members (with background information) as well as the opportunity for members to provide their answers online to the Delegates. The form is not meant to be a replacement for the numerous 'group consciences' throughout the various service levels. Instead the form is intended to aid and complement the usual process. It also permits additional voices to participate in our General Service Conference especially if geographical or other difficulties are present.

The form allows answers to be easily entered, question by question, online via a web browser, which then are sent directly both to the Delegate's email group and the respondent's email after clicking 'submit'. The form also enables all the background information / attachments / references to be hyperlinked alongside the question, thus displaying everything together in the one place (which is not currently possible with AA Service News).

A "test page" of the 2016 online feedback form is available for evaluation purposes at:

[www.bit.ly/CER\\_test](http://www.bit.ly/CER_test)

[www.alcoholics-anonymous.eu/membership-of-a-a/general-service-conference/conference-questions-2016/](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.eu/membership-of-a-a/general-service-conference/conference-questions-2016/)

References:

**2013 GSC Committee 4 Recommendation 1**

**The Role And Function Of Conference.PDF**

Terms of Reference No. 7

This system has been tried before in other regions and it wasn't felt to have been successful. It is felt that the GB AA's large audience doesn't lend itself to practical and successful use of this system

37.

**Would Conference support the use of the 'Chit System' across all areas of service?**

**Would Conference also support the implementation of a web page for professionals to validate the chits (be that employers, social workers, doctors or other relevant professionals). Relevant liaison officers similarly would also need a secure login to generate chit numbers for participating groups in their area (or an equivalent).**

***Background***

**Conference 1987 discussed the topic in relation to Probation (England & Wales) / Social services (Scotland) – currently described in the AA Service Handbook 2013 section 9.5 under Probation / Criminal Justice.**

**The Q&A plenary session at Conference 2016 – had a disparity of opinions on how the 'Chit System' was used – in some areas it is used for health / employment as well as social services. In other areas it was viewed as only for the probation / criminal justice service.**

**Whilst I have not investigated the detail – I would imagine it is implemented differently in various Inter-groups.**

**Personally, I have been asked to sign forms for employees sent by employers.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

This question is very similar to another question which is being taken forward to Conference.

Would Conference consider what the Fellowship can do to prevent a member's lack of computer skills becoming a barrier to service?

Background information

The AA Structure Handbook, page 73, makes the following statement concerning money, expenses and spirituality.

"... But it is also widely held that trusted servants should be reimbursed for reasonable expenses even if they are subsequently returned to the pot. Such claims should be made and accepted lest the less privileged feel denied the right of participation."

With this principle we have prevented the personal lack of money becoming a barrier to service.

This question is concerned with the possibility that the lack of computer skills becoming a new barrier to service and asks us to consider what can be done to prevent those without computer skills feeling denied the right of participation.

This is a real possibility...

A BBC survey in 2013 found that 21% of the population did not have basic digital skills. Half of this group are over 65 but the 35 to 55 age group (arguably the most common age group in AA) still had around 10% lacking basic digital skills. Examples of basic digital skills are being able to use the internet, interact with web pages and use social media. Having these skills does not mean that you can also use software such as word processing, pdf manipulation, spreadsheets and databases. A portion of the remaining 79% will not be able to use this software either.

Source: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/overview/assets/bbcmigital literacy\\_20130930.pdf](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/overview/assets/bbcmigital literacy_20130930.pdf)

The youth of today may be able to play games online and use social media but it does not mean that they too have these skills. My experience as a tutor has shown me that even in this day and age a sizeable minority of 18 to 25 year olds lack digital skills. Furthermore, many alcoholics have had lifestyles focussed on drinking rather than education and the proportion of our members without digital skills may be higher than the national averages.

Here is an example of what can happen and what can be done:

For the last 6 years the treasurers of our local intergroup have used a bespoke spreadsheet to record monetary transactions and produce their reports. There was reluctance amongst the membership to volunteer for this service when the last treasurer of that period was rotating out of service. It was felt that the use of this software was off-putting and it was made clear that the use of manual accounting methods would be fine. A volunteer came forward. Our current treasurer is not computer literate and is doing the accounts manually. For some this would appear to be a retrograde step but AA is not a normal organisation. OK the computerised accounts looked professional and use of the software saved much time. One definition of quality is "fitness for purpose". The manual accounts are accurate and do the job, and they also enable a member to do service which the computerised system was denying. From the AA perspective it can be argued that the manual system, in this case, was a better quality approach.

In some cases it may not be possible for AA to revert to a manual system. For example, our local Region produces minutes and officer reports in digital format and distributes them electronically. It would appear that the lack of computer literacy would bar a member from all of the service positions at this Region. This question does not imply that this Region should go back to manual reports but the question is asking how members without the requisite computer skills can still hold service positions at this Region. In effect this question is asking this Region to consider how it could accommodate a secretary who could not use a word processor. Clearly what Groups, Intergroups and Regions do about the issue of computerisation is their business (Tradition 4) but it is possible that they have not considered its implication for those without the necessary computer skills. AA regards service as a major contributor to sobriety and encourages all its members to participate. The intent of this question is to maximise the inclusivity of our service structure in the face of growing and possibly inevitable computerisation, thereby contributing to the Third Legacy of Service.

Terms of Reference No. 7

The Fellowship handbook already suggests that we should not exclude members without relevant skills from service positions; Chapter 3 AA and Electronic Communications 3.7 page 37. The answer can be found here.

40.

Would the Fellowship review the categories used for those questions submitted for Conference that are deemed not suitable and consider what further categories, if any, could be usefully added to the current list.

Background information

Writing suitable questions for Conference is a difficult task. It is the intent of this question to help the membership write questions for Conference by providing additional guidance.

Part of this intent is to aid the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) doing the very difficult task of selecting suitable questions by raising the awareness of these categories amongst the membership and giving Conference support to any additional guidance.

A total of 172 questions were submitted for conferences 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 which were subsequently deemed not suitable using the following categories:

- **Category 3: Used once.**  
As the CSC terms of reference states, this category is avoided.
- **Category 5: Used 20 times.**  
Discussion at Conference includes the GSB reports as well as the Committees. Also, the CSC has to consider whether a different aspect of a previous discussed topic is serious enough to warrant inclusion. Usually it does not but it is none the less a tricky decision!
- **Category 6: Used 34 times.**  
Clearly background information has to be supplied but it must also be pertinent to the question. Longwinded questions can easily fall into this category because they lose focus.
- **Category 7: Used 147 times.**  
Now this category is the focus of this question.

(These total more than 172, i.e. 202, because some questions are rejected using 2 or more categories.)

The relative use of these categories suggests that more guidance can be given to the membership and that Category 7 is worthy of further analysis to see if there are any more common shortcomings.

In a further analysis of the Category 7 questions, 9 more groupings were used. These groupings are not official and are based on the comments supplied by the CSC. (See the "Questions not accepted" lists that can be downloaded from the Document Library on the AA GB website) These groupings have in effect been created by the CSC. It is not proposed by this question that these groupings should necessarily be adopted but they do provide a basis for discussion.

- **Existing literature (43)**  
If a question implies that existing literature has shortcomings then the background information needs to present a really good case for it being changed. Remember also that GSB UK does not hold the copyright on some literature and others require a two thirds majority of the worldwide fellowship to change e.g. the Steps.
- **GSB/CSC/Technical (34)**  
Sometimes questions are better dealt with by the GSB (including its' committees) and some are just too technical to be suitable for discussion via the committee question process. Questions of this group may not have been rejected and some may be considered at Conference in more appropriate manner.
- **Tradition 4 - Local issue (24)**  
Conference upholds the autonomy of groups, intergroups and regions and the CSC has to ensure that Conference will not be drawn into any disputes that exist between these AA groups.
- **False premise (15)**  
Sometimes a question is based on an assertion or proposition which the CSC considers to be false and serious enough to negate the question.
- **Other question chosen (9)**  
When there are two or more questions on the same topic/issue, the CSC prefers choosing one of the questions rather than using category 3.
- **Tradition 10 - Outside Issue (8)**  
The CSC will not allow questions that could embroil us in public controversy
- **Controversial (5)**  
The CSC also attempts to minimise internal controversy.
- **Previous conference (5)**  
It is possible that these could have been rejected using Category 5



- **Personal view (4)**

Questions can end up being a straightforward acceptance or rejection of a personal solution rather than an open ended question designed to encourage discussion of an issue.

Note that the top 4 groupings account for 116 (79%) of the 147 Category 7s. Such a concentration does suggest that these groupings could be included as further categories. Two of these groupings, Existing Literature and Tradition 4 – local issue, are anticipated in the leaflet “How to submit a topic or question for conference”, but in the form of advice rather than criteria for assessment. There is always going to be a need for a category that can be used as a catch-all for unanticipated, infrequent or unusual reasons but that category really needs to have the lowest usage.

Now this analysis is rigorous but the chosen groupings are arbitrary and another set of groupings would create a different result. However, the analysis does show that further groupings are possible.

It is the premise of this question that additional categories will

**(1) Help members to write questions suitable for Conference by providing more guidance about the assessment of those questions.**

Members can then critically review their own questions to consider how the question can be rephrased or whether it needs more convincing support from the background information.

**(2) Help the CSC’s task of selecting appropriate questions.**

Additional categories, which have been discussed and agreed by Conference, will enable the CSC to spend less time on unsuitable questions and more time on the identification and development of potentially suitable questions that just need further refinement and/or background information i.e. Category 2 questions.

To summarize: An analysis of the categorization of questions deemed not suitable for conference has shown that further categories are possible. It is a truism that full guidance should be given prior to any assessment and this applies to members going to the time and trouble of creating questions for Conference. Further categories, discussed and agreed by Conference, will enable most of the common reasons for rejection to be highlighted to the questioners before they submit a question. The legitimisation of such categories through discussion by the membership and ratification at Conference will support the CSC fulfilling its difficult role.

Terms of Reference No. 7

It was felt that it should (and will be) reviewed by the Conference Steering Committee directly. It was felt that this was the best forum to review and amend the Terms of Reference as opposed to the fellowship discussing it as a whole.

42.

**Would Conference share experience and make recommendations for a revision to the format of the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain to that of the previous Handbook was loose leafed and simpler to amend.**

***Background***

**The previous AA Service handbook was in the form of a loose leaf document with the date of each page in one corner of that page. To maintain an up to date copy one simply had to cross reference one's own copy with that in the documents section of the website and, where a new page had been issued, print that page off and substitute it for the out of date one.**

**Since the issue of the first edition in 2013 there have been six amendments to this document approved by Conference. The Literature section at GSO is still selling the original first version without amendments recommended by Conference**

**Conference 2014**

**Committee 1 Q 3 Revised chapter three**

**Conference 2015**

**Committee 5 Q1 Behaviour amendments page 82 to 85**

**Committee 6 Q2 Revision to Chapter 9**

**Conference 2016**

**Committee 1 Q3 Review The Group under participation**

**Committee 2 Q 3 YPLO**

**Committee 5 Q 3 review pages 82 to 85 (again! – see Conf 2015)**

Terms of Reference No. 7

This subject has been considered by the literature sub-committee and the decision is to remain with the booklet format. The next issue of the Guidelines and Handbook are due to be published later this year and will be available to all free of charge.

44.

Would the Fellowship and Conference discuss changing the name of the GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE Great Britain, and make recommendations?

**Background**

a) A new-comer to AA is usually encouraged "to do service" as part of their own recovery, but for the majority this service extends only to rotational positions within their home group or those nearby. This may include a stint as GSR and a chance to feel the personal benefits of service within the wider AA. But for most the inverted triangle is just a laminate that appears occasionally, and they have little idea how AA GB works or even why, given the much read "autonomy" of Groups. Those who make it to Intergroup, and connect, are truly on a road to a great adventure.

b) Many alcoholics, when they finally find the rooms of AA, have developed resentments against many aspects of life; life-partners, employers, systems. They hate the way the world is run, especially the bureaucratic "them and us". In AA they are glad to find we are all "us". There are no "them". That is until their GSR mentions the need to discuss this year's Questions for Conference, which is often met with apathy or even hostility. Could this be born of ignorance and fear? *"They" are using corporate language; conference, delegates, voting, committees, reports. That's what made me drink!*

c) When AA was in its infancy in 1930s United States many, maybe most, of its early members were business men. Conferences and corporate decisions were their bread and butter. When Bill W, realising the weight of responsibility of AA and his and Dr Bob's mortality, first mentioned the idea of a national service conference (Dr Bob and the Good Old Timers p 321) Dr Bob was doubtful if rank and file could run this ever expanding, life-saving force. He favoured a steering committee of "elders". By the time he came round to agreeing with Bill the word "conference" seemed fixed (but references were usually in lower case, indicating a purpose rather than a title?) (AA Comes of Age, pp 214,223,226-8)

d) To the anxious and befuddled newcomer, or enquirer, AA is full of jargon and for many it takes months even years to make sense of that which will help establish their own sobriety, let alone enlighten them on AAs structure outside "the rooms". (The difference between GSR and GSO?). Many are taken, by their sponsors, to a local Convention, to experience a wider side of AA and, hopefully, to show that recovering alcoholics need not be boring and glum. Then National Conventions are promoted and gangs reminisce! Then comes mention of Conference and a silence falls . . . .

e) At Conference 2016 Committee 4 Q2, discussed the "fitness for purpose" of Conference and unanimously passed it as fit. However it was pointed out that this was only so, given the responsibility of ALL levels of membership service to make it work. Would a change of name, to, shall we say, the National Fellowship Assembly GB, help to open this conduit? (AA Service News No. 167 p10.)

Terms of Reference No. 7

The Committee discussed this and decided that the current name for the Conference fully covers the role of what happens at conference and that a change of name would not be appropriate at this stage. Please see the leaflet <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/download/1/Library/Documents/Conference%20Reports%20and%20Background/Role%20%20and%20%20Function%20of%20Conference.pdf>

Conference's task, apart from answering questions from the Fellowship is to hold the General Service Board to their role and as such the title of the Conference fits that adequately. Indeed, using the name G SERVICE C shows the progression of Service that a member can do.

45.

So called 'thirteenth stepping', where an existing member has inappropriate relations with a newcomer, remain an ongoing issue for the fellowship and existing guidelines etc don't seem to be sufficient. Can the fellowship please share experience and make recommendations on the following:

Where an individual AA member has repeated concerns raised about their conduct in this regard, at what point is it legitimate to bar them from service such as being on 12 step lists or as primary contacts for hospital or similar meetings?

Where a member in a position of trust has concerns raised about them and within fellowship approaches as recommended by our guidelines do not change their behaviour, is it acceptable to inform outside agencies such as hospitals or Protection of Vulnerable Adults teams about these concerns? Are there limits to the principal of anonymity where safeguarding may be involved?

Should we engage the services of a suitably qualified outside agency to look at how best we can safeguard members who may be considered as at risk of abuse?

**Background**

A long term member has repeated concerns raised about their conduct, including that they have bought alcohol for a newcomer in order to facilitate having sexual relations with them. This member is approached by representatives of intergroup and spoken to about their conduct as recommended in our guidelines. The member dismisses the concerns and carries on as before. The intergroup representatives are uncertain about how to proceed - this member is well established in service particularly in a group meeting in a psychiatric hospital where he goes onto the ward to bring inpatients to the meeting. Confusion over issues of anonymity and delegated authority prevent further action being taken, but newcomers remain at risk and the fellowship in grave danger of being brought into disrepute by having been aware of a problem but not taking decisive action.

This is one example but many members will know of others.

The idea that regulations or laws (such as the Social Services and Well being Act (Wales) 2014 and their equivalents in the rest of the UK) don't apply as each group is an autonomous entity may not cover the Fellowship where services such as telephones, prison, probation or hospitals etc are co-ordinated at the level of intergroup, region or even nationally. Without consulting with experts in the field, as we do with other legal or financial matters, we may be leaving the Fellowship open to significant harm to our primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Whether or not they do, it is clear from examples such as the BBC and Jimmy Saville that great damage can be done to an organisations reputation where inaction follows the repeated raising of concerns. Those services we engage with in order to carry the message such as hospitals, prisons, schools etc would certainly expect us to have some rigorous guidelines in place and could withdraw their co-operation if they felt we were not dealing with situations appropriately when their service users could be at risk.

Terms of Reference No. 5

The subject of suitability at meetings and the methods of dealing with this had been discussed at Conference in 2015 and the pamphlet agreed in 2016. This question was deemed to be very similar in nature in that violence and inappropriate behaviour need to be dealt with by the Group using the Group Conscience. The Pamphlet Violence and Personal Conduct is available from GSO York : <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Shop/Categories/Products/AA-Unity-and-Service/Violence-and-Personal-Conduct>

46.

In light of the fact that the GSB has allowed some sub-committees to suspend and remove trusted servants from post, and that Regions and Intergroups have been known to follow similar practice, would Conference consider and recommend the introduction of a means of defence, representation and/or appeal in these circumstances which is more robust than just Concept V, and that when AA sees fit to revert the inverted triangle for such purposes, its trusted servants should expect no lesser treatment than an unpaid, uncontracted volunteer would receive in an employment scenario as recommended by ACAS.

*I understand that our Trusted Servants are not employees, but they are volunteers and should be protected from arbitrary, uninformed or excessive punitive action without any form of defence, as volunteers in the workplace are.*

**Background:**

AA Structure Handbook, Concept V, pages 34-36

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/BasicdisciplinaryprocedurefromPEACe.pdf>

ACAS Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance Procedures

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>

I have two examples, details of which need not be provided to the Committee.

1. The suspension and subsequent removal of a member of the Online Response Team by the ECSC
2. The Prevention of a Conference Delegate from attending Conference (thereby curtailing any role in future Sub-Committees) following an allegation of bringing AA into disrepute. This was done by Eastern Region.

In neither case was the person affected asked to be present or able to be represented when the decision was taken.

Terms of Reference No. 7

To bring in outside Agencies to decide on whether Group Conscience decisions are correct would be a breach of Traditions, especially Tradition 2, 6, 10 & 12 Anonymity would be broken if outside Agencies were brought in.

47.

### **Homeless Liaison Proposal:**

**History:** This Intergroup has voted in the position of Homeless Liaison Officer at Intergroup in April 2016. Homelessness and alcohol misuse has become such a major problem that we felt that effective and beneficial work needed to be done is too vast to just be allocated to a Public Information Liaison officer.

Would Conference consider creating a role for HLO within each Intergroup area in line with the following background information outlined below:

- 2 years sobriety
- HLO would benefit from having experienced homelessness/been a rough sleeper
- Term recommended to run for 3 years
- Good working knowledge of the 12 steps and 12 traditions

#### **Aims**

- To inform homeless/rough sleeper alcoholic about alcoholism and AA via direct (eg face to face) and indirect (eg outreach agencies and charities) means, and utilising available literature (online and printed)
- To engage the homeless/rough sleeper alcoholic into the unity of the fellowship.
- Encourage the homeless/rough sleeper alcoholic into service via the service structure.

#### **Responsibilities**

- Refer to 2013 Committee 2
- Contact and conduit for homeless/rough sleeper with a desire to stop drinking
- Develop contact list of AA members with experience to share
- Work with Public Information LO
- Work with Health LO
- Support Intergroup Area and/or Regional activities concerning homeless/rough sleeper alcoholic. Eg workshops, PI events, conventions etc.
- Encourage homeless/rough sleeper alcoholic to get involved in all aspects of service.
- Liaising with the homeless/rough sleeper alcoholic via charities, day centres, professionals etc
- Providing information, awareness and support.
- Promote using literature, face to face meetings and conversations, online.

Terms of Reference No. 5

Has been discussed within the last three years but it is worth revisiting, possibly in 2018, when it is no longer covered by the three year rule.

48.

**We think that as there are no guidelines on cross-sharing in AA, and all that we have recourse to are the guidelines from other fellowships, whose needs are different to ours, there should be a question for Conference about this. AA needs its own guidelines to avoid confusion!**

**Please could Conference discuss and agree on a clear definition of cross-sharing in AA and some guidelines on the difference between cross-sharing and identification. Ideally, a leaflet or other literature, with no waffle, would be produced to explain it fully.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Question for the group conscience to address and insufficient background material.

49.

**Could conference questions be bi annually?**

**Most groups seem to find it hard to get people to submit their thoughts at a conscious meeting which means the response isn't really an accurate submission just something done in a complete rush.**

**Also could the questions be simplified so that the questions are not so gobbly guok and more user friendly explained?**

Terms of Reference 6/7

Insufficient background material and questions are submitted by members of the Fellowship so the wording of them is not down to Conference.



50.

**Examine and discuss how AA can best respond to changing circumstances (in the world of addiction). In today's world there are more options open to the sufferer, including other 12 Step programs, as well as a wide spectrum of spiritual approaches to living. Has our approach to our Primary Purpose changed in the past several decades, or are there changes needed in the light of changing circumstance? Make specific recommendations.**

***Background***

- **AA Comes of Age**
- **The Twelve Traditions; specifically Traditions 5 and 11.**
- **In the first decades of Alcoholics Anonymous there were few successful alternatives to A.A.. This is perhaps less true in today's world?**
- **Declaration of Unity and The Responsibility Pledge**

Terms of Reference No. 6

Insufficient and inappropriate background information.

51.

**Is our fear of Promotion preventing us from being seen enough to be Attractive? Discuss the balance between Attraction and Promotion in light of our Primary Purpose.**

***Background***

**The 12 Traditions; specifically Traditions 5 and 11**

**AA Comes of Age**

**Declaration of Unity and The Responsibility Pledge**

Terms of Reference No. 6/7

Background information was insufficient and using a complete book as background was inappropriate. Also the question was too vague to be deliberated and answered by Conference.

52.

Would Conference consider ways to support users of older, and in particular non - microsoft, computer systems in AA service positions.

This is a question about communication and computer literacy:

In these days of "user friendly" "teach yourself" PCs, some people seem to be completely baffled when they, for example, send a "word" document to an old applemac user, only to be told "sorry, I can't read the file in that format."

PCs and Applemacs have in fact been working alongside one another for decades, and this problem is quickly and easily resolved by sending the file in an appropriate format. PDF (portable document format) has been in use since 1993; and this has become the de facto standard format for sending locked files between applications,

The recipient of the file, however, is dependent on the sender having the basic computer skills to do this.

#### *Background*

I have been using computers since the 1970s, however, by today's standards, I am one of the dinosaurs. Because I use a lot of old SCSI equipment, it has been necessary for me to retain an old Applemac computer, running on one of the older operating systems. Using this computer I have nevertheless, for many years, been successfully able to undertake a variety of AA service positions at Intergroup and Region level. I never had any major problems with using a "non - microsoft" system until I took up a position on one of the General Service Board committees.

I applied for this particular job as it seemed well suited to my skills, and also to the Adobe software I use. This proved to be the case, microsoft software was neither necessary nor appropriate for the task in question. However, as a member of a committee, I needed to be able to read the day to day files such as Agendas and Minutes.

I duly asked for the relevant files to be sent as PDFs. The person responsible was either unable or unwilling to do this, and I was asked instead to install a "Translation Package" and claim this as an expense from GSO. It became apparent that the person concerned had no idea what a PDF was, and wanted me to install Microsoft Office software in order to be able to read "word" documents sent in the default format.

The software installation, unfortunately, wasn't possible on my system, so I asked a board member what I should do about the problem (more about that later). The eventual outcome of this request was that I was not allowed to continue in the service position as a result of the communication difficulty. This was disappointing for me personally, but it highlights the issues relating to this conference question:

If a service position is software specific, or if a software installation may be required, it is particularly important that this information is included in the advertisement for the job; or at least mentioned in the job description. We currently live in a "download the app" culture; people new to computing may not appreciate that this is a relatively recent phenomenon, and users of older systems and equipment need to be able to ascertain before applying for the job, whether or not they will be able to comply with any specific software requirements.

If, on the other hand, a job is not software specific (and there seemed to be no reason why this particular position needed to be); then, in an ideal world, all members in administrative positions would have the basic computer skills necessary to establish communication with all other computer users. If that were the case, then there would be no reason for this conference question, and the problem highlighted would not have arisen.

Many professionals, when sending files to multiple recipients, will send them out as PDFs as a matter of course; this is the simple way of ensuring that everybody can read them. So a structural solution to this problem is certainly possible. However, the most important issue to deal with is that, if an electronic communication problem does occur, it should be possible to ask for help from within the Fellowship, without having the matter treated as though it were some kind of dispute; which is what seemed to happen in this case.

AA members in my position are clearly in a minority, but I am certainly not the only user of an older or non microsoft computer system within our fellowship; we would like to do service.

Terms of Reference No. 7

This is not a question AA is able to answer.

53.

Should we as a fellowship have a working guide/guidelines to organising and the running of public meetings? If so, can Conference suggest a method in which our Fellowship can bring together the experience of groups/intergroups/regions who have public meeting experience they can share with other groups to coordinate a successful meeting and raise awareness with professionals and volunteers from outside of AA and attract newcomers in this way?

**Background**

Just over 5 years ago, after receiving a yellow flyer from GSO regarding Alcohol Awareness month which mentioned holding a public meeting to raise awareness during this period, our group decided to organise and run a public meeting for the first time. With very little information available specifically on this matter in our Service Handbook and the pamphlet 'How AA members cooperate with Professionals', we had to depend mostly upon adhering to the AA traditions and holding regular conscience meetings (about 8 or 9 in total) before our first event.

We had to consider many factors such as service positions (including speakers and back up speakers, chairperson, who would answer questions before and after the meeting, setting up, meeting and greeting), the format, timing and length of the meeting, considering if our venue was large enough and accessible to most people, how we would compile a list of people to invite and how to contact and invite them, what catering we would provide, health and safety (mainly in relation in the event of a fire/emergency), creating posters for the event and press releases (including matters around protecting personal anonymity), informing our local telephone office of the event, what literature we would make available for sale and what free literature/posters/contact cards we gave to attendees to take away. Finances was also an important matter including if we could afford the event and if we was to have a pot or not considering we are self supporting, ensuring that we did not take money any money from non-AA attendees.

With having to consider these factors I have mentioned and more, leading up to the event was pretty stressful without having specific guidelines to follow. If we had protocol to work from then this process would have been a lot easier and less time consuming in terms of thinking about if we had all possible angles covered. After the event we held another conscience meeting to discuss how we felt the event went and to give any feedback from the people attending from outside of the Fellowship as well as what members thought of the event. The feedback we got was very positive, over the years we have attracted newcomers to the Fellowship who have been able to get sober and this has given us the encouragement to run a public meeting each year since then.

We believe if the Fellowship had an official suggested guide to public meetings for other groups to follow then this would give groups the confidence and the ability to run their own public meetings. Having read service news and seen that other groups across the country have held similar events we believe that all of our experiences can benefit others, especially if we can gather this together by means of doing it through a PI Sub Committee or by any other means.

We are currently in the process of putting together a guide for North West region to share with other groups of how we organise these events and we will send a copy of this once completed to be considered at Conference if this question is accepted.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Already being done through Service News, PI Sub Committee work and their Newsletters. PI Sub Committee is available for advice when required.

54.

**Would Conference discuss whether the current price of the pocket sized edition of our basic text Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book) best supports our Primary Purpose?**

***Background Information***

**Our basic text, the book Alcoholics Anonymous, affectionately known as the “Big Book”, provides clear-cut, precise directions on how to recover from alcoholism.**

**“To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.” Foreword to the First Edition.**

**Broad distribution of the Big Book thus becomes a fundamental part of our Fellowship’s Fifth Tradition, or Primary Purpose, and an essential element of individual members’ Twelfth Step activities. It is generally accepted that every AA member ought to possess a copy of the Big Book, and we are encouraged to make it available not only to still-suffering alcoholics, but also third parties such as the family, wives, doctors and employers.**

**A very useful format is the pocket sized edition of the Big Book, which is currently priced at £5. However, this price may be considered too high for some members and groups to purchase frequently and distribute broadly. Therefore, if the price were to be lowered, it may lead to greater purchasing from members and groups, and therefore greater distribution to the still-suffering alcoholic and other parties.**

**A lower price may be practically possible as, for example, similar style books are already offered by other publishers at much lower prices.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

General Secretary/GSO will be considering this question outside of Conference.

**Would Conference discuss possible improvements to the Document Library on the AA Great Britain website?**

***Background***

**Our Document Library, which is accessible via the AA Great Britain website, is a valuable resource that contains many AA service documents covering a wide range of topics pertinent to our fellowship.**

**The documents held in the library are useful for a variety of service activities. For example, preparing questions for Conference requires members to research archived information, such as past Conference Recommendations and Board Reports.**

**However, there may be times when the information needed is difficult to find. This may be due to:**

- **Absence of a search, sort, or filter functionality (particularly within documents)**
- **Obscure file names e.g. 2008.jpg**
- **Empty folders e.g. "Calendar of Events"**

**In addition, as new files are added every year it's likely to become even more challenging to make practical use of the library in its current format.**

**To help make our Document Library more efficient and easier to access, there are numerous proprietary and/or open source electronic information management systems available which could be utilised to alleviate these problems and provide members with a fast and effective means of accessing the information they require.**

**Improvements to the ease and accessibility of our Document Library may enable more AA members to engage with the Conference process, help provide higher quality Questions for Conference that are more accurate and complete, as well as more effective sharing of our collective experience, strength, and hope.**

**References**

**<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Document-Library>**

56.

**Would the fellowship consider what more it can do to attract ethnic minorities through the doors of AA?**

***Background***

**Walk down any street in any large town or city and you will be among a diverse range of different colours, races and creeds - but turn off the street into an AA meeting and mostly what you I see are white Europeans like myself.**

Terms of Reference No. 6

Insufficient background material pertinent to the question.

57.

**Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on whether the price of core literature should be reduced?**

***Background***

- 1) Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2015
- 2) The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 p120
- 3) Tradition 7

In the 2015 Financial Statements, literature income was £540,000 while related expenses were £177,000. According to our accounts, across the catalogue literature is therefore being sold at three times cost. Our meetings should be the cheapest place to buy books, it is part of the fundamental attraction of meetings, yet our core literature is often sold online from non-Fellowship sources at a lower price.

Reducing the price of all books in the catalogue to a maximum of £5 would also help with the problem of our-Fellowship's ever-growing reserves. Tradition 7 long form states that '...we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated AA purpose.'

Additionally, Concept XII warns against becoming '...the seat of perilous wealth...'

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 p120 suggests GSO hold 'a prudent reserve equivalent to the budget expenditure for the forthcoming year'. However, at 30 September 2015 free reserves totalled £2,130,000 while annual expenditure was £1,294,000. The Board has reported surpluses totalling over £800,000 in the last five reporting periods and in the year to 30 September 2015 the General Service Board reported a surplus of £61,000, further increasing reserves from a figure already well over the Structure Handbook's recommended position.

My intention behind asking this question is for Conference, as the voice and effective conscience of the Fellowship, to advise the Board on how it might take steps to reduce the ever growing reserves, heeding the warning contained in Tradition 7. Unless action is taken we are in danger of compromising our primary spiritual aim.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Cost of literature reviews are already regularly undertaken by the Literature Subcommittee.



58.

**What can we do as a Fellowship to show newcomers and the public at large that we are not stupid, boring and glum?**

***Background***

The public perception of AA, particularly from the television, is that we sit around in dingy rooms complaining about our problems. My experience when I came to AA was the opposite. I found it to be full of vibrant happy people, carrying a message of hope. I continue to find my home group a joyful and cheerful place to be. We also have a lot of fun and laughter together, both at meetings and at our social events.

Could we take any steps to try and change the public perception of AA? Perhaps by carrying out more upbeat PI work or speaking to the media to change the way we are portrayed on TV?

Big Book page 132: 'We are not a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life'

'So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness'

Terms of Reference No. 7

Already being addressed by the Public Information service structure.

59.

**Would Conference consider asking the Board to place a disclaimer on our national website, to state that we are not affiliated with any other AA websites?**

***Background***

There are currently a number of websites which regularly attack AA, AA groups and even individual members. Because these sites claim to be written by AA members, newcomers and members of the public have no reason to think that these hate sites are not endorsed by AAGB. I have spoken to many people who have been put off coming to AA due to these sites. These sites also make AA unattractive to the public. A disclaimer would be a simple way of showing that AAGB does not endorse such sites.

Traditions: 5 and 11.

Tradition 9 long form: *'The trustees of the General Service Board ..... are authorized by groups to handle our over –all public relations'*

Concept 9

Terms of Reference No. 7

Outside issue which could lead AA into public controversy.

60.

**Do Conference believe that the way Questions for Conference are written and undertaken is the best way to approach it?**

***Background***

**As a fairly new member to service within the service structure, I have found it extremely hard work and confusing to understand what the question is asking. I feel that the way in which is written with all the background needed is making Conference something that is not applicable to the majority of newer members of this wonderful Fellowship.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Suggested that initially talk to a sponsor, ask for help from the wider Fellowship, refer to the pamphlet 'how to submit a topic or question for Conference' and undertake service in AA and become a Conference delegate.

61.

**a) What does the Fellowship feel that Conference and Regions can do to foster confidence in the grass roots membership for the Conference process?**

**b) What does the Fellowship want from Conference?**

**Delegates to gather experience from around the country, collate, discuss and make recommendations.**

***Background***

**Less people all the time coming forward to do service, particularly at Region and Conference level**

**Grass roots membership having little contact with delegates.**

**Delegates report to region, Region reps report to Intergroups, GSRs report to Groups leaving little chance of delegate enthusiasm to communicate to AA members in general.**

**Internet and email requiring less local contact with membership. One-to-one contact has always been the life blood of our message. How do we integrate this into our Service work?**

**For example the type of Question often put forward by newer members concerns the Conference Question process and how it is relevant to staying sober at the Group and individual members' level. While sponsorship can clear up some of the confusion, the overall perception is one of complication. Complicated wordiness (guilty on occasions!) and vague references to Traditions, Concepts and Guidelines without clear explanations of the application do not always help the average member to understand more.**

**Local recent experience of members doing service at Intergroup but not moving on.**

**Local experience of Intergroups and Regions sometimes being places for criticism, accusation and judgement rather than support and encouragement for service initiatives.**

**These are all some of the reasons that newer members seem to feel discouraged about the AA service structure**

**Tradition 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12**

**Concepts with particular reference to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9. Not forgetting the essays surrounding them.**

Terms of Reference No. 5

Question 2 Committee Four 2016, together with Question 1 Committee Two, and Question 1 Committee 3 2016 were considered to be too similar.

62.

Would Conference discuss, consider and make recommendations to further update the section on 'The Group, sub-section 5: Violence and Personal Conduct' on pp.82-85 of the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain, to include and make specific reference to the internet? In particular, to include, under the sub-heading 'About Behaviour', suggestions about members' behaviour:

- a. when using AA's own online facilities and services; and
- b. when contributing to, posting on, or using other non-AA internet sites to share their experience or make comments about AA.

**Background**

Conference 2016, Committee 5, Question 3 approved certain changes to the Structure Handbook as regards members' behaviour, including the section on bullying and harassment.

However, despite the increasing use of the internet in AA fellowship and service work – for example recognition of online groups (Conference Reports 2015 and 2016), adoption of the 'Chat Now' service on the AA GB website, the Online Responder Service – together with the rapidly increasing use of social media, when amending the handbook the Conference 2016 committee was perhaps remiss in not making specific provision for behaviour when online.

The AA 2015 Membership Survey records that 19% of people – that's 1 in 5 – found AA online and came to their first meeting as a direct result of contact via the Internet.

Numerous examples of bullying, harassment and offensive behaviour on the internet which have been reported to GSO and the GSB are harmful to newcomers and longer-term AA members alike. The GSB should take the lead in discouraging such behaviour.

For those reasons it is vital that Conference acts to ensure the Handbook is updated to reflect the variety of online communications AA members and newcomers engage in, and the GSB should take steps to inform the Fellowship that bullying, harassment and offensive behaviour on the internet is just as unacceptable as it is in meetings.

See also:

'Hints and Suggestions on Internet Safety' card

Terms of Reference 5 and 7

Has been discussed in the last three years and AA is unable to monitor people using external sites.

63.

Would Conference discuss, consider and make recommendations on how the General Service Board, Trustees and NATs could work with the press, radio and television at the national level to increase public awareness of AA and so make better use of the media to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic?

“Awareness” ought to include:

- not only awareness of AA as an organisation and how to get in touch, but also
- awareness that AA offers a solution to alcoholism for those who need and want it

**Background**

The AA 2015 Membership Survey records that only 1% of newer members were introduced to AA via television and / or radio, and that only 1% of newer members were introduced to AA via newspapers and / or magazines. This figure suggests we may not be reaching many hundreds, if not thousands, of alcoholics who need and want AA.

Examples of previous national PI campaigns include television adverts and roadside billboards e.g. in Bristol 2002-03, but is AA consistently doing enough to carry the message at the level of press, radio and television? For example, a documentary shown during Alcohol Awareness Week last November (2015) (follow <http://www.radiotimes.com/tv-programme/e/dyd59x/im-an-alcoholic-my-name-is>) made no mention of AA, nor was the AA Helpline number offered as a potential source of help to viewers at the end of the screening. The people taking part spoke of their continual relapses and the overall message was that there is no solution to alcoholism. Whereas AA did not contribute or participate, it missed a golden opportunity to offer another viewpoint and disappointingly was invisible and silent.

Therefore, can the GSB, Trustees and NATs do more to raise public awareness, not only that AA exists, but that our Twelve Steps offer a solution?

There are lots of good ideas around the Fellowship and no shortage of effort, but often PI activities hit a “brick wall” because of media apathy or disinterest. However, if the GSB could take the lead at the national level, then it is hoped that groups, intergroups and regions would stand a better chance of working with the media at the local level.

Ideas include articles in the press, making use of local radio and an AA “documentary” of its own.

See also:

Step 12 – Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics [..]

Tradition 5 – Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Concept I – The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for British AA services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship in Great Britain.

Concept XI – We need the increasing good will of editors, writers, television and radio channels. These [..] should be opened wider and wider [..] every real public relations success brings alcoholics in our direction.

(From Bill W's Essays).

Terms of Reference No. 7

This work is already being undertaken by AA's Public Information Subcommittee.

64.

Would Conference discuss, consider and make recommendations on whether “speaker tapes” – audio files of AA members sharing their experience, strength and hope – could be incorporated into the AA GB website [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)?

***Background***

There are many good examples of AA shares available on the internet, and the success of the Young Persons’ short animated video shows that the AA GB website can itself be an effective medium in carrying AA’s message of recovery and not just about buying literature and finding meetings.

With 19% of people finding AA via the internet (AA 2015 Membership Survey), a selection of short audio shares by a cross-section of AA members (male, female, old, young etc.) accessible via the website could be a great starting point to enable newcomers to identify with the malady and provide them with a clear message about sponsorship and AA’s Twelve Steps.

See also:

**Step 12 – Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics [..]**

**Tradition 5 – Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.**

Terms of Reference No. 7

Is already being undertaken by the PI Subcommittee, for example putting individual shares via pod casts on the website.

66.

**Would Conference provide guidance on how online AA meetings should monitor and check inappropriate behaviour?**

***Background***

**More and more newcomers are finding their way to AA via the Internet (see the latest survey of AA in Great Britain). These less experienced members arguably need to be protected from others and from themselves at online meetings where it's easier to be less sensitive of others than it is face-to-face at regular meetings.**

Terms of Reference No. 5

Discussed within the last three years.



67.

**Would Conference consider having a purpose built micro site for CONFERENCE – The role, purpose and function of this process**

- a. Since there has been discussion in the past about making the process of becoming a Conference Delegate more informative and less anxiety based, having a leading QUESTION such as “How does a member of AA become a Conference Delegate?” could be a Real Time or Virtual experience depending on how interactive technology is embraced.
- b. If a separate website is not an option then having a dedicated section on the main site clearly guided from the Home page could work as a first stage development

**Proposal:**

**Conference - The Purpose and Function**

- To make clear the significance of conference with AA jargon explained (simple pop up system),
- To highlight its significance worldwide in our Membership who have not been given chance to find out via current website and service structure
- Explain the process of conference
- Have a clear record of past decisions
- Keep its own document library
- A separate site will enable us to implement the next suggestion from this process

**Create website using VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)**

- 21ST century technology
- Designed to present information & enable users to engage in discussion and receive feedback online throughout the year
- VLEs designed to enable users to provide the content
- Ease of use - if you can use a smart phone you can use VLE
- Could bring Conference alive and potential to increase involvement
- See Moodle <https://moodle.org/> and is perfect for AA
- It's open source i.e. it's FREE and supported by worldwide community-proven to be effective
- Young people in particular are familiar - it is used in schools and universities as well as businesses.
- It is the Young who are increasing the numbers in fellowship

Terms of Reference No. 6 and 7

Insufficient background material and that the information is already available.

68.

**Would Conference consider:**

**A highly visible link button for Literature on The Home Page**

**(see US World Service site)**

**This would make Literature easier to obtain**

Terms of Reference 6 and 7

Insufficient background material and the link is already there under 'Shop'.

69.

**Should Share magazine be available Online by Subscription?**

- **Save printing costs**
- **Save Distribution costs**

Terms of Reference No. 3 and 6      A question of a similar nature has been accepted on the agenda and insufficient background material to support the question

70.

Can Conference discuss why in the 2015 Survey of Alcoholics Anonymous:

A) the 12 Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous were not included in the list of things that have led to your successful sobriety?

B) God has been replaced with Higher Power?

*Background*

A) The programme of recovery outlined in the Big Book is based on the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

1. On page 58 of the Big Book 4<sup>th</sup> edition it states: "If you have decided that you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to take certain steps."
2. On page 60 of the Big Book 4<sup>th</sup> edition it states: "Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps..."
3. In the GB Guidelines of Alcoholics Anonymous it states: "The primary purpose of an AA Group is to offer sobriety through the teaching and practice of the 12 Steps"
4. The 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous states: "Tradition 1: Our common welfare comes first, personal recovery depends upon AA Unity."

B)

1. May you find God now: God appears 59 times in the first 164 pages and 137 times throughout the whole Big Book. Whereas Higher Power appears twice in the first 164 pages and 15 times throughout.
2. On page 29 of the Big Book 4<sup>th</sup> edition it states: "Each individual in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God."
3. Page 60 of the Big Book states: "B) That no human power could have relived our alcoholism and C) that God could and would if He were sought."

Terms of Reference No. 7

Conference does not decide the questions that are asked in the Survey, these are chosen/decided upon using professional advice.

Can Conference discuss the Traditions complications of the "God Word" Pamphlet? Do the stories give the impression that there are two types of Alcoholic: one that has lost the power of choice and needs a Power other than human to recover and another that can stay stopped through human power alone? Can Conference explain how this does not call into questions the validity of our Common Solution and the Unity of our Fellowship?

**Background**

1. The sole purpose of an AA Group is to offer sobriety through the teaching and practice of the 12 Steps - GB Guidelines
2. Traditions Pre-Amble: To those now in its fold, Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety, and often the difference between life and death. A.A. can, of course, mean just as much to uncounted alcoholics not yet reached. Therefore, no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone. The 'Twelve Traditions' of Alcoholics Anonymous are, we A.A.'s believe, the best answers that our experience has yet given to those ever-urgent questions, "How can A.A. best function?" and, "How can A.A. best stay whole and so survive?"
3. 1st Tradition (Long Form): Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.
4. Our common welfare comes first, personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
5. On page 29 of the Big Book 4th Edition it states - "Each individual in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God".
6. We Agnostics chapter
7. How it Works chapter, a/b/c's and the 12 Steps
8. May you find God now: God appears 59 times in the first 164 pages and 137 times throughout the whole Big Book.
9. The experience of The Washingtonians.

72.

The image used to represent members of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous on the AA UK website (under the Members section) is not representative of the fellowship of AA in the UK. Please can conference discuss the use of this particular image & seek alternative images that represent anonymity, gender, race, class & cultural representation.

The nature of the stock photography for the members section could be associated with certain Christian organisations, business practice or 'cult' like organisations, and in no way reflects the diversity of the members in UK AA or indeed the inclusive and open message of AA.

I believe the use of photographic images of adults used in the Members section on the AA website is opposed to the fundamental premise that 'Anonymity is the spiritual foundation .....

References:

1. [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) (USA)

Where the use of the silhouette image of a wide range of people is easily apparent & their use of cartoons rather than photographic images.

2. [www.alcooliques-anonymous.fr](http://www.alcooliques-anonymous.fr) (France)

Where the use of body parts e.g. ears, eyes and hands are used to reflect diversity & cultural differences in a positive, inclusive manner. N.B. One photographic image used on their site (on the importance of anonymity) is a crowd scene with the faces of individuals blurred in the foreground to underline the importance of anonymity.

3. [www.alcoholicos-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholicos-anonymous.org)

Where the use of silhouetted images of members are used & cartoons to illustrate individuals, thereby encouraging our 'spiritual foundation of anonymity'.

4. [www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au) (Australia)

Where the use of face or body & voice is obscured in the videos for the sake of anonymity. No photographs of real or imagined individuals (i.e. stock or copyright free photography) are shown thus preserving anonymity.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Passed to the General Service Board for consideration.

73.

In support of raising the awareness of the Concepts, would Conference consider producing a parchment version of the Twelve Concepts for World Service and/or the Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain in the same size (13" x 17") and style as the parchment versions of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions? Further, would Conference consider producing a stand-alone table-top display that includes the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for World Service (and/or the Twelve Concepts for World Service Great Britain)?

**Intention:**

To increase awareness of the Concepts by making available displays that are smaller and more usable by Groups that must meet in smaller spaces.

**Background:**

- Groups that meet in smaller spaces often do not have sufficient room to use and store the banners of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts. Currently only the Steps and Traditions are available in the smaller parchment versions.

**General Service Conference Reports:**

- 2016: Committee 1, Question 2
- 2012: Committee 6, Question 2
- 2007: Committee 2, Question 1
- 2006: Conference focused specifically on the Concepts in 2006. In particular the following Conference approved answers may be relevant: Committee 2, Question 1 / Committee 3, Question 1 / Committee 5, Question 1 / Committee 6, Question 1

**Literature:**

From *The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013*:

- 'Introduction to the Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W.'
- 'Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain'
- 'Bill W's Essays "Twelve Concepts for World Service" '

Pamphlet: 'Twelve Concepts Illustrated'

Pamphlet: 'Twelve Concepts Checklist' (if available)

Terms of Reference No. 7

Passed to the Literature Committee for consideration.

