



Your AA Group

and its place in the
structure of AA Great
Britain.

The Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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“A.A. groups exist to help alcoholics achieve sobriety. Large or small, firmly established or brand-new, speaker, discussion or study, each group has but one reason for being: to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. The group exists so that the alcoholic can find a new way of life, a life abundant in happiness, joy, and freedom. To recover most alcoholics need the support of a group of other alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope. Thus my sobriety, and our program’s survival, depend on my determination to put first things first.”

Daily Reflections p. 218.

This pamphlet has been put together to give members – and in particular the newer members – some basic information about how AA groups work, and how groups relate to other parts of AA.

It is only an introduction. There is much more detailed information in other AA publications. Some of these are listed in Section 9 of the pamphlet. Underlying all that is said are the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of AA. These guide us in all our AA affairs. To keep it simple only some of them are quoted in the text but all are included at the end of the pamphlet.



AA's symbol is a triangle inside a circle. The circle represents the total Fellowship. Within it the triangle's three sides are labelled Recovery, Unity and Service, which are the Three Legacies of AA. In the group we first find support and help for our recovery. The group is united by a common purpose and in its relationship to other parts of AA. In the group and all through AA there are many opportunities for service. The circle and triangle have guided the shape of this pamphlet.

Please remember that the suggestions here are guidelines and are **not** a set of 'rules'. They describe how many groups work, and how they link to other parts of the Fellowship, but there will be other patterns and other ways of bringing alcoholics together to seek recovery within the Fellowship of AA.

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Quotations in the text: all the quotations retain their original spellings and punctuation, which may differ from those usually found in modern UK English.

1 Your AA group

If you have recently come into AA then you may find some of your questions about AA groups answered here. If you have been in the Fellowship for a couple of years or more it is hoped that you will still find something of interest, especially in the later parts of the pamphlet.

Every AA group is independent, unique, manages its own affairs and runs its own meetings. As Tradition Four says: *“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.”* However, there are many similarities between groups, and these are what will be described in the following pages.

1.1 What is a group?

There seem to be some points which define an AA group:

- all members have a desire to stop drinking or to stay sober and all such people are eligible for membership
- a group’s primary purpose is to help alcoholics recover through the Twelve Steps
- as a group they have no other affiliation
- as a group they have no opinion on outside issues.
- as a group and as individuals they maintain personal anonymity
- as a group they are fully self-supporting.

“The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.” (Tradition Three.) Any such person is a member of AA if he or she says so and can attend meetings. In AA there are alcoholics who have stopped drinking a day at a time, sometimes for many years, and those who still work on stopping drinking. Most of us in AA attend several meetings a week, each one perhaps run by a different group (See also 1.6, ‘Home groups’.)

1.2 The difference between a ‘group’ and a ‘meeting’

The chief activity of any group is the holding of regularly scheduled meetings to help alcoholics recover. Some groups hold only one meeting, usually once a week, but others may run two or more meetings, perhaps at different locations and at different times. Much depends on local circumstances – a city centre group may have more meetings than one in a small town. To help spread the organisational load groups with several meetings may appoint people to look after each meeting, and this is dealt with in more detail in the section on Officers.

1.3 The meeting room

Meetings are held in many sorts of place, rented by the group for its meetings. You may find that the meeting is signposted by the AA logo being displayed near the entrance.

Some groups have ‘greeters’ to welcome those attending and to show them the way to the room. In the room there is usually a table for the chairperson and any speaker, with chairs arranged in front of it. Meetings can be large, with a hundred or so people, others as small as two or three, with anything in between.

On the walls many groups have posters showing the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, and there will be a notice reminding people of the importance of anonymity. There may well be a card stressing that it is important to remember that some present may have hearing difficulties. On a table there are likely to be pieces of AA literature which can be purchased, such as the Big Book, Starter Packs and other publications, together with the area’s ‘Where To Find’ list. Refreshments are usually available before the meeting, and offer an opportunity for chat.

1.4 Anonymity

Anonymity is important. AA members might *choose* to give their full names to others but personal anonymity leads to most introducing themselves with a phrase like “Good evening. I’m Chris and I’m an alcoholic.” No-one should ever reveal the names of other members to any third party. As the table card says: “Who you see here, what you hear here...when you leave here let it stay here.”

1.5 Newcomers

Tradition 5 tells us that the primary purpose of a group is to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This means that all newcomers should be warmly welcomed into a group. When a newcomer arrives some groups will change their planned business in order to concentrate on Step 1 and to try to make shares and other contributions as accessible as possible to the new member, who might be very nervous and upset. In some groups there is a person responsible for greeting newcomers and introducing them to other members. The AA booklet “Welcoming Newcomers to the Group” is aimed at assisting groups to carry the message to newcomers. (See the appendix of relevant literature.)

1.6 Home groups

Most members feel more ‘at home’ in one particular group than in others. There can be several reasons for this including the group’s location, the ‘feel’ of its meetings, or because it meets some specific need. This becomes the member’s ‘home group’ and this is the place where the person attends regularly, offers service and perhaps makes particular friendships. In AA we each have only one home group. Over time members of a home group get to know each other well, and the sense of ‘belonging’ grows both in group meetings and also in between them through members’ social meetings and telephone calls.

When attending meetings run by other groups the member takes part in the normal meetings but usually won't participate in business or policy decisions or any voting for officers. In the home group, however, the member participates in all aspects of the group's activities.

Offering service can start with helping with arranging the furniture, or with the washing up, and we can gain much from giving a little service whenever possible. There is more on how to give service in later sections of this booklet.

1.7 Where to find meetings

Groups in a geographical area such as a city or part of a county co-operate through the intergroup structure to draw up a list of their meetings known as a local 'Where To Find' pamphlet. This will list all meetings in the area and will have notes to help those looking for a particular sort of meeting or those needing certain facilities. You might see entries like:

City Centre Wednesday: 7.30 Women's Group, closed, St Michael's Church

City Centre Thursday: 7.30 Share meeting, closed, Library annexe (wheelchair access).

City Centre Friday: 7.30 Newcomers, open, Hospital Block 3 (hearing loop).

There is also a national directory listing all meetings in the UK and in the Continental European Region. This *Where To Find Great Britain and Continental Europe* is published annually by AA's General Service Office and is available for purchase from them or from a group's literature table. Some members keep a copy in the car when travelling around.

The Web Site of AA Great Britain has a good 'meeting finder' <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/AA-Meetings/Find-a-Meeting> The AA GB site also has a 'Chat Now' service, aimed mainly at newcomers and this link gives access: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/Newcomers>

Alcoholics who cannot attend local meetings may be able to join 'virtual meetings' which run on the Web. Members using these may wish to pay particular attention to on-line security and to anonymity.

When you are on holiday you can use these 'Where To Find' tools to get the addresses of local English language meetings. Alternatively, if you search online against "alcoholics anonymous" plus the name of the country or place you are in, many computer search engines will return details of local meetings. Look also for notices on hotel and holiday venue notice boards for details of AA meetings and for invitations to 'Friends of Bill W' or 'Friends of Dr. Bob' to get together

1.8 Types of meeting

Most groups within AA are open to all those who have a problem with alcohol, but there are also groups which offer an environment in which some members might find it easier to share their particular experiences. These include groups primarily for women, young alcoholics, atheists and agnostics, members from the LGBT community, and others. (See Section 9)

Meetings attended only by members of the Fellowship are known as 'closed' meetings. There are also 'open' meetings which can be attended by those who do not have a personal problem with alcohol but who wish to find out more about AA or who have been invited to experience an AA meeting

1.9 Speaker meetings

Many group meetings are 'speaker' meetings where a member or a visitor from another group is invited to spend say 20 minutes to half an hour telling members of their journey into sobriety, their 'experience, strength and hope'. This 'share' is followed by contributions from the other people present. A description of a typical 'speaker' meeting is given in Section 2

There are other types. 'Step' meetings may discuss each of the Twelve Steps; 'Big Book' ones talk about a selected passage from the 'Big Book'; 'round robins' may not have a main speaker but all present are invited to contribute a short 'share' if they so wish. Meetings aimed specially at newcomers may have discussions concentrating on Step 1 and on the first days and months of recovery.

1.10 Business meetings

There is often a chance at the start or end of any group meeting to mention briefly 'business' things – forthcoming AA events in the area, a report on what other AA bodies are doing and things about the organisation of the Group itself.

There are also times when a group will dedicate most or all of a meeting to business matters, where participation is usually for those who have made the group their home group, although a visitor from another group may be asked to chair the meeting or to provide special input. These business meetings can be of several sorts.

It is suggested that all groups hold regular 'conscience meetings' or 'inventory meetings' where the ways in which the group is carrying out its primary purpose of helping alcoholics into recovery are reviewed to see whether improvements can be made. A conscience meeting is an honest discussion of the group's strengths and weaknesses. Section 2 has a description of such a meeting.

Once a year groups are likely to hold a meeting to discuss the election of its officers and to review its operations including its finances. Some groups combine this with a conscience meeting.

Groups may decide to devote all or part of a regular meeting to specific business like discussing questions which have been submitted to AA's General Service Conference (see Section 6.5). They may also arrange public meetings to which people, including professionals whose work includes contact with

alcoholism, are invited to find out more about the Fellowship and what it can and cannot do.

1.11 Personal conduct

In recovery we try to be tolerant of each other's opinions, and to treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated. We accept that we do not wish to control others. This usually means that when we go to meetings we can find serenity and fellowship which help to sustain us until the next meeting.

With this in mind it is suggested that women coming to meetings should accept lifts only from other women, and men only from men, especially in early recovery. Young alcoholics should be pointed towards those with substantial sobriety who might act as their mentors.

Some people come into AA meetings unaware of which behaviours are appropriate and which are not. For example we don't interrupt when others are speaking in the meeting. We don't gossip about other members. Keeping quiet and listening helps us more than chatting or playing with a phone. Inappropriate behaviour or language that disrupts the group's ability to carry out our primary purpose, or which directly endangers those present, threatens unity and recovery.

If any problems arise they should be dealt with promptly by the chairperson and other group officers, and they should be discussed at conscience/inventory meetings.

Experience shows that honesty, selflessness and a spirit of tolerance enables groups to deal with problems, especially when they follow Tradition Twelve and "place principles before personalities."

The final report of the General Service Conference 1979 (Committee 1, Attraction by the Individual) contained the following statement:

"The importance of the individual member in drawing the suffering alcoholic to the way of recovery was stressed. By guarding his/her own behaviour, morals, dress, ethics,

tolerance, sympathy, compassion and understanding of all human beings [a member] carries the message or leaves a slur on the name of AA."

1.12 A group's officers

This is a brief introduction to the jobs you might find mentioned in most groups. More information is given later in Section 5 of this booklet.

Tradition Two says: *"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern"*

The group has officers who are trusted servants who have a sufficient period of sobriety. The group is their home group, and they are elected (or confirmed in post) each year at the group's annual general meeting. People are appointed for a fixed period in post. This ensures that there is rotation through the service posts, to give as many people as possible an opportunity to give service to the group, and to prevent any one person from monopolising a job.

The posts most often found in a group are Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, General Service Representative (GSR) and Literature Secretary. However there may well be other posts, for example for service in marking members' AA birthdays, greeting newcomers and ensuring that the group has tea, coffee and biscuits.

2 Examples of two sorts of meeting

2.1 A typical AA 'speaker' meeting

Meetings usually start and end at the advertised times. When the meeting is due to start the chairperson will ask for quiet. Members will be welcomed, particularly any newcomers. There may be a request for a few moments of silence so that we may collect our thoughts and remember the still suffering alcoholic. Usually the AA Preamble is read out. Then there may be a request for any items of AA business (such as reports from officers, or notification of AA events coming up soon).

This is frequently followed by someone giving a reading from the Big Book, perhaps a passage chosen by the main speaker. The chairperson will introduce the speaker, who will spend say twenty or thirty minutes talking about their drinking and recovery, their 'experience, strength and hope'. This is a personal story, and not in any way an official statement of AA policy or practice, since no one person can 'speak for AA'.

After thanking the speaker the chairperson may announce a short break in some groups and after this break, if there is one, any members who wish to speak are invited to do so. It's not a requirement that one should speak, and newcomers are often advised to listen rather than speak until they have been to a few meetings and feel more settled. When speaking, members are asked to focus on the subject of alcoholism rather than raise any other matters, about which AA has no view. The length of these 'shares from the floor' depends on local custom, and the size of the meeting, and there may be a gentle word from the chairperson if someone is speaking for too long or getting into topics not related to alcoholism.

Before the meeting comes to an end the chairperson will 'pass the pot' for contributions. (The suggestion is often made that each of us should put in 'the price of a pint' but contributions are at the discretion of each member, and there is no requirement to put in any money if you are new – or broke!). The money collected from members goes to pay the rent for

the meeting room, the purchase of AA literature for re-sale and other running costs, with any surplus being passed on to the local intergroup, which is made up of representatives of all groups in an area. (There is more information about AA's structure later in this pamphlet.)

At the close of the meeting some groups may ask someone to read the Promises, and then end the meeting with members joining in saying the Serenity Prayer.

Before and after the meeting group members will help to set out and clear furniture, make tea, collect cups and do the washing up. Anyone who wishes to help will be welcomed, and it's often a good 'ice-breaker' for people new to the meeting. It's also a good opportunity to chat to other members and to exchange contact details if one so wishes.

2.2 A typical group conscience meeting

In a group conscience or inventory meeting the group reflects on its primary purpose and how well or less well it is carrying this out. Sometimes a visitor with some years' sobriety from another group is asked to come to chair the meeting, to assist in making sure that the matters are discussed with honesty and candour. The following are examples of questions which the group might ask itself:

- what is the primary purpose of the group?
- what more can the group do to achieve this purpose?
- are newcomers made to feel welcome?
- is the group attracting a wide cross-section of people?
- is the physical setting appropriate for all?
- is the meeting structure satisfactory?
- do members stay or move on to other groups?
- is there a good opportunity for all members to speak and participate in group activities?

- are group officers selected with care, and with consideration given to the responsibility of being a trusted servant?
- does the group play its full part in intergroup and other AA activities?

There could be more questions, depending on the group and its circumstances. It might become appropriate to discuss how the group deals with problems of conduct, The group might need to discuss moving to a different location, or whether to change the start and end times of meetings. After the meeting is over it is the responsibility of the officers and members to keep in mind and act on the views of the meeting, to which all members should have been asked to contribute.

A Declaration of Unity.

***This we owe to AA's future; to place our common welfare
first; to keep our Fellowship united.
For on AA unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to
come***

Anon: AA's 35th Anniversary International Convention, Miami

3 A note on sponsorship

“Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: “You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!”

He found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need A.A. was born. The word “sponsor” was not used then; the Twelve Steps had not been written; but Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob, who in turn safeguarded his own sobriety by sponsoring countless other alcoholics. Through sharing, both of our co-founders discovered, their own sober lives could be enriched beyond measure.”

Questions and Answers on Sponsorship (Copyright © 1976, 1983 Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.)

In some ways the AA group in itself acts as a sponsor to the newcomer and even to others, as the unity, strength and example of its members help others through the programme of recovery.

However, it is suggested very strongly that each member should seek sponsorship from a member of the Fellowship with more experience of recovery, someone who is following the practice and principles of AA’s 12 Step recovery programme with the help of their own sponsor and is willing to help others to grow in sobriety.

Finding an AA sponsor is a significant act. We are looking for a person who has “something we want” and upon whom we will lean heavily, especially in early recovery and in difficult times.

So, we look for a person who seems to be comfortable and serious about their recovery, someone who has been through the Twelve Steps has a sponsor themselves and has a few years of sobriety. They will be able to guide us through the Twelve Steps. A sponsor should be a person with whom it is

easy to talk freely and in confidence about both personal and Fellowship matters. Above all, our sponsor will be someone whose suggestions we are prepared to follow and whom we can trust to be there for us when needed.

Many members find sponsors in their home groups, but that is not necessary. Also, new members are often unsure about themselves and others, and so find someone to act as a temporary sponsor until they are a bit further into recovery. It is suggested that usually members should seek sponsorship from someone of their own gender.

Over time the relationship between us and our sponsor is likely to change, and we end up in some ways sponsoring each other, sharing the good and bad times in our lives and helping each other resist any temptation to drink.

“I understand that service is a vital part of recovery but I often wonder, “What can I do?”. Simply start with what I have today! I look around to see where there is a need. Are the ashtrays full? Do I have hands and feet to empty them? Suddenly I’m involved! The best speaker may make the worst coffee; the member who’s best with newcomers may be unable to read; the one willing to clear up may make a mess of the bank account – yet every one of these people and jobs is essential to an active group. The miracle of service is this: when I use what I have, I find that there is more available to me than I realized before.”

Daily Reflections p. 32

4 Giving service

This section is quoted from the Introduction to *The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017*.

A quote from our co-founder Bill W on General Service in AA:

“An AA service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer – ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.” (Pass It On, page 347)

4.1 Growing into Service (from the AA pamphlet *Growing into Service*.)

“Alcoholics Anonymous is more than a set of principles; it is a Fellowship of alcoholics in action. Service is at the centre of every AA concept and activity. It is as fundamental to AA as abstinence is to sobriety. Without this giving of oneself to another, there would be no Fellowship. This desire to serve improves recovery.

As newcomers, we see people giving time, energy and love in the service of the Fellowship, and it is suggested that we too should become involved. Those of us who have done this will tell you of the enormous benefits we have received by willingly stepping into service. A great paradox of AA is that rewards come when we begin to forget ourselves”.

4.2 What are these rewards?

Simple service tasks have helped to develop confidence, a belief in one’s own value and opinions, self-respect and self-worth. We have all found that participating in service activities has helped our recovery. Everyone in AA has some contribution to make. There are so many ways of practising our Twelfth Step. Some are talented in hospital or prison work,

others can write to loners or answer telephones and some have abilities which lie in committee activities or sponsorship. But service is not just for a small number of experienced people. Each one of us has been surprised at the abilities which have emerged with a willingness to grow in service.

4.3 How do we become involved?

AA's Twelfth Step "Carrying the Message" is the basic service that our Fellowship gives; it is our principal aim, and the main reason for our existence. We must carry AA's message otherwise we ourselves may fall into decay and those who have not been given the truth may die. Carrying AA's message is therefore the heart of our Third Legacy of Service. Any action which helps AA to function as a whole is service. Where better to begin than in our own home Group?

4.4 In the group

It is as a result of Twelfth Step work that a group is formed and we discover that we are a small part of a great whole. Regular attendance at our group meeting is in itself a form of service. Group meetings are necessary for maintaining sobriety. Love and effort is needed to keep the group growing and maintained. For some of us it is not always possible to do individual Twelfth Step work but for all of us regularly attending meetings, it is possible to serve within the group by helping to set up the meeting rooms; we can arrive early and help to:

- Put up the slogan signs
- Display the AA literature
- Arrange the chairs
- Greet members, especially new ones, as they arrive
- Help maintain the tradition of self-support
- Make the tea or coffee
- After the meeting, help wash up and clear up

The last two give a great service to everyone yet give us as individuals so much in return, for we all know the shared experiences gained during "washing up therapy" when

shyness seems to evaporate. Perhaps here we feel our first sense of purpose and belonging.

4.5 Service to newcomers at group meetings

A warm smile of greeting can make newcomers feel welcome. A cup of coffee or tea also releases tension. Giving your name and sharing your experiences on the spot can make them feel they are in the right place. Giving your telephone number, and taking theirs in order to call them, may not seem like service but where would we all be today if someone had not done this for us?

These little efforts on our part are sure steps into responsibility, reliability, and confidence. They are also steps into loving, the sort of loving that makes no demands, asks for no rewards, and fulfils our sense of purpose.

As we grow in sobriety, we may be asked to become a group officer, described in our Twelve Traditions as a trusted servant. Each group needs to have certain jobs done in order to function smoothly and responsibly.

The symbol of AA is three-sided: Recovery, Unity, and Service. With Unity we are given Recovery; as Recovery develops we give ourselves in Service, creating deeper Unity and creating for ourselves deeper Recovery. The corners are forever turned; the road is always before us as we need to be continually furthering our progress into sobriety. Along this route we have all benefited from the love, compassion, and understanding incorporated in this three-sided symbol. Let us all, therefore, give these away in service to others in order that we ourselves may continue to grow, and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous will remain forever steadfast.

“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.”

Alcoholics Anonymous p. 89

5 A group's officers and finances

5.1 The officers

This is a brief introduction to the jobs you might find mentioned in most groups. Each group might have a slightly different structure, according to the group conscience and the needs of the group.

Tradition Two says: *“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern”*

The group has officers who are trusted servants. The group is their home group, and they are elected (or confirmed in post) each year at the group's annual general meeting. People are appointed for a fixed period in post. This ensures that there is rotation through the service posts to give as many people as possible an opportunity to give service to the group, and to prevent any one person from monopolising a job.

It is strongly suggested that no member should be asked to give service as an officer until they have been in sobriety for a recommended period of time and that no-one should undertake any service load which might endanger their recovery.

The **Chairperson** of the meeting might be an elected Chair or might be someone whom the Secretary has asked to run the meetings for a month or longer. In some Groups the Chair might be elected to co-ordinate all the group's activities and its several meetings. In other groups this may not be needed and the **Secretary** will be the group's principal officer. The person chairing a meeting might then be the Secretary or someone invited by the Secretary to find visiting speakers for the next month or so. At the end of that time the Secretary will find someone else to take over the chair. The Secretary also keeps records of business meetings and generally ensures that meetings take place at the advertised times.

There is a **Treasurer**, who keeps records of the income from the pot, banks the cash, pays bills and presents accounts on a regular basis.

A group's officers may have assistants when the group runs several meetings on different days, to spread the service and the load, and some large groups have small committees to share and co-ordinate the tasks.

Every geographical area of Great Britain and most in Continental Europe have an AA intergroup, to which each registered group in the area may send a representative. (See Section 6.3.) This person is the group's **General Service Representative** (GSR). At intergroup level he or she will report on what the group is doing, and will pass back to the group information on what other parts of AA are doing, requests for help with filling vacant posts, assisting with Conventions and so forth. The GSR also ensures that the group discusses the questions and literature proposals going to AA's annual General Service Conference (mentioned in Section 6.5).

Other officers may be the **Literature Secretary** (selling and replenishing the group's AA literature) and people doing other service which the group has decided needs specific officers to look after things. It could include those keeping a list of Twelfth Step responders or lists of people willing to do telephone service, and making sure that 'Share' is available (and seeking contributions to it). One of the jobs may well be keeping the 'Birthday Book', a diary of the date on which each home group member had the last drink, so that the group can mark the passing years.

There may be officers whose job is to welcome newcomers, or to make sure that there are refreshments. Another often forgotten but vital service post is held by the keyholder who unlocks and prepares the meeting room, then closes it afterwards.

5.2 Financing the group

Tradition Seven tells us: *“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”*

A group’s income is effectively the contributions which members put in the pot. The catchphrase most used about contributions is that one should ‘put the price of a pint in the pot’. Other income can come from the sale of AA literature.

The group’s Treasurer looks after the income and expenditure and provides regular reports to the group on its finances. It is suggested that each group has its own bank or building society account, and that cheques drawn on the account should need to be signed by two officers of the group. (If there is no group bank account then money can be paid direct to the intergroup.)

The main use of the income is to pay the running costs of the group. These include the rent for the meeting room and any associated costs. Because AA does not accept outside contributions, each group pays for its room either as a rental payment or a donation, even if a church or other organisation offers free accommodation for meetings.

Many groups pay for the materials used to provide refreshments at meetings. It may be that certain members will find that carrying out some service responsibilities incurs costs and these may be refunded by the group. (However, groups wishing to run social events and so forth should not use the group’s money for such purposes.)

Income from selling AA literature is usually balanced by the need to re-stock the literature table by buying material from General Service Office, and probably won’t provide much in the way of a surplus towards the general income of the group.

Because the level of income from contributions can vary from time to time a group should keep a ‘prudent reserve’ in hand to meet costs when income is lower than usual. This is often equal to keeping in hand enough money to pay the next rent bill, and to meet a couple of months’ other costs.

From time to time a group may build up more money in hand than is needed for this 'prudent reserve' and then the group decides how much of the surplus can be sent to the local intergroup, where it is used to finance more AA activities and service.

If a group cannot cover its own costs then it usually urges members to increase their contributions. Failing that working, the group will need to close down as it is not fully supporting itself.

“The moment Twelfth Step work forms a group, a discovery is made – that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns on each member that he is but a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship. He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.”

*As Bill Sees It, p.9,
quoting from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.*

6 How the group links to other parts of the Fellowship

The structure of AA Great Britain is shown as an inverted triangle, as shown in the diagram on the middle two pages of this leaflet.

6.1 Introduction

In the book, *“Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age”*, Bill W wrote about ‘Mr. Grassroots’ – your ‘average Joe’ member of AA. The structure of AA in Great Britain is built on the thousands of Grassroots who carry the AA message in their groups. The home group is a place of introduction to, and sponsorship into, service in the wider Fellowship – intergroup, region, Conference and the Board of Trustees. This structure is not built on what Conference Delegates or Board Trustees do at Conference and it’s not built on those people doing sterling work on the General Service Board; the work people do in these areas is vitally important, but where do they come from? The Twelve Concepts of World Service (see section 14) show they come from the Grassroots and how the interrelationship of trust and delegated authority at any level of service, which is ultimately, exercised at the annual General Service Conference, works. We are not ‘us’ and they are not ‘them’. We are one.

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017 contains comprehensive information on the matters outlined in this section.

6.2 The structure of AA Great Britain

Keeping it simple we can say that there are about 4,500 registered AA groups in Great Britain and registered English language groups in Continental Europe. Each group in an area can be represented by their General Service Representative at a local area meeting called an intergroup, of which there are about 130 in Great Britain and mainland

Europe. The intergroups in a geographical region (like South East England, for example) send elected representatives to their region meeting. Any member of a group can attend these intergroup and regional meetings as a visitor, to see what they do. There are 16 regions. Each one has a member serving on the AA General Service Board, and elects six people to attend the annual AA General Service Conference.

All the parts of the AA structure have members of the Fellowship giving service as trusted servants, and the diagram shows that the autonomous Groups can make their voices heard all the way down to the Board.

In general, the member who wants to give service will find that this will start at the level of his or her home group, and might lead on (with increasing time in sobriety) to other parts of the structure. Full details are in *The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain*. 'Shares' from members who have given service at various levels are given in Section 7. They show how starting to serve one's group can lead to other service posts, and how by giving it away the recovering alcoholic can keep a strong sobriety.

All service posts have a fixed period in office, to encourage rotation and so to encourage as many members as possible to offer service. The periods of service in post vary but many jobs are for a maximum of three years. As the service posts get perhaps more demanding so the recommended minimum time in continuous sobriety before taking up such a post increases. For example, the main officers in a group and an intergroup are likely to have been sober for at least two years whilst intergroup Regional Representatives and the region's officers are likely to have three years' sobriety. A region's Conference Delegates are expected to have been continuously sober for at least five years, and Board Trustees will have at least ten years' continuous sobriety. This is done with the intention of ensuring that a member's recovery is sound enough to allow the member to cope happily with the work of the service post. The principle is always that one's personal recovery comes first.

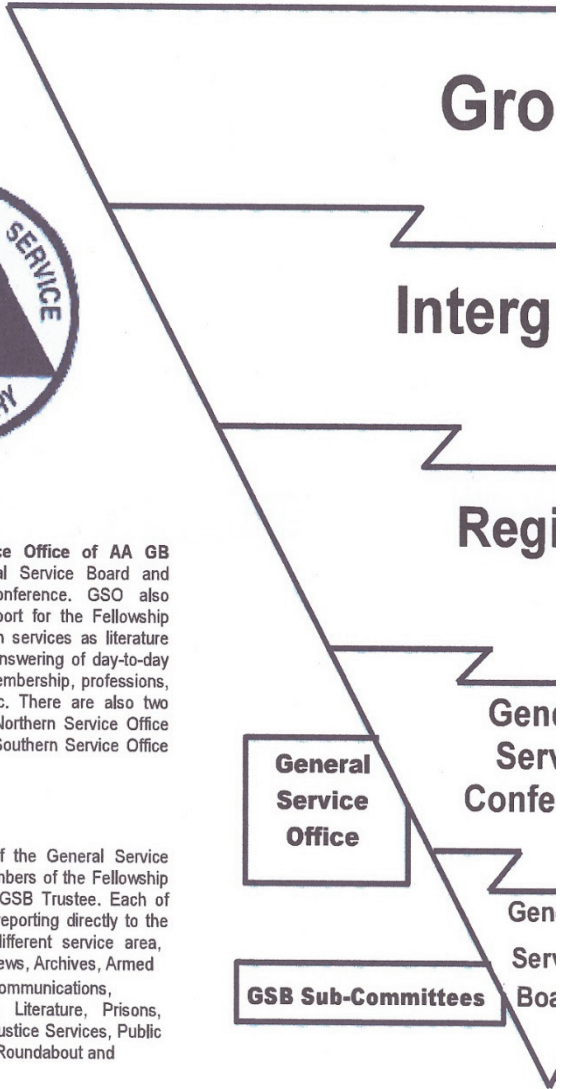
The Service Structure of Alcohol

'Our leaders are but trusted servan



The General Service Office of AA GB supports the General Service Board and General Service Conference. GSO also provides central support for the Fellowship as a whole with such services as literature distribution and the answering of day-to-day enquiries from the membership, professions, media and the public. There are also two satellite offices; the Northern Service Office in Glasgow and the Southern Service Office in London.

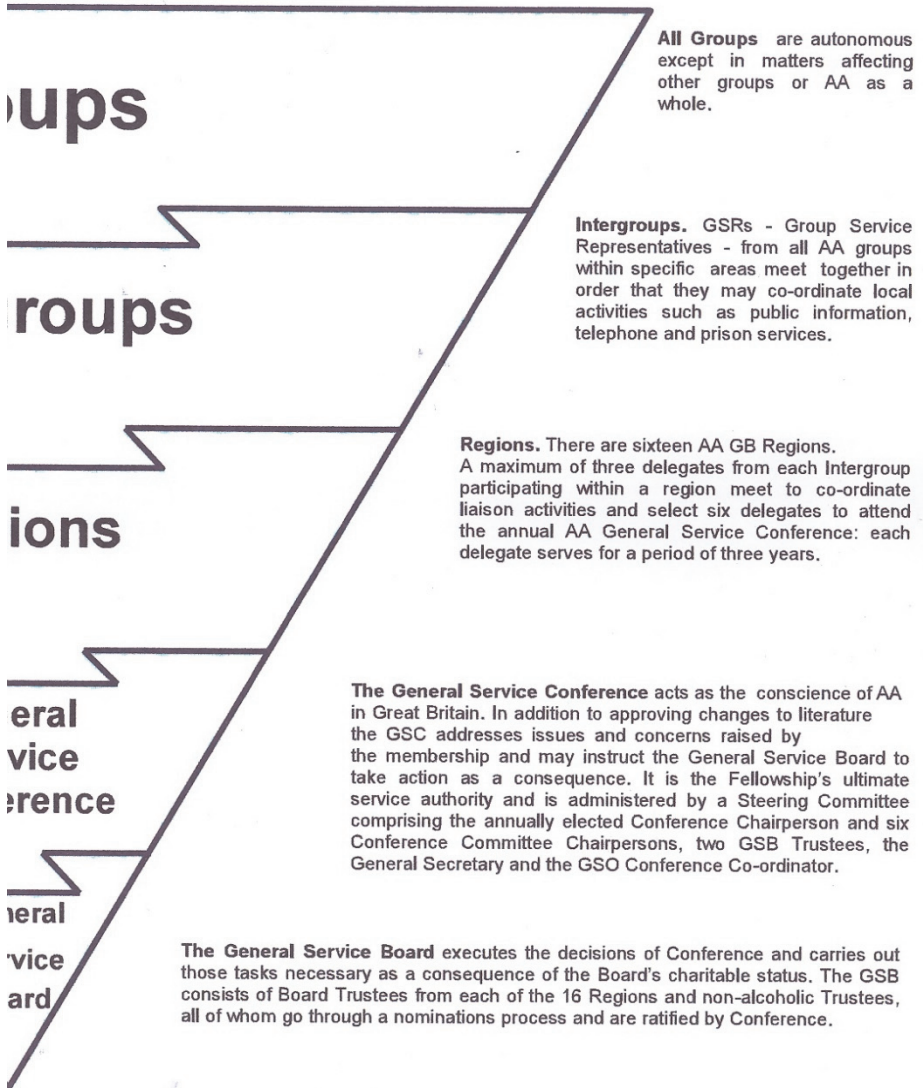
A Sub-committee of the General Service Board comprises members of the Fellowship and is chaired by a GSB Trustee. Each of the sub-committees, reporting directly to the GSB, addresses a different service area, such as AA Service News, Archives, Armed Services, Electronic Communications, Employment, Health, Literature, Prisons, Probation / Criminal Justice Services, Public Information, SHARE, Roundabout and Telephone Service.



'This we owe to AA's future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fell

Politics Anonymous (Great Britain)

...ants; they do not govern' - Tradition 2



Fellowship united. For on AA unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come'.

6.3 Intergroups

Intergroups bring together representatives of all the AA groups in their area. Some include all of a county, others a part of a big city. Their areas are decided partly by geography and partly by the history of the growth of the Fellowship. In Continental Europe and in sparsely populated parts of Great Britain the area covered by an intergroup might be quite large. In one example of an intergroup we might see the General Service Representatives from 30 or so AA groups meeting together with the intergroup officers every two months or so.

Each group's GSR is a member of the intergroup and should make sure that their group is made aware of matters under discussion, forthcoming events and regional matters talked about at Intergroup. The GSR should also ensure that their group's views are presented to intergroup when necessary.

Intergroup officers are elected at an annual general meeting of the intergroup, or confirmed in post if they have more time in their period of service. The intergroup may elect not just a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer (and perhaps a small committee) but also intergroup liaison officers to organise public information liaison activities to ensure that the AA message is spread outside the Fellowship to the general public. This includes organisations involved in prisons, probation, health, employment and other areas. Often AA groups are asked (through their GSR) to encourage members to help with general or specific activities being run by these officers.

Each intergroup also elects up to three members to attend meetings of its local region and these Regional Representatives act as a two-way channel of communication and co-operation with the other intergroups which are within the region. In addition, the intergroup liaison officers will be working with their region counterparts to help give effective service to (for example) prisons or health workers across the whole region.

Often intergroups organise AA conventions and other events such as forums on particular topics, and co-operate with any such activities run by the region.

Groups which encounter problems that they themselves cannot solve through conscience meetings can ask their intergroup to consider the difficulty and to suggest some answers. Any differences between groups can also be discussed in the intergroup.

An intergroup's income is based on contributions from its member groups, and managed rather like group finances, but there are more officers needing to submit budgets for liaison activity and claiming justifiable expenses for carrying these out. (It is usual for big activities like the running of a convention to have their own budget and to be required to be self-supporting.) Any surplus (after retaining a prudent reserve sufficient to cover about three months' expenditure) is sent to the region in which the intergroup lies.

6.4 Regions

Great Britain is divided into 15 AA regions, each comprised of an average of 8 intergroups. There is also one region for the Intergroups in Continental Europe. They hold meetings called Regional Assemblies, usually four times a year. The Assembly includes up to three representatives of each intergroup in the region as well as the region's officers and Conference Delegates, and the Board Member for the Region.

The primary purpose of the region is to promote communication and co-operation between neighbouring intergroups. It also provides a framework for the officers in intergroups to work closely with those doing similar service in other Intergroups.

The region's officers include its Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It will elect members to act as regional liaison officers for the various service areas like prisons, health and employment. Often these liaison officers will have had some relevant experience at intergroup level.

Information comes to the region from its groups and intergroups about what the parts of the Fellowship are doing to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic through liaison and other service. This information is passed on to the General Service Board in a report from each meeting of the region. Regions also serve as channels for information to flow from Conference and other bodies back to intergroups and to groups through these elected officers.

Often regions will organise special events such as conventions, and forums on particular topics. Most also hold annual workshops at which those in liaison work, or with other responsibilities such as Conference Delegates, or Intergroup Treasurers, can meet together to share and gain experience.

Regional liaison officers in each service area (like Health or Telephones) have the responsibility of attending the annual meeting of regional officers in that branch of service. These meetings are held in the General Service Office, York, and encourage unity between the regions and the sharing of their varied experiences in the provision of the service.

Each region is entitled to send six delegates to the General Service Conference of AA, and these people will be members of the Regional Assembly, as will any alternates elected. The member of the General Service Board for a region also attends the Assembly.

The income of a region is from the monies passed to it by Intergroups. The region agrees a budget and each meeting will receive a statement of the current financial situation. Region will pay the justifiable expenses of its members who attend Conference and officers who incur other costs on behalf of the Fellowship. The region holds back a prudent reserve and any surplus money is sent to the AA General Service Office to further carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

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6.5 The General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain

“The General Service Conference is the practical means by which the group conscience in Britain can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole.”

(from The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017)

The annual General Service Conference is attended by six Conference Delegates from each of the 16 regions, and the members of the General Service Board. It is the practical means by which the group conscience can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole. This is achieved by:

- **the Board Trustees giving reports to Conference** on the year’s work in each area of service and on the Fellowship’s financial position.
- **approval of new literature** to be published by AA Great Britain and available to all the Fellowship, and of proposals for changes to its existing literature. (Any proposals for new material and for amendments are publicised to all groups and on the AA GB Web Site well before Conference.)
- **addressing issues and concerns via Questions for Conference** Questions can be raised by any individual member, group, intergroup, region or Board Trustee on any issue that is felt to be of importance or concern to the Fellowship. The Conference topics/questions approved by the Conference Steering Committee are widely publicised in *AA Service News*, by posting them out to Group Secretaries, and on the AA GB website. (Rejected submissions are published on the site, with reasons for their rejection.)

It is suggested that each AA group might discuss the Conference Questions, and literature proposals, at a group meeting. The GSR then reports its views to a special meeting of the local intergroup, usually attended by one or more of the six Regional Delegates to Conference. The Conference

Questions and the AA groups' responses are also discussed at intergroup and region. Thus, when they attend Conference, the Regional Delegates are fully aware of the opinions of the members of the Fellowship in their region and can carry forward to Conference the collective conscience of those they serve. A report on each Conference is circulated widely within AA GB, and put onto the AA GB web site.

6.6 The General Service Board

The General Service Board consists of a member nominated by each of the 16 regions, the Chair and other officers and also non-alcoholic members who can contribute because of their special experiences or background. Members of the Board are called Trustees. The Board acts as the executive body for AA Great Britain Limited, which is a registered charity and subject to charity law. (Trustees must not only have wide experience and knowledge of AA service and structures and at least ten years' continuous sobriety, but must also be eligible to hold office under charity law.)

The Board implements Conference decisions. It acts as the custodian of the Twelve Traditions of AA and ensures that they are preserved and that they are adhered to within AA Great Britain. The Board still acts as a Group of trusted servants and does not govern.

There is an Executive Committee to deal with carrying on the Board's work between meetings and to act as its liaison with the General Service Office.

Each of the service areas (like Health or Prisons or Employment) is guided by a Trustee on the Board to whom is delegated responsibility for looking after that area. Often there is a sub-committee of the Board charged with furthering the objectives of each service area, and anyone in the Fellowship who has the requisite length of sobriety and relevant experience can submit a nomination to be considered for membership of these committees.

It is through the Board and its members that AA Great Britain sets up and maintains links with other AA bodies internationally in the world Fellowship.

6.7 The General Service Office (GSO)

Under Tradition 8 AA may employ specialist workers in its service centres, and the staff of the General Service Office in York are mainly employed by the Fellowship. It takes full-time staff to be the centre of communication for 4500 or more registered AA Groups, 130 or so Intergroups and 16 Regions in Great Britain and Continental Europe.

As *The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017* puts it:

“The GSO serves as the central point for co-ordinating, storing and passing on the wealth of AA experience that has been gathered over the years and provides a wide variety of services to the Fellowship. It is from GSO that Conference approved literature is published and distributed, where the resources of AA are managed and the national Archives of AA in Great Britain are housed.

The main functions centred in the GSO are the publication and distribution of literature, financial controls, Group registry, production of SHARE and Roundabout, co-ordination of national events, professional exhibitions and conferences, the co-ordination of AA’s national Conference, maintaining service databases, for example the prison sponsor listing, supporting and organising the work of the General Service Board.

It is the responsibility of AA groups to pass on to GSO details of their meetings and the contact details of their officers, otherwise the national ‘Where to Find’ and the GSO mailing lists used to circulate *AA Service News* and other information will be out of date.

There are two small satellite offices providing local support, the Northern Service Office in Glasgow and the Southern Service Office in London.

6.8 AA and other organisations

As it says in The Preamble “AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution.” The Fellowship co-operates with many other organisations but is not affiliated with any. Sometimes AA will have Al-Anon and/or Alateen speakers at ‘open’ events but these are separate bodies which provide support for those whose lives are or have been affected by someone’s drinking.

Some AA meetings are held in treatment centres and similar places but they are only run in co-operation with them and are self-supporting. There are AA meetings in prisons, and the Fellowship co-operates with other bodies like probation, hospitals and social workers, but remains separate from them and their organisations.

6.9 Questions to ask ourselves

Without group service, and sponsorship into it, we cannot have any of the other parts of the AA structure. Remember that members who do service in all the parts of the structure sit next to you at your AA meetings.

The Home Group

Have I got a home group?

Do I give service to my home group?

Have I a sponsor who has introduced me to service, our Third Legacy?

Do I know that the Three Legacies are Unity, Recovery and Service?

Intergroup

Do I know what happens at intergroup?

Who can I ask about these meetings?

Have I attended as an observer?

Why do people not go to intergroup meetings?

Who does go to intergroup meetings?

Can I give service through intergroup?

Region

Do I know what happens at Regional Assemblies?

Who can I ask about region meetings?

Have I attended as an observer?

Do I know who the Board Trustee for my region is?

Can I give service through my region?

“It is not only to the few that we owe the remarkable developments in our unity and in our ability to carry A.A.’s message everywhere. It is to the many, indeed, it is to the labors of all of us that we owe these prime blessings.”

As Bill Sees It p. 155

7 Two 'service' shares

If you have a story to tell regarding your journey in service write to AA Service News and share it with others in the fellowship.

Susan

My name's Susan and I'm an alcoholic. I went to my first meeting ten years ago and I was scared, ill and shaking. The meeting made little sense, but I went back to more meetings that week. Slowly things began to sink in and I listened.

I really liked going to one meeting in particular because most there seemed to be happy in recovery, and I went to it every week. Still frightened by life I hesitated but then found the courage to stay and help with collecting cups and washing up. The others doing this service chatted and made me feel part of the group. It soon became my home group, and I found my sponsor there, someone who was following the AA programme and who seemed to have found happiness and a new life without alcohol.

Over the next year or so I and my sponsor had worked through the Steps and the Traditions and I was changing – gaining confidence and serenity. As the quality of my sobriety improved my sponsor 'suggested' – quite strongly – that I should do more service, as she believed that giving service reinforced recovery. We went together to meetings of intergroup and region as visitors so that I could see how AA service operated in them.

As well as taking on service in my home group I listened to our GSR passing on the word that members were needed to work with the intergroup's Health Liaison Officer, even just by taking AA posters and literature to doctors' surgeries. I'd always felt that it was important to get the AA message to health professionals, so that they could pass on information about us to the still suffering alcoholic, so I got in touch with the Liaison Officer and volunteered to help out.

Over time we formed a Health Team to spread the load, and talked to nurses and doctors in many places. When the liaison officer was soon due to rotate out of office I was coming up to having three years of sobriety and (after chatting to my sponsor) agreed to stand for the post. As Intergroup HLO I attended workshops at region, and the Regional Health Liaison Officer set up an e-mail list so that we Intergroup officers could share our experiences with him and with each other. Eventually he sponsored me into taking over the regional Health role, and this led to me working closely with more people in the Fellowship at regional and national level through the network of the annual meetings of regional liaison officers. We were all united in our desire to get the message out.

Throughout my time giving service I've experienced much which has had a big impact on my recovery. I haven't been able to control the outcome of my talks and visits, and I have just had to go with the knowledge that we had done our best to pass on the message. We couldn't *make* people listen.

Doing the jobs in the AA environment has made me remember that it's not about me and my status but about working with others, with humility, to try to help the alcoholic. When I've got irritated with someone it's taught me the importance of placing principles before personalities. I've had to bite my tongue at times, because AA has no opinion on outside issues. The Serenity Prayer helped me, especially to accept things that I could not change.

Sometimes I've been dispirited by what I saw as a lack of visible progress, but then I've had a call from a doctor to ask if I can guide a patient to a meeting, and it's given me a great uplift and a determination to keep on carrying the message. And I still enjoy collecting cups and doing the washing up.

John

My name's John and I'm an alcoholic. I found the Fellowship and recovery at the same time as Susan did, and we've both gone forward together. But I chose service along a different path. I missed a lot of school and I don't like writing, much, so I looked for service where that was fine. I've been a Telephone Responder for a few years now, and I also Twelfth Step the still suffering alcoholic when they call to ask for help.

On the phone and when chatting I know that I can say what it was like for me when I was drinking. Sometimes the message gets through, and sometimes it doesn't, but it's a great feeling to go to a meeting and to see someone I took to a meeting for the first time a year or more ago. Often there's a big change. They are better in health and happier. Just seeing people in the rooms after I've talked to them a bit back does great things for my recovery because I know that they needed someone there with a message and I was lucky enough to be around for them.

Like Susan I give service in our home group, and we wash up together. I also get the keys to open the room and close up afterwards, and I try to chat to newcomers and give them my phone number. It all helps to keep me sober for today.

I am responsible... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Al S, AA International Convention, Toronto, 1965

8 A brief history of AA in Great Britain

- 1935:** AA was born on 10 June 1935, following the first meeting between our co-founders Bill W and Dr Bob in Akron, USA;
- 1939:** publication in the US of “Alcoholics Anonymous”, the Big Book.

- 1947:** the first AA meeting in Great Britain took place in London.
- 1948:** the first telephone Help Line was set up, and in the same year the first provincial meeting took place in Manchester.
- 1949:** the first AA meetings were held in Scotland.
- 1950:** Following on from correspondence starting in November 1948, about reshaping AA to suit the British temperament, Bill W and his wife Lois visited UK in the summer. As a result, the American Foundation offered 1500 Big Books, and Bill waived his rights to royalties in GB, so that AA-GB could set up its own publishing company.
- 1951:** the first meeting was held in Wales. (In that same year AA’s first General Service Conference was held in New York.)
- 1954:** AA-GB published its 1st Edition of the Big Book.
- 1960:** more than 100 AA groups were registered in England.
- 1981:** more than 1500 groups were registered in Great Britain, in 80 intergroups and 14 regions;
- 1989:** Continental Europe Region became part of the GB Service Structure.
- 1997:** 50th Anniversary of AA in Great Britain. National Convention held in Blackpool. Groups in Great Britain number 3,279, 15 Regions and 118 Intergroups
- 2017:** 4484 AA groups were registered in GB numbered, spread over 16 regions and 127 intergroups.

9 Further information

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017 ***The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017.***

These booklets provide much information and are strongly recommended to you. The Structure Handbook covers in detail all the organisational parts of AA from the group to the General Service Board and more. The Service Handbook starts from information about how to get into service and then gives details about all the service areas in AA. Both Handbooks should be available at your group's meeting.

The **AA Great Britain Web Site** <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk> has a great deal of material for members and for the public. Many of the items listed below can be purchased through its on-line shop or read on line, as can past copies of *AA Service News*. The site provides information about where to find meetings; the 'Chat Now' service; Conferences past and current, and many other things for newcomers and for those further into recovery.

More on individual sections in this pamphlet

1 Your AA group

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017
12th Step Starter Pack
Understanding Anonymity
Welcoming a Newcomer to the Group
The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA
'The Home Group': AA Service News Spring 2016,
Online Safety
AA Business Meetings, the Group Conscience and
Group Conscience Meetings

3 Sponsorship

Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered

4 Giving service

The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017
Growing into Service
Hints and Suggestions for 12th Steppers
The AA GB CD (disc)

5 A group's officers and finances

The Rewards of being a GSR

The Pot (about Fellowship funding generally)

The Group Treasurer's Cash Book

6 How a group links to other parts of the Fellowship

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017

How AA members co-operate with professionals

A Message for Professionals

Speaking at non-AA Meetings

The Role and Function of Conference

How to Submit a Topic or Question for Conference

8 A brief history of AA in Great Britain

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain pp 2-11

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age

To view AA GB's history in more detail see: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/Archives/Timeline>

Other useful material

This is AA (for the public, but generally useful)

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Twelve Traditions Checklist

Twelve Concepts Checklist

Living Sober

Literature for specific audiences and needs

Younger People in AA

A Message For Young People

Too Young?

AA and the Armed Services

Prison and Alcohol

AA and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic

LGBT Voices

The "God" Word: Agnostic and Atheist Members in AA

AA for the Older Alcoholic

Support for the Hearing Impaired

The AA Member – Medications and Other drugs

All the works mentioned are 'Conference Approved' AA publications (unless attributed elsewhere) and are available from General Service Office if they are not on your group's literature table.

10 AA's Co-Founders' Three Legacies

At the beginning of this pamphlet we described the AA symbol: a triangle within a circle: the sides of that triangle are labelled with AA's Co-Founders' Three Legacies to our Fellowship:

“Bill’s idea was that the co-founders’ First Legacy to AA was Recovery, embodied in the Big Book, in the Steps, and in person-to-person Twelfth Step work.

The Second Legacy to AA was Unity. This Bill had realised when he said, “We can do together what I cannot do alone” – it was vital that AA’s stay together. To insure AA’s unity, Bill had written the Twelve Traditions.

And now, with his penchant for symbolism, he had coined a third term to make the AA legacies three in number. The Third Legacy was – what else? – Service. The general service conference would be the means by which the Fellowship would be autonomous, operating through the instrument of a truly democratic, representational, elected form of self-government.

The Third Legacy, as defined by Bill: “...an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer – ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.”

Pass It On p.347

When a new man or woman walks through our doors for the first time, they may feel alone, confused, desperate, and weak. It is now that our three legacies of Unity, Service and Recovery come into full swing. We are strong as a group and become stronger by passing on to them the message that we too were once like they are now, but our own experience shows that recovery – and vastly more than that – is possible. They become stronger in recovery because of our unity. In

essence, AA becomes stronger because of them, because what makes us strong, as individuals and as a Fellowship, is when we take the actions suggested for Unity, Service, and Recovery.

Those are the Steps, Traditions and AA's Concepts, which follow in sections 11 – 14:

“We think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have helped others to recover. What greater cause could there be for rejoicing than this?”

Alcoholics Anonymous p. 132

11 The Twelve Steps

- 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

12 The Twelve Traditions

- 1** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
- 2** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- 3** The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
- 4** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
- 5** Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- 6** An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7** Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8** Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non- professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
- 9** AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10** Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

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

"The life of each A.A. and of each group is built around our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We know that the penalty for extensive disobedience to these principles is death for the individual and dissolution for the group. But an even greater force for A.A.'s unity is our compelling love for our fellow members and for our principles."

As Bill Sees It p.273

13 The Twelve Traditions (long form)

Our AA experience has taught us that:

1 Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

2 For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

3 Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

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

5 Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6 Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to AA, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such

facilities ought not to use the AA name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, AA managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside AA—and medically supervised. While an AA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An AA group can bind itself to no one.

7 The AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated AA purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8 Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual AA Twelfth Step work is never to be paid for.

9 Each AA group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our AA General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our AA Tradition and the receivers of voluntary AA contributions by which we maintain our AA General Service Office at New

York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the AA Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in AA are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10 No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11 Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA 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.

14 The Twelve Concepts for World Service in Great Britain

1 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

2 When, in 1995, the British AA groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our services and thereby made the Conference - excepting for any change in the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter - the actual voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain.

3 As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the groups, the Conference, the General Service Board and its General Service Office, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of service with a traditional "Right of Decision."

4 Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation," taking care that each classification or group of our servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

5 Throughout our service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

6 On behalf of AA, in Great Britain, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and

finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain).

7 The Conference recognizes that the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the General Service Board (Great Britain) are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the British service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the AA purse for its final effectiveness.

8 The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities:

(a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They directly manage these affairs.

(b) But with respect to the executive services provided by the General Service Office, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to appoint staff who are charged with carrying out their policies.

9 Good service leaders, with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.

10 Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority - the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, by appropriate charters or by legal instruments.

11 While the Trustees, acting together as the General Service Board (Great Britain) hold final responsibility for AA's service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible committees, service executives, staffs and consultants. Therefore the composition of committees and service assemblies, the personal qualifications of their

members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

12 General Warranties of Conference: in all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

"The moment Twelfth-Step work forms a group, a discovery is made - that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns on each member that he is but a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for the preservation of the Fellowship. He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not. "

As Bill Sees It p.9

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