

FINAL REPORT

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

GREAT BRITAIN

Fifty-First General Service Conference

22-24 April 2016
The Henley Suite
Park Inn Hotel, North Street, York

*Happy, Joyous
and Free*



General Service Office of AA
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Fifty-First
General Service Conference

*Happy, Joyous
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FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

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DIGEST OF AGENDA

Friday 22 April 2016

Registration and Reception

Opening Session

Committee Meetings Commence

Nominations - Conference Chair 2017

Presentation of
General Service Board Reports
(Session 1)

Saturday 23 April 2016

Committee Meetings Continue

Presentation of
General Service Board Reports
(Session 2)

Open Forum

Sunday 24 April 2016

Presentation of Committee Reports

Election of Chair for the Fifty-Second General Service
Conference

Confirmation of
Board Members Elect

Closing Address

FRIDAY 22 APRIL

The Fifty-First General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain was held at the Park Inn Hotel, North Street, York – a venue situated in the heart of the City of York and only a few minutes walk from the Railway Station and the General Service Office. All full sessions were held in the Henley Suite.

After lunch, registration and distribution of folders commenced at around 1 pm and was followed by a reception which, as usual, provided an ideal opportunity for delegates to familiarise themselves with the venue, to renew friendships and to share with those delegates and observers attending for the first time. After the opening session which started at 2.45pm, Committee proceedings commenced at 4.00pm including welcome and introduction to Committees.

The Conference comprised 95 delegates from sixteen Regions; 23 members of the General Service Board, Jim F - Conference Chair (Scotia Region), Roundabout representative, the General Secretary and 5 members of staff from the General Service Office. Also in attendance were 11 Observers from the following countries:

Belgium	1
Bulgaria	1
Croatia	1
Czech Republic	1
Ireland	2
Poland	2
Portugal	1
Romania	1
Slovakia	1

Total in attendance 137.

Opening of Conference by Jim F (Conference Chair 2016)

Good Afternoon Conference, my name is Jim, and I am an alcoholic. It is my privilege on behalf of the Fellowship to welcome you all to this the 51st General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain.

To those of you who are returning delegates, Board members and staff may I, once again on behalf of the Fellowship, thank you for your continued service.

To those of you attending for the first time you will have noticed that your name badge is adorned with a small red dot. It is not an indication to a rooftop sniper that they get extra points for hitting you, that symbol is there to indicate to those of us who have been to Conference before that this is your first year and that we should do all we can to assist you. If you find our procedures strange or there is something that needs further explanation please do not hesitate to ask, believe me, on my first Conference attendance I needed to ask a lot of questions.

To our guests and many observers from abroad a very special welcome, thank you for attending.

I would also like to place on the record of this Conference my grateful thanks to the members of this year's Conference Steering Committee; Lisa, Mark, Amanda, Mike, Carmel and Bruce, our six Committee Chairs, Roger and Nigel our Board members, for their commitment and input at the CSC meetings.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Roger our General Secretary and Sharon our Conference co-ordinator. A huge personal thanks for sharing their experience of Conference and preventing me from making too many mistakes, although I am sure one or two of you will find the deliberate ones I left in, but remember, anything you find in relation to grammar or spelling does not count.

I will now open with the preamble:

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience 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 AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation 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.

Now, I would like everyone to join me in saying the Declaration of Unity:

*This we owe to A.A.'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.*

Also, I am Responsible...
*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.*

Conference can we please have a moments silence to remember why we are here and for the still suffering alcoholic.

Jim then invited the General Secretary, Roger B to read the Twelve Traditions and then commenced his **Keynote Address**:

HAPPY JOYOUS AND FREE

Hello Conference, my name is Jim and I am an alcoholic. It is a privilege to be with you once again. Personally it is without doubt a special, but humbling experience to have the opportunity of Chairing our Annual Conference and also in sharing some of my AA journey with you today.

One of the roles the Conference Chair has is to choose the theme for Conference. On my way home from Conference last year when frankly I was still in a bit of a daze at being chosen for this honour, two possibilities occurred to me, and of the two, I finally decided on Happy Joyous and Free. The other possibility was another phrase from the Big Book on the same theme which is 'We aren't a glum lot'. That phrase means a lot to me as an individual as it has been a source of many a fun filled conversation with my Sponsor Charlie.

Conference, I believe the evidence of my eyes and ears over the years, telling me that I can keep my illness at bay and I will get better a day at a time if I continue to make spiritual progress. I also believe that my Higher Power did not get me into the Fellowship to be miserable and regretful. Indeed there is a paragraph in our Big Book that I would like to quote, and it reads:

“So 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 been given the power to help others”

I, like many others I have heard sharing, always found a way to deflect any discussion about my level of alcohol consumption and my excuses were many. Indeed my mother was Irish, my father a Scot and I would use that to excuse my drinking by saying the Irish part of me loved to drink but the Scottish part hated to pay for it. Thereby raising a laugh and deflecting a serious conversation.

I was taken to my first meeting after asking a friend whom I knew was in the Fellowship if he could help. He asked me if I had a problem with my drinking and I steadfastly refused to confirm that fact to him although it was patently obvious to everybody, except that is, me. As I was waiting outside the meeting place in his car a celebrity went into the entrance and I got my first AA lesson there and then about anonymity.

I, at that time, considered myself to be an open minded and reasonable sort of human being and indeed when I eventually entered that room it had maybe 60 people and there was what I now know to be the usual pre meeting hubbub. On top of that I saw people smiling and laughing and greeting one another by hugging each other, men hugging men, men hugging women, women hugging women and women hugging men. In my state of open mindedness and reasonability I immediately decided that it was impossible to be at AA and to be happy about being there. I decided there and then that the happy clappy mob, as my head had them, were indeed some form of cult (a word I will return to later), and that no matter what I was never having anything to do with them. In fact I decided there and then that I was not coming back but I would for my friend's sake stay for this meeting. It never occurred to me that these happy people having been released from the chains of their addiction to alcohol and having found a new way of living, were indeed Happy Joyous and Free.

Like a lot of people I have heard sharing over the years, I do not remember much about what was said at my first meeting but I did hear if you do not take the first drink it is impossible to get drunk and that alcoholism was an illness. I suppose deep down I knew about the first drink as I had become a binge drinker due mainly to my employment, and instinctively knew there were situations where it was too dangerous for me to take alcohol. However I had never heard it so starkly put and at that moment it seemed like rocket science to me.

The fact that alcoholism was an illness gave me my first AA resentment, I was immediately consumed with a contempt and loathing for my GP who had never told me that alcoholism was an illness. To be fair to him I had always declined to tell him anything remotely approaching the truth about the level of my alcohol consumption. However it was now his fault I was in this room full of strangely behaving people.

Well, I did come back and attended a lot of meetings but was reluctant to talk to people at these gatherings. I was given a Big Book which I read from cover to cover in two days and thought it was a marvellous book. I then put it on a shelf and ignored it as it never dawned on me at that time that it was a template for living, if you like an instruction manual of how to become free of alcohol.

I read the words of the Programme and the Traditions on the scrolls I saw at meetings, I heard people talk about the importance of getting a sponsor and of course joining a group. However, I decided that as I could read I did not need anybody to explain to me the meaning of the words on the scrolls, so there was no requirement for me for either to join a group or indeed get a sponsor.

I continued in this vein for a number of years and although I did join a group I would not share from the body of the hall but would respond to a general greeting at the start of the meeting by saying 'I'm fine' when asked how I was. I had no idea that one of the Fellowship pearls of wisdom identified the word fine as meaning Frustrated, Insecure, Neurotic and Emotional which, in retrospect of that time, summed me up pretty well. Indeed to my shame I engineered an argument with another group member to avoid speaking at a meeting and left that group.

I continued in this vein for some time until the penny finally dropped that my problem was a complete inability to look at myself as it says in the Big Book in Chapter 5 'How It Works' *"Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves"*. That summed me up in a nutshell. An inability coupled with an unwillingness to identify the issues that were preventing me from growing within the Fellowship.

I was indeed looking for an easier softer way that did not exist, but believe me when I say I expended a lot of time and energy looking for it.

It was Adam, the man that took me to that first meeting who suggested that perhaps I needed to look at the different kinds of meetings available.

I had gone along one evening out of a sense of curiosity to a Big Book Group near to where I live and as fate would have it I am still attending that meeting as a group member many years later. It was there that I got the sponsor that I was never going to have and was taken through the programme that I was never going to need. It was there that I found out all the character defects that I did not have when I came through the doors at first. By doing all that, which to be fair was exactly what I had heard at many, many meetings that I was able to share about myself and my agonies with and without alcohol. It had taken four years for the penny to drop.

Indeed it was the occasion of my 4th AA birthday that I shared from the top table for the first time. I remember feeling a sense of relief and satisfaction having shared, when I was

brought back to earth by a member now a good friend of mine, Tony, who said to me that I had robbed AA of the last three birthdays. I had gone along believing that it was me who was staying sober without having the decency to acknowledge the power of the people and the programme in all the various meeting rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I am forever in the debt of all the people who showed me such kindness and understanding when I could not be kind to myself or understand myself. The price I am asked to pay is a very simple one, to pass the message on to the still suffering alcoholic, not my message, not some of the corruptions of the message I have heard over the years, but the message of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is contained within our Big Book Chapter 5 which is entitled 'How It Works', which even I figured out eventually is.... 'How It Works'.

Thanks to my sponsor Charlie I was encouraged into service in the group where I am currently the greeter and where I learned to put something back into the Fellowship. I have over the years filled all the roles the group has asked of me because I now believe to be true a phrase that my friend Adam told me, that my Higher Power would never ask of me something that I could not do. My service is like that of many of you here today, I do what I can for the still suffering Alcoholic on a daily basis. I have had the joy and benefit of sponsoring others through the programme and see them flourish in their sobriety. I have watched others I have sponsored return to the bottle and learned the very painful lesson that I am powerless over people places and things.

My service led me to become an active member of Kelvin Valley Intergroup and a realisation that like many intergroups there is a constant struggle to get all the people who say they owe AA everything and would do anything for AA, to actually take up a post and engage in service and assist in spreading our message to the still suffering Alcoholic. I became intergroup representative to Scotia Region, where after a few years as the Roundabout Liaison Officer, my Higher Power demonstrated a fine sense of humour by placing the post of Region Secretary before me.

I came to this very room for the last time on completion of my three year term as a Conference delegate twelve months ago and left having been given the honour and privilege of chairing this the 51st Annual Conference of the Fellowship.

When I thought about this address to Conference I so desperately wanted to come and address you on some new and innovative way of carrying the message that had come as an inspirational moment to me. Thankfully, once I got my ego back under control I realised that I have nothing new to add.

I recalled being at a meeting one evening, a young man was talking about his early days in the Fellowship. At first he said he used to share his opinion with everyone, whether they wanted it or not. He went on to add that he now realised that he was asked simply to share his experience, strength and hope, not his opinion, strength and hope.

Friends, in writing this address to Conference, I have been mindful of that wisdom. I have shared a little about my journey in the Fellowship and my experience of the wonderful people I have met along the road of happy destiny. They turn out to be fully paid up members of the happy clappy mob I was so disparaging about, those who are unashamedly, and deservedly, Happy Joyous and Free.

I said earlier I would return to one word that I used to describe some people when I came to the Fellowship at first that is the word cult. It is a word I first used as an insult, born out of ignorance, to describe some people in the Fellowship. As I progressed on my journey I found myself becoming indignant at those who described this Fellowship as a cult. I was upset that they would suggest that I would be part of such an organisation so described. Now when I hear the Fellowship demeaned as such by people who have little or no idea of our Steps, Traditions and Concepts, I smile and think of the word as an acronym for what I have experienced over the years in the Fellowship: Compassion, Understanding, Love and Tolerance.

Friends, we will soon go into the Committee sessions, and we are of course, all here one large gathering of AA members to do service to further our primary purpose. There will of course be one or two different opinions on how we best achieve our aims over the weekend and I am certain there will be some interesting and lively discussions in the various committees, but I believe to be true, that with open mindedness, tolerance, patience and consideration of others to the forefront of our thinking we can enhance the good of the Fellowship over this weekend and return home having enjoyed and gained considerably from our time together.

I trust that we will enjoy the experience and fellowship and when we depart on Sunday we all will be a little more Happy Joyous and Free.

Jim then introduced each one of the six Committee Chairs and then asked Mike P, alternate Conference Chair to give the Steering Committee report.

Conference Steering Committee Report

Mike P (London Region North), Alternate Chair

My name is Mike P and I am an alcoholic. I came to Alcoholics Anonymous from the streets, booze had taken me to begging for 69 pence for a bottle of White Ace cider (it had never seen an apple)! Today I stand before my fellows a sober man; that is the miracle of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This Fellowship has given me a life today where I am able to look the world in the eye and say I am a free man.

In a treatment centre which took me in, they told me it was a twelve step treatment centre, they could have told me it was Disneyworld, I just wanted a warm bed and a bite to eat; after which I would be on my way. That's not what happened, I was cared for and introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous. At my first AA meeting I was given a Big Book, I read it in two nights, it was a good read and although the prose was a bit flowery it held the door of sobriety open for five month, we had a big book study which was enough. I was the belligerent drunk, but I hadn't drunk.

It was at an Alcoholics Anonymous convention in the Isle of Wight I found a really old church and looking round at the windows and the decor I thought it would be nice to sit down. I sat in the pews for what I thought was 5 minutes; in fact I had sat there for an hour. Going back to where I was staying I discovered what this strange sensation was, my head was quiet for the hour I had found a real peace of the kind that I had never known, it really was where my journey began.

I came back to London and found a gentle, kind man who took me lovingly through the 12 Steps. He insisted that I do service, from tea making from which I learned about resentments, to greeter which taught me to try to be cheerful, I had had enough misery I didn't need to pass that on, to Literature secretary which taught me to love books again, being a secretary taught me to listen, GSR this taught me the traditions and true patience and tolerance especially at some Intergroup meetings. At intergroup I was asked if I would like to take on Region Rep, this then sent me to region for three years where I was to learn about the Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous and even more about myself, it taught me that I had skills that I had not used in an age, talking to people on a level I had not done for a long time.

I found that my past experience, in a life that was quite full could be helpful, I had a couple of careers, both were very different and demanded different degrees of competence, I was a Nurse for Special Needs, the other was a skilled job using the latest technology that was about at the time (it's moved on a lot since), but it made me realise that not all in my life had been bad there were good things that I had done and things to be proud of not in the wrong way but in the right way.

In a movie called Kung Fu Panda, it's a kids film, the old turtle says "there are no accidents" and talks of the "illusion of control", how I became a Conference delegate is just that, I was to stand for the Southern National Convention Committee Representative, someone else had the same idea and he was duly elected, then someone who I knew from Region who was a third year delegate said to me "why don't you become a delegate", honestly, I did not think that I could do it. I had known people in the Fellowship who had said it was all hot air and it was a jolly up and they were sceptical of what went on, needless to say none of them had been to Conference.

I was elected and was on my way to my first Conference, I was a red dotter, what did that mean? It meant that I got a red dot on my name badge, this denoted that it was my first year and that I was going to be helped by the rest of Conference who showed me the true meaning of democracy. Those of you in your first year don't be afraid to ask questions of anyone here, it's alright not knowing, going into my first Committee was a bit nerve wracking but talking to my fellow delegates made it feel like I was going to be OK.

The whole of the three days flew by in a bit of a blur but I do remember the plenary session (which I didn't know what it meant till I looked it up, it's (of a meeting) "to be attended by all participants at a conference or assembly, who otherwise meet in smaller groups". I thought yes, that really sums up the session because all were there from smaller groups, intergroups and regions even Continental Europe and all carrying the conscience of the Fellowship. My fellow delegates from my Region and my Committee helped me to understand what was happening so that I could take an active part and even ask a question from the floor.

My second year I took the role of the scribe and kept the notes from our Committee on a flip board and there were many changes and rewrites, for my sins I was also pulled out of the hat for one of the tellers. By the end of the first day I was fair exhausted, the second day went by fairly quickly, in my experience it all goes by a bit too quickly this I think is due to everybody's hard work, so much for the naysayers, it being a bit of a jolly up and a lot of hot air it's far from it, we didn't finish till 11.45pm on the Saturday night. I really enjoyed the plenary sessions and this time listening to the Board reports, something that I didn't really get a grasp of the first year and, to be honest, I only really understood when I read

the first year full report, and hearing others from across the country and continental Europe and their thoughts and their take on the Fellowship was special.

Going back to the committee room we then had to elect a Chair for the next year, myself and two other committee members were nominated and I was duly elected. I was gripped by fear and that “what have I done moment”, I realised that it was the same as every bit of service I have ever taken on, fear of not doing it right and fear of what others would think, that niggle of not being good enough, when at the end of the day I am an alcoholic doing some service for something very special that saved my life.

The two thirds majority and the same for all, but in the event of the election of the Chair, if a two third majority could not be reached then it finally meant the last two names going into a hat and letting the Big Fella decide.

This then opened another part of the service the steering committee, I had served on steering committees in work situations which was heated and bitter and argumentative, this was special, there were no harsh words or inflated egos, no budgets to be met and fought for, just plain honest views and all views were listened to, again Alcoholics Anonymous working.

Receiving the Questions for Conference and sorting through the members 47 questions with my fellow steering committee members to arrive with 12 questions was methodical and diligent, referring to the Terms of Reference, Traditions and Concepts with Roger and Sharon on hand to guide us through any difficulties with some of the more shall we say long questions, but all were read in their entirety, and given due diligence.

The final choice of the questions was made and the reasons for the questions which were rejected were given, this process is very honest and true, the staff in the office make the writing and rewriting seem effortless, which it isn't, and the people who asked the questions, who remain anonymous throughout the whole proceedings, will be written to and given an answer as to why the question was not chosen, the questions were then apportioned to the six committees, how democratic is that.

I am very grateful to be given the opportunity to do this service and thankful to the staff of GSO for all their hard work making it an enjoyable experience, the camaraderie and the esprit du corps (a feeling of pride and mutual loyalty shared by the members of a group) it was a bit special. I would like to thank all the members of the Steering Committee for their hard work and I would like to thank all the staff at GSO, I have only ever met four, but I would like to name them all for all their hard work and the seemingly effortless running of the General Service Office they are Sharon, Sophie, Karen, Roger they are the ones that I know but there is also Angela, Caroline, Chris, Julie, Jenny, Phil, Steve and Stephen, I would like to thank them all for caring for our Fellowship.

I hope everyone has a good Conference, and red dotters enjoy the experience.

Roger B, General Secretary, was asked to read the orientation containing last-minute changes, safety information and the National Convention dates which are:

Scottish Convention	–	6 th – 9 th May 2016
Welsh Convention	–	10 th – 12 th June 2016
Southern Convention	–	2 nd – 4 th September 2016
Northern Convention	–	24 th – 26 th March 2017

Jim went on to explain the voting procedure and how these votes would be counted to which Conference agreed and eight tellers were selected from 2nd year delegates to undertake this task for the whole weekend.

The first full session of Conference ended at 3.45 pm with Jim asking everyone to join him in saying the Serenity Prayer.

FRIDAY EVENING

Jim welcomed everyone back and opened the second full session of Conference at 7.45 pm with a moment's silence and the Preamble, asked for nominations for Conference Chair 2017 before handing over to Willie MacD, Chair of the Board, to introduce the General Service Board Report.

NOMINATIONS FOR CONFERENCE CHAIR 2017

The under mentioned were proposed and seconded for the Chair of the Fifty-Second General Service Conference 2017:

Jimmy M	-	Glasgow Region
Mike P	-	London Region North
Amanda S	-	London Region South

The nominees signified their willingness to serve and each gave a brief summary of their AA service background. The formal election, by way of a modified Third Legacy procedure as recommended by Conference 1998, to take place at the final session of Conference.

General Service Board Report

(Willie MacD – Chair GSB)

Good evening Conference, my name is Willie and I am an alcoholic, it is my privilege and honour, as Chair of the Board of Trustees, to present the General Service Board Report to Conference.

Firstly, a warm welcome to each and every one of you, especially our first year delegates and our delegates who are in their final year. I would also like to thank the overseas observers for attending our Conference. This year we have 11 in attendance.

I would like to thank Jim F, Conference Chair, and the Conference Steering Committee for all the hard work that they have done over the past year.

My thanks to the General Service Office staff, led by our General Secretary, Roger Booth for their ongoing work, commitment and support, and also to our staff in the Northern and Southern Service offices.

The General Service Board have carried out and completed all the recommendations proposed by Conference 2015.

During the course of Conference, Trustees will be presenting their reports/proposals in the usual manner and I have no wish to pre-empt them.

We will have reports from Honorary Treasurer, Electronics, Telephones, GSO Roadshow, Literature and Health. A report from two of our Non-Alcoholic Trustees, Ash Kahn the Survey and Martin Weegmann summing up his experience of an Non-Alcoholic Trustee.

An Armed Services Seminar (February) and a Prison Service Seminar (June) were held in York 2015, and a Health Seminar was held in February this year, which were well attended

by very enthusiastic AA members who continue to carry the message to the Armed Services, the Prison Services and the Health Services.

Public Information continue to run events at Westminster, Holyrood, and the Welsh Assembly.

Our Non-Alcoholic Trustees continue to represent us at a public level, co-operating with the professional community and do a fantastic job in carrying AA's message. We have had a presence at 18 professional conferences and exhibitions in the past year.

The European Service Meeting was held at York in October 2015, and the following countries attended, Austria, Belarus, Belgium (Flemish Speaking), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, German Speaking Europe, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland (French Speaking) and Ukraine.

In June 2015, Roger Booth and I attended The Sub Sahara South African Service Meeting in Johannesburg. This meeting is jointly funded by GSO USA/Canada and GSO GB and helps carry the message to developing countries by the sharing of experience.

The General Service Board's Young People's Project continues, especially since the Conference decision to incorporate the Young People's Liaison Officer into the Fellowship structure. What we need now is young people to get involved in service. We have just received three applications to join the Young People's Sub Committee, which will be considered at the next nominations committee in May.

The Board has agreed to send an annual donation to the International Literature Fund, which this year was £5000 and we have received acknowledgement and a thank you letter from GSO New York.

Board Trustees attend 4 Board meetings and 1 workshop a year.

Trustees have attended the Belgium (Flemish), Danish, German, Irish, Polish and Romanian Conferences in the past year, sharing their Experience, Strength and Hope. We have 16 sub-committees, 4 National Conventions, 3 Parliament Events, European Service Meeting, The Sub Sahara South African Service Meeting, The World Service Meeting and Two Forums which Trustees have taken part in (Eastern Region on 28th February and Midlands Region on 4th July). Conference: can I tell you we keep them busy.

Conference, may I introduce you to your present Board of Trustees and the disciplines that they are responsible for.

Tom B, London Region North - Archives, Westminster Parliament Event, Southern Convention

Clive D, Midlands Region - Probation/Criminal Justice, Finance

Roger E, South West Region - Conference Steering Committee, Prisons

Judy F, Wales & Borders Region - Telephones, Welsh Assembly, Welsh Parliament Event

Wullie I, Vice Chair - Public Information, Survey, Young People's project

Brian J, South Midlands Region - Armed Services, European Service Meeting

Joe H, Honorary Treasurer - AASN, Finance

Carol H, London Region South - Literature, Nominations, Westminster Parliament event

Geoff H, North West Region - Health, European Service Meeting, Northern Convention

Ash Kahn - Nominations, Survey

James K, East of Scotland Region - Roundabout, Electronic Communications

Sandy MacV, Highlands & Islands Region - Employment, Scottish Parliament Event, Finance

Nigel P, Continental European Region - Health, Conference Steering Committee

Charlie R, Glasgow Region - Nominations, Prisons, Scottish Convention

Helen S, Eastern Region - Share, Survey, Nominations

Tom S, South East Region - Electronic Communications, Nominations

Martin Weegmann - Probation/Criminal Justice

As you can see none of them have two heads, no us and them, normal human beings doing the best they can in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Please appreciate them and the tremendous amount of work they do in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

My personal sincere thanks to our Board Trustees, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, for their dedication, hard work, support and who freely give their time in fulfilling our primary purpose of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic. As always Trustees will be present throughout Conference to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you Conference.

Finance

(Joe H – Treasurer GSB)

Good evening Conference, my name is Joe, I am an alcoholic and what I would like to do is give you an overview of the financial year 2014/15 as well as a look at the General Service Board's reserves policy which is based on Warranty 2 of Concept 12.

Where does the money come from? Two main areas, the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the sale of AA literature.

	YEAR TO SEPTEMBER 2015 - Unrestricted fund	YEAR TO SEPTEMBER 2014 - Unrestricted fund
INCOME	£1,355,138	£1,253,774
EXPENDITURE	£1,282,340	£1,236,470
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	£72,797	£17,304

The figures above are taken from the Unrestricted Account which is the main AA account as opposed to the two Restricted Accounts that we have. In terms of Income, that increased by £101,000 to £1.3m. Expenditure did go up by over £45,000 which left a surplus for the year 2014/15 of over £72,000.

	2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014
Group & I/G contributions	£644,683	£575,645
Personal contributions	£47,488	£13,951
Group & I/G Gratitude Week	£62,704	£49,113

Looking at the contributions a little closer, group and intergroup contributions increased by over £69,000 on the previous year and taking into account that every intergroup, group and region has their own primary purpose to fulfil which would include spending money that is very generous.

Personal contributions increased by over £33,000 and that included two legacies of £10,000, five other legacies ranging from £2,000 to £6,000 and four other personal contributions amounting to £6,000. That, again, is a marvellous thing from members of the Fellowship who are probably no longer with us.

Group and Intergroup Gratitude Week increased by over £13,500 and that is a lot of gratitude.

These are marvellous contributions from the Fellowship and it has been the basis for what I am going to go into further.

Where does the money go? It only goes in continuing to fulfil our Primary Purpose to carry the AA message to professionals, the public, the suffering alcoholic and to the Fellowship of AA.

	2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014
Cost of publications	£177,239	£191,717
Printing costs	£16,960	£9,957
Postage	£62,745	£59,041
Publication announcements	£25,799	£6,095

What I have tried to do next is try to pick out an area of expenditure above that relates to each of those. Unfortunately, the first one had to be contrary because the cost of publications has gone down by over £14,500, but there is nothing amiss there as what had

happened was that the previous year two invoices for big orders of literature fell in the same year, so consequently there was a lot more spent in the previous year than in 2014/15.

Printing costs went up by just over £7,000 mainly due to the change to the National Telephone Helpline, we got new pull up stands as we have 18 exhibitions and conferences to cover which requires the correct information to be displayed and reprinting costs for replacing the number on various items of literature.

Postage costs, which the Fellowship don't pay for, increased by just over £3,000 and lastly, Public Announcements which includes the invoice for the national media campaign and although it was quite some time ago the invoice fell in the 2014/15 year. It also includes adverts in Civvy Street magazine and GP Health magazine so there are other things that are covered by this.

Thanks again to the contributions of the Fellowship which has enabled the Board to fulfil its Primary Purpose in several ways and some of which are:

- Fulfil all the services requested by the Fellowship
- Plan and manage projects
- Manage changes as & when needed by the Fellowship
- Keep costs down by buying in bulk
- Carry the message both nationally & worldwide
- Reduce the selling price of some literature.

Looking ahead, we are still in a stable financial position to continue to carry the AA message of recovery as our reserves in the unrestricted account total over £2.1m. That is not all cash in the bank firstly it includes fixed assets; fixed assets are the furniture in three offices and the digital equipment in those offices. The current assets include all the literature stock we have in the warehouse at Pocklington and at GSO. The current assets also include the investments and the cash in the bank as well. The £2.1m is made up of several different things.

Reserves Policy of the General Service Board

Concept 12 - Warranty Two: "Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve should be its prudent financial principle."

- Ample Reserve held by the charity should exceed 1 year's expenditure = **£1,282,340**
- Sufficient Operating funds are considered to be one quarter's expenditure = **£320,585**

This gives a total of over 1.25 year's expenditure = **£1,602,925**

The Board agreed some time ago that the Ample Reserve held by the Charity should exceed one year's expenditure and as mentioned that expenditure is over £1.2m. Sufficient operating funds as stipulated in Warranty 2 are considered to be one quarter's expenditure being over £320,000. Adding the two together gives one and a quarter year's expenditure which equals just over £1.6m. This £1.6m is not a target to be achieved and it is not a

limiting factor, it is a desired financial state. Doing a little bit of sums and taking that Prudent Reserve and the Operating Costs added together and subtracting it from the total reserves of our Unrestricted Funds we are left with over £527,000 and it is that amount which enables the Board.

Now £527,000 is a lot of money but putting it in the context of the Charitable Company I will give you some instances. Next month there is an invoice coming in for a literature order which is nearly £100,000 and from now on our annual expenditure is going to go up by at least £15,000 because we are taking over the paying of the National Telephone Helpline. Later on this year there is going to be the Handbooks reprinted and taking into account right-off costs of the previous Handbook it is going to be in the region of £50,000. So we are talking big numbers that are operating within the Charitable Company and as I said this amount over and above the £1.6m is the money that enables the Board to act as it has been and it is so important.

Just to cast a bit of rationale behind the Prudent Reserve:

- Significant proportion of this reserve is held in stocks & bonds which can fluctuate significantly. About 12 months ago we reinvested the Fellowship's investments in a company called CCLA (Churches Charities & Local Authorities) which is a Charity in itself and we invested the money in what is called the Ethical Fund which is a fund that has won awards in the financial system – not for its return but for its quality of investment.
- It is meant to enable the Charity and therefore GSO to function during difficult conditions.
- Only in last 6 years has 'Prudent Reserve' met our definition of 'One Years Expenditure'.
- There is no maximum stated in Warranty Two or GSB policy. Where and when the total reserves figure becomes large – action taken e.g. reducing cost of some literature.

Operating Funds. The more I mix with finance people from other charities the more I realise that our charity, The General Service Board, is a unique charity because it has no control whatsoever over how much comes in and when. Because of this lack of control it means that there is a greater variability in what comes into the Fellowship and that also relates to our investments as well. So the operation funds act as a kind of buffer between liquidity and the Prudent Reserve and this enables the Board without dipping into the Prudent Reserve during a stock market low.

Overall our reserves policy is deemed good practice by the Charity Commission and the GSB Auditors.

All of the information I have put across to you can be found:

- **Fellowship Accounts** distributed quarterly to Regional Treasurers
- **Financial Reports** distributed quarterly to Intergroup & Regional Treasurers
- **Annual Report and Account** is circulated to all Regional & Intergroup trusted servants as well as all AA Groups

Please pass on our grateful thanks to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain and English Speaking Continental Europe for the support they have given us over the past twelve months it really has been appreciated.

Electronic Communications

(Tom S and James K)

Good evening Conference, my name is Tom, I'm an alcoholic and Trustee for Electronic Communications and my name is James, an alcoholic and also Trustee for Electronic Communications. Tom will start the presentation.

As I was compiling the presentation the theme that started to strike me is communication and it's a key note that keep coming up again and again.

Current status of the Website

We have a new Web Master and this is my final Conference and I have done four years as Electronic Communications Trustee and we have been advertising like crazy to get a new Web Master but could we find one, no. We went to a forum in South East Region and I convinced Jim F to stand and he thought hard and long about it, he was telephoning his wife and finally the arm-twisting worked. He was our ORS administrator prior to that and he now has another two years working with the sub-committee as our Web Master.

As far as the site goes it just keeps getting better and busier. We have had over 4.3 million pages viewed during the course of the year from over 800,000 visits, these are not unique visitors but the total number of visits of people coming back and looking for meetings etc., but it is still a great communication tool and now that it what it is becoming, a communication tool for helping people and helping us to carry the message.

We had one major outage in the last year which means no system availability and was down for twelve hours so coming up to four years in service it has had only one major outage.

Online Response Service (ORS)

This service is getting bigger and bigger and there are up to about 10,000 emails which is an incredible amount which a small team manage to get through and it also shows that people are coming to us via other means than those traditionally used like the telephone. From the last survey there are some interesting statistics about people coming through the website.

We have improved the ORS administration just recently, we have a new Administrator, Eleanor from Eastern Region, and we have reviewed our working practices and user guides and we have updated those. We now have a completely full rota and, in fact, Eleanor had to stop an advertising campaign for sending out flyers for recruitment as we were suffering from a lack of responders because now all the training places are full. Thank you to the Fellowship for coming forward and getting involved.

Enhancements

All the enhancements that we are going to be doing this year are all documented in the Board Report which you have.

New Email Service

This is a project that we desperately needed, the reason being that the current email service is rolling on an old server, its functioned and done its job but it is coming to its end

of life. It suffers from storage problems and the fact that emails stay there for ever and a day and never get cleared off. James did a full audit and that showed us that it was not worth trying to fix, it was better to cut that loss and start a brand new service and create a construct of emails that would be consistent and role based. Role based means that it would match our structure and service positions. We are going to have a dedicated email server with much more storage capacity and we are still going to allow the autonomy of Intergroups and Regions to join or not join as they so wish. A new venture will be to allow the email accounts to be administered by GSO.

Tom gave a live demonstration of the role based emails and how it would function.

Chat Now

Recommendation of last year's Conference, Committee 3, Question 1:

"This Committee welcomes the idea of a 'chat now' facility on the AA website as an additional way for the still suffering alcoholic to contact the Fellowship. However, we have serious concerns about its practicality, in particular with regard to the recruitment, training and supervision of responders. We therefore recommend that the Board undertakes a feasibility study and report back to Conference 2016."

Chat Now is a new way of responding. Let's have a look at a few of those reservations which I fully shared with them until I started to look at it in a bit more detail:

How do people engage with it?
How do we control our responses?
How do we cover 24/7?
How do we create a response team?
How long will it take to start using it?

I talked to people about this and the best avenue I got was from our RECLOs themselves, they come to York once a year and we put this on the table and we had two or three RECLOs, like me they work in IT, who had actually implemented Chat Now systems. They started to tell us how they did it.

So we would go to the Newcomers Area on the Website, that would preclude all types of people coming in and asking all sorts of questions and it would target the newcomer and therefore become a response to recovery.

How do we control our responses? The tools have full administration capability and they are wonderful and the RECLOs reassured us of this and when we saw it we were over the moon.

How do we cover 24/7? The simple answer is that we don't have to. The systems are what I call resource availability driven which means if there is no responder logged on it comes up and says I'm sorry there is no one available at the moment would you like to telephone our telephone service or would you like to send us an email.

How do we create a response team? This is one of the big reservations that the Committee had last year. We spoke with our ORS team and they have a very good training package and they take potential responders and give them background and tuition and then start

sending them emails to test them, to see how they respond and to see if they have a good grasp of ORS. If they don't then they get further mentoring etc. until they are capable.

They looked at Chat Now and said we can do that, it's an extension of what we already do, it won't be perfect to start and they have already identified more experienced responders who might be interested in working in this area.

How long will it take to start using it? Recruitment and training – I asked the ORS team to come back and give me a time line. I asked them to think about the recruitment plan and about the training plan, to think about the rollout, don't rush it and make sure you are comfortable. They said six months to get to a basic working service and a basic working service would mean a typical rota that would fill from 8 in the morning to 8 at night.

James gave a live demonstration of Pure Chat and how it would function.

I hope that allays the fears of the Committee and I had those fears as well, I thought how can we do this, it's too big and we are not really into that game but when we started to run the pilot it became apparent that this is too good to miss. Even if the responders are not available, the newcomer is going to be looking at that saying but I want help so I am going to get help and if it says to phone or email they will do it, so it's opening up a new channel even if there is no responder available. Pure Chat is a new and clever way of responding to those needing help.

Does Conference approve of Pure Chat?

Conference approved the above with a two-thirds plus majority.

On-Line Meetings

This is again coming from Conference last year, Committee 1, Question 1:

“This Committee shared experience and recommends the recognition of online groups. We request that the General Service Board GB investigate the implications and practicalities of this recommendation. They should also consider how such groups can be incorporated within the structure of AA GB. The Board to report back to General Service Conference 2016”.

I investigated this and I talked to other GSOs, Germany in particular, who have been discussing this for about two years and they said that they are still talking because they are finding it difficult to get it into the structure. What I concluded from that discussion was basically we need to keep it simple. If we are going to do it we need to do the recognition through our existing structure.

Technically we can meet the challenge by amending the Meeting Finder on the Website to show on-line as a separate meeting type so that they will not get mixed up with the other meetings which are geographically based. Allow autonomy to join InterGroups or not, it's up to the group as long as they follow group meeting guidelines and are self-supporting etc. We cannot stop them starting up the only thing that is missing is recognition. It's a different way of meeting in the Fellowship and, as I said to you at the beginning, this is about communication, it's about improvement and it's another unique opportunity.

I put this proposal to the Board at the last Board meeting and they said come back with a statement which we can present to Conference.

Our initial findings are that it is feasible to include an on-line group on the AAGB Meetings database and thereby recognise that group from a search on the website. This may require some minor changes to the meeting finder function of the website. It is envisaged that the group would register with GSO in the normal way using a pink form or online, ideally it would attach itself to an existing intergroup as is custom for all new groups although this is not mandated by the Fellowship. It is then up to the group/intergroup to facilitate the meetings, appointment officers and arrange pot collections etc. as is done by any group in becoming self-supporting.

Would Conference like to adopt this option to be taken forward by the General Service Board?

Conference approved the above with a two-thirds plus majority.

Non-Alcoholic Trustees

(Martin Weegmann)

It's good to be back at Conference, I have been on the Board for five years and I'm stepping down in about twelve hours. I still like to describe myself as a still suffering non-alcoholic and hopefully little bit wiser after those years on the Board.

I'd like to give a story about my 15 year relationship with AA and unlike the vast majority of people here I don't have a sobriety birthday but I have a first, proper involvement with AA kind of birthday, which was about 2000 when I went to my first 'open' meeting in London which proved to be very important and a big step for me.

I had obviously been aware of AA for a long time before going to 'open' meetings and I had encountered it by listening to my clients. Quite a number of them, I was based in a substance misuse service, were also attending fellowship groups of various kinds but I will just talk about AA.

I have always been very curious by nature and increasingly I would encourage them to talk about their experience of the meetings and what they were learning about themselves and their own progress. Indirectly, it was a way of educating myself about this world of fellowship meetings and what it was providing for those people.

There is often a disconnect in services between the world of the professional agency or service and that of mutual help, grass roots movements and I was always keen from early on to bring them together so that they could speak to each other more, so that they didn't have to be seen in competition, and I still passionately believe in that the importance of dialogue, communication, understanding and that each can learn from the other. The importance of encouraging people to speak and to share with me and other people the things that they were finding helpful in sustaining progress and overcoming the difficulties that they were in.

I was thinking earlier about a chap I assessed a very, very long time ago in my early days and after asking him about his alcohol problems for about twenty minutes, he was very tanked up, he rounded on me and said that enough of my questions about his drinking and that I

looked like I had never drunk a pint in my life and it really brought home to me the difficulty of being a therapist because why should a client believe that we know anything about their lives. Over the years I have comforted myself with that so I have to thank him with my own version of Step 1 which is 'we are powerless over our patients'. Once I got to that it made it a lot easier.

Through psychology and psychotherapy, I always worked in the NHS for the most part, I did try increasingly to use what I was learning about fellowship groups, build it into my own practice and use some of the oral and written tradition of AA and some of the wisdom that is encapsulated there. 'Minds are like parachutes. They only work when they are open' that of course applies to us as well as the client.

My decision to go to 'open' meetings, very nervously to start with, proved very decisive because it was only really by going to 'open' meetings that I got a real sense of the power of AA fellowship, the power of mutuality, people helping each other, coming in from the cold (or wet), learning how to live their lives in a new way, the courage to change and the fact that there might be someone in the room a few days dry sitting next to someone with ten years sobriety was very powerful. Each could learn from the other in different ways or one could be reminded how easy it could be to go back. The importance of finding a human way to solve ones problems as opposed to a chemical way.

Those meetings had a powerful impact on me and I started going for a number of years, once a month to different meetings in London although I had my home meeting (as it were) in Earls Court. Increasing, as a result of going to those meetings I experimented and trained in 12th Step Facilitation Therapy with my clients, trying to use the accumulated wisdom of AA to help people who were very reluctant or dismissive of meetings, and these were people that were not yet at a stage of wanting to go to meetings.

A brief example of how that might work with a hypothetical client. You might say I'm sure AA works for a great amount of people and it's a great organisation but I don't think I'm there and I might say in response, well perhaps you are not there but tell me where you are in relation to your own drinking and from that might be a very useful discussion about their own patterns, the consequences and then after a while I might decide to bring in Step 1. To ask that person to consider just how manageable they believe their life is and to consider the question have they succeeded their power to alcohol which they could otherwise have for themselves. The person might scratch their head a bit, maybe a few more sessions talking about it and they may well come back and say well, actually my life and behaviour is very messy and I know it is out of control and I know that alcohol is getting the better of me. From that you could have a discussion about whether they would be interested in going to a meeting with the idea of going with an open mind, to look for similarities not differences, to see what they might have in common with those people in the room and to look at where their drinking might have taken them by listening. Learning to listen and listening to learn.

This is probably a smooth example but in reality things can be a bit more prolonged and people need a lot of convincing but the idea is just to open people up to trying something new. The idea is to reduce resistance and to increase engagement.

Care also comes through information and I always used to clutch a copy of the Where To Find and give it to people and, of course, with the website you can actually sit down with a client to look through it. One of the things I have found helpful with clients is getting them

to do the questionnaire and does this apply to me and, often tick, tick, tick all the way down and then you say there is a lot of ticks there, what do you do with that knowledge, you hand it back all of the time, so information is also a way of caring for people.

One of the things I found important in my practice working in an alcohol service, in a Multi-Disciplinary Team, was to bring greater awareness of AA to my fellow colleagues because, even if you are a specialist in that area, the amount of misconceptions and ignorance can be considerable so I saw it as my job not only to try to help clients who were in a state of denial or resistance, but also just to try to educate the referrers and to bring greater awareness of AA to my colleagues. Not in a patronising way but just to sort of say well, perhaps we can also think of AA as an option for this person.

Also to question some of the stereotypes and myths and I always remember a doctor who rather cynically said that we don't want this person to get addicted to AA as well! From that I developed 12th Step facilitation training for staff which consisted of a day and a couple of times I did it with a member from the Fellowship and sometimes I did it myself. There was an historical introduction to AA, there were many interactive exercises around the concepts and ideas of AA and what the Twelve Steps are. At the beginning of the day we would ask people to list their preconceptions about AA and then, rather than me answer them, I would show them the list and ask them to answer those questions themselves. At the end of the day it was interesting how much the staff with greater awareness were able to question some of their own myths and to be more receptive in the end. This was a very interesting process for me.

Coming on the Board of AA for five years has been a very positive experience and I feel a bit sad to be moving on. As well as learning a huge amount about service, as from the 'open' meetings I learnt a lot about recovery and how people get better, but from the Board I gained insights into what giving back really means, giving back in so many different ways. I also appreciate the humour and camaraderie that we have all had.

For me as a psychologist:

Listening is the most important art
All people need encouragement
Don't just see the problem, see the person
Understand fear of change
'Be there' to nurture change
Information is care
Help people re-connect, take courage to change
Change happens. Recovery happens

Willie MacD
(Chair – GSB)

Normally I would say goodbye to Trustees on the Sunday morning unfortunately Martin will not be with us as he is leaving tomorrow, so I wanted to show my gratitude and give Conference the chance to show their appreciation to Martin for the work and service he has carried out for us.

Martin over the past five years has been involved in the Probation/Criminal Justice Services Sub Committee, he spoke for Alcoholics Anonymous GB at the Welsh Parliament, Scottish

Parliament and the Danish Conference. Martin is a very humble and professional man and it has been an absolutely great pleasure to work with Martin over the past five years. We wish him well in the future and I am sure that Martin will share his experience of AA with others. He is a tremendous man and, in my opinion, everyone in AA owes Martin a great deal of gratitude and thanks. Thank you Martin.

GSO Roadshow

(Angela Varley and Sharon Smyth – GSO Staff)

Good evening Conference. It is our privilege to give this presentation, requested by the General Service Board, on what the General Service Office is and what it does.

GSO provides the links between Groups, Intergroups, Regions, the General Service Board and the General Service Conference. Our GB GSO serves as the European Information Centre across Europe.

GSO is the administrative arm of the Fellowship, providing services for Alcoholics Anonymous nationally - through GSO in York, the Northern Service Office in Glasgow and the Southern Service Office in London.

GSO maintains Communication with the 16 AAGB Regions (including Continental Europe), 120 Intergroups and more than 4400 Groups in Great Britain to date, also various GSOs throughout the world.

The Staff of all three offices are dedicated to providing these services as efficiently as possible, and most importantly with care and consideration for our Fellowship.

Services to the Fellowship include:

- AA Service News
- Accounts monthly, quarterly & annually
- Annual Report & Conference Reports
- European Service Meeting
- Mail-shots to the Fellowship
- Share & Roundabout
- Group, Intergroup & Regional Records
- Fellowship Books & Pamphlets
- Service literature & material
- Where to Find & other directories
- Co-ordination of Media & Professional calls
- Board projects
- Updating the AAGB Website
- Production of a variety of CDs & DVDs

How many staff members are there at GSO, NSO & SSO?

At GSO there are 10 full-time and 2 part-time members of staff. At NSO in Glasgow there is one part-time and at SSO in London we have 1 part-timer and one full-time staff member.

At GSO the Staff Members are:

- Roger – General Secretary
- Angela/Sophie – Office Manager
- Caroline – Accounts / Literature Orders
- Chris – Records Department
- Graham – Literature Department (Part-Time)
- Jenny – Board Administrator
- Julie – Share / Roundabout Admin (Part-Time)
- Karen – Management Accountant
- Phil – Literature Administrator
- Sharon – IT/ Events Manager
- Stephen – Group and General Administrator
- Steve – Telephonist / Reception

The SSO & NSO Staff Members are:

SSO London:

- Miranda – Office Administrator
- Imogen – Assistant Administrator

NSO Glasgow:

- Helen – Office Administrator

We have both worked at GSO for well over 25 years and it gives us a sense of pride and gratitude to work for the Fellowship of AA, as indeed it does for all of the staff at our three offices.

Thank you for your attention and giving us this opportunity to share this information with you.

An in depth profile of each staff member at GSO, and what their responsibilities are, is available in our full Presentation which can be obtained from GSO or the AAGB Website in the document library.

Jim closed the Friday evening session at 10.45 pm in the customary way by asking everyone to join him in the saying of the serenity prayer.

SATURDAY EVENING

Continuation of General Service Board Reports

Jim welcomed everyone back and read the Preamble. He asked for a moment's silence to remember why we are here, think of the still suffering alcoholic and also gather our thoughts for the evening's session. Jim then invited Carol H (GSB) to commence the continuation of General Service Board reports.

Literature

(Carol H)

Good evening Conference, my name is Carol, I am an alcoholic and Chair of the Literature Sub Committee. I have to start off by thanking my Sub Committee of three for their hard work over the past year to try to get everything together that you so generously recommended last year!

Literature passed by Conference last year:

Two posters produced by The Young Peoples Project Team are now available from GSO.

The Twelve Traditions Checklist requested by Committee 6 to be reformatted into an A5 leaflet has been completed and is now available from GSO.

Three pieces of literature have gone to Committee:

The new chapter 'Young People's Liaison Officer',

Revised wording to 'The Group – Violence and Personal Conduct' in the Structure Handbook,

Additional wording to 'The Group – Group Meetings' again in the Structure Handbook.

So, straight into voting because we have six pieces of literature to present this year:

From Committee 2: Retention of New Members – a checklist to be designed.
2015 This subject did not fit comfortably into a checklist format, so we have produced a suggested guide titled 'Welcoming a Newcomer to the Group'

Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.

From Committee 5: Pamphlet to address matters of inappropriate conduct:
2015 'Violence and Personal Conduct'

Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.

From the Prisons Sub-committee:

A new Prisons pamphlet 'Prison and Alcohol', produced in conjunction with the Prisons Sub-Committee. This will eventually replace 'It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell' and 'AA in Correctional Facilities'.

Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.

From Conference 2014 and through the Health Sub-Committee:

An additional question to the pamphlet 'The AA Group' under 'How do group problems get solved?' (page 20) and titled 'What should a group do if it attracts visitors in numbers from a treatment centre?' It will be the new No. 16 and the last two sentences of No. 15 get moved to the end as they have nothing to do with it.

Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.

Redraft of 'The God Word' pamphlet, now including agnostic and atheist members' personal experiences in AA – this is primarily intended for the new or newish member to the Fellowship.

After discussion Carol asked Conference to vote on the above pamphlet with the word God in inverted commas.

Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.

Booklet 'LGBT Voices' with LGBT members' personal experiences in AA – this is again, primarily intended for the new or newish member to the Fellowship.

Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.

Thank you Conference.

AA Fellowship Survey 2015

(Ash Kahn)

Good evening Conference. The survey takes place every 5 years and has been going on since 1972. Anyone who would like to look at the old surveys, they are available in Archives and are well worth reading as you will notice that there was different protocols being used and it was difficult to spot trends or to make comparisons, for example, at one time some members of the Board did a survey and then another time the University was paid to do a survey.

Since 2010 we have used a certain type of methodology so that some consistency can now be seen. In the past we have been looking at various demographics, the length of membership of AA, length of sobriety etc. In 2010 there was a bit of a diversion in that we added several new questions which I thought was worthwhile looking at and we used the same methodology this time in 2015. We do that because we want to see how AA is progressing and it generates information which is useful to both AA and to pass on to outsiders and also for the Board to see how they are performing in certain ways, it's part of carrying the message.

The survey is done in two phases. The first phase is a survey of the Group Secretary that reports on the number of people attending the AA meeting over seven days of a certain date. We have used an outside marketing company called Marketing Means who do a lot of social marketing surveys.

The first phase – forms were sent to all Group Secretaries in May 2015 to gather information around the number of attendees at specific meetings. Replies were then sent to the General Service Office who then sent them on to Marketing Means in batches. Marketing Means then calculated the number of groups that needed to be surveyed to receive at least 1000 individual membership replies. They then selected them in a random way split proportionally by regions, to make sure we get the 1000 replies to give us some meaningful data:

- 250 groups randomly selected split proportionally by regions
- 186 of these group secretaries sent back the membership forms
- 2217 completed membership survey forms were received
- Anonymity was preserved and all forms were destroyed on completion of survey

For an example of the things we were looking at, first of all, the question of how did you hear of AA to attend your first meeting and in 2010 31% of people came through an existing group member and in 2015 it was 28% .

The next one, Treatment Centre which in 2010 was 13% and 2015 it was 18% and I think that is quite an interesting shift because Public Health England have said to treatment centres that they have to get people into various mutual aid support groups of which AA is the main one in this country. That is an indication of the impact of what government policy might be doing.

The third highest, when you look at the whole Fellowship, was the Phone Directory and in 2010 it was 20% and in 2015 it was 16%, fourth was the GP which has stayed steady at about 14% in both surveys and then fifth was the Internet which in 2010 was 6% and in 2015 was 10% which is an increase.

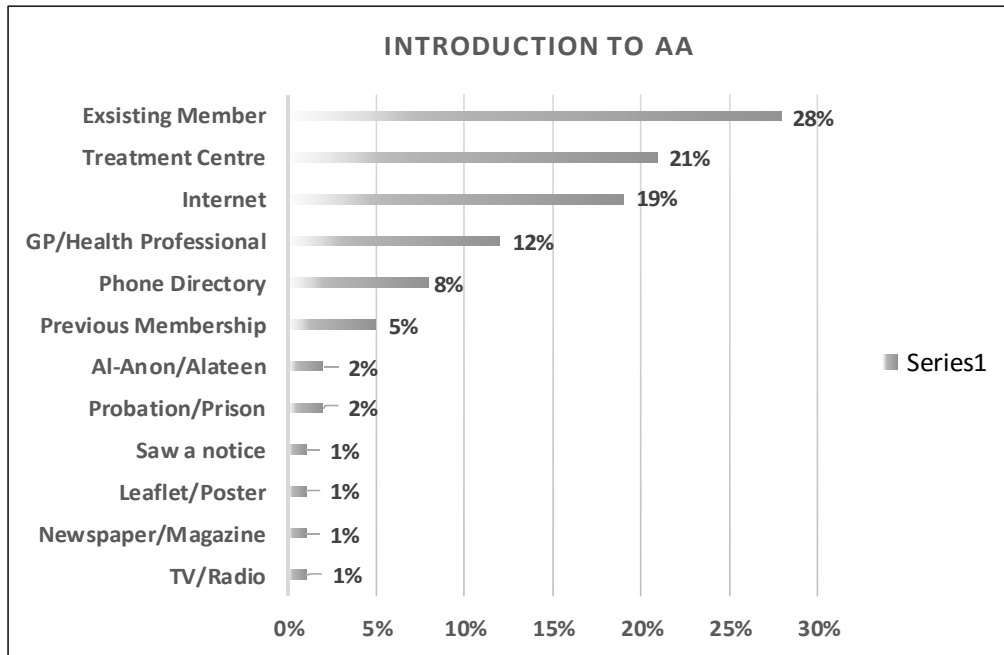
The key information I would like you to go away with is:

- Over the past 5 years an increasing number of people make their first contact with AA via website
- The ratio of 60% male and 40% female remains unchanged over the last 10 years
- The survey re-emphasised that regular attendance at meetings as well as having a home group is important in achieving and maintaining sobriety

We always try to estimate the membership of AA and that I think is impossible to do as people go to more than one group, there are no records and you don't apply to become a member of the Fellowship, it's very laissez faire, a bit like counting sheep that are running around between different herds so the best we can do is an estimate which, we reckon, is between 33,000 and 40,000.

However, what we can calculate is the number of attendances at AA in a year and that number is over 3 million people a year. That is fantastic use of a service and I think that if you compare various mutual aid groups they come nowhere near that and I think that that is something we can be proud of.

We drilled down on the information and looked at people coming into the Fellowship in the last 5 years and what I thought was interesting from the chart below:

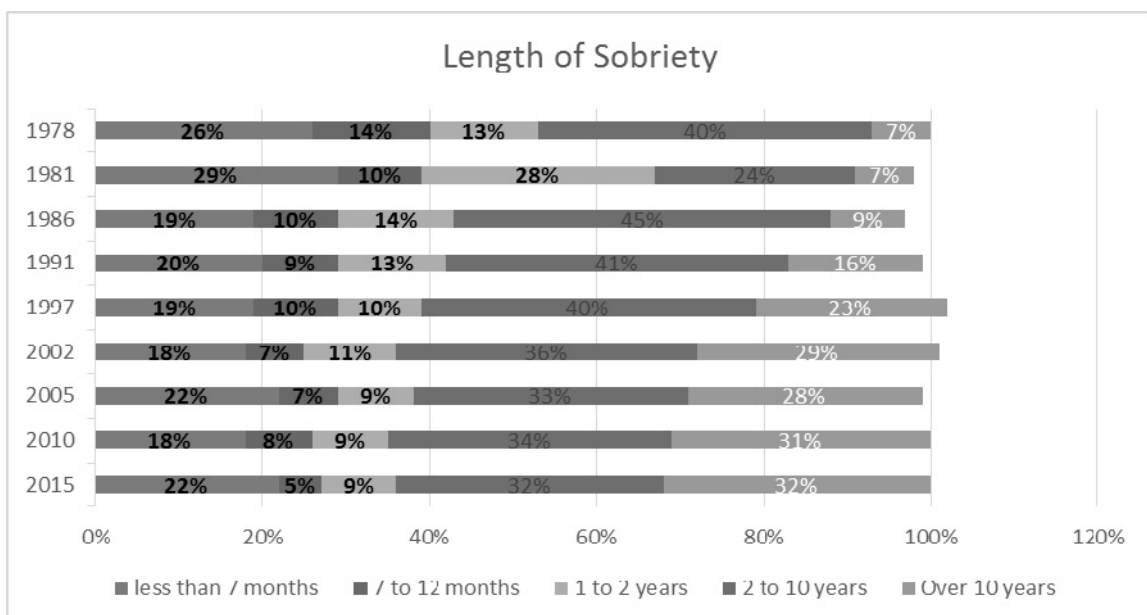


The above chart analyses the pathway of how recent members of the Fellowship (less than five years) were introduced to Alcoholics anonymous

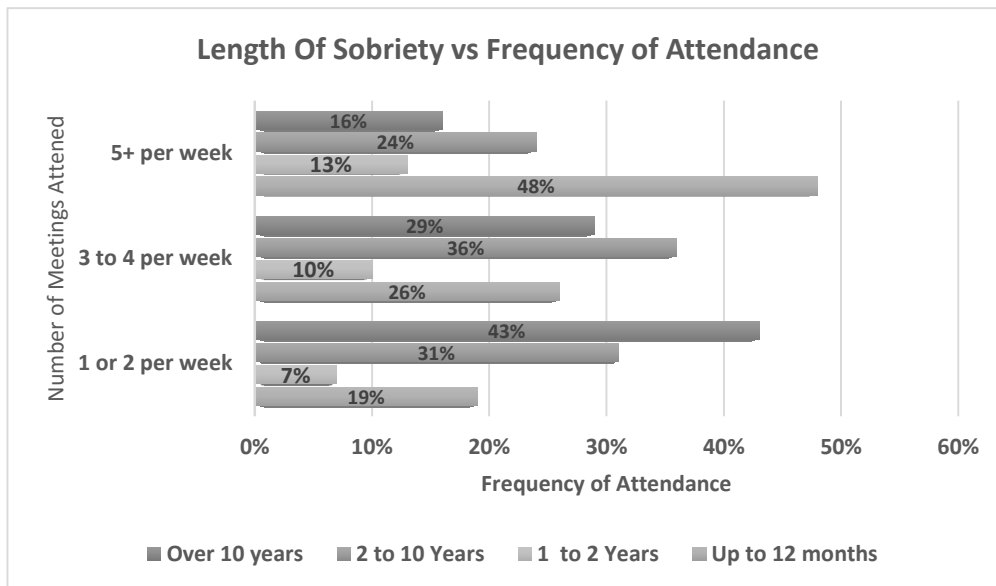
Before the Internet was below the Phone Directory but now you find it has shot up and younger people, and that's a fifth of people coming to AA, come through the pathway of the website. That is a terrific return on the money we spent on the website and if you think about it, we spend less than £10,000 annually on the website.

Other information that I think is quite interesting that fact that Probation and Prisons is quite low and we know that a lot of people with alcohol problems end up there and perhaps we should be focusing a bit more of our energy on persuading people from that particular area to get to AA.

Newspapers and Magazines are also low and I don't think that means we should not be trying to get articles in newspapers and magazines and it's important to keep the awareness of AA in the public's consciousness but, probably, young people don't read newspapers.



What we have tried to do, in the slide above, is to take the data from the various surveys and looked at the length of sobriety. If you are over 10 years in the 2015 survey 32% had been sober over 10 years but what is interesting is that 64% have been sober for more than 2 years and another thing that is also quite interesting is that a third of people have been sober for less than 1 year so we are attracting newcomers. You can see the changes over the years. In 1978 the number of people sober for more than 10 years was very small compared to what is happening now, it is a reflection of the fact that we are all living longer but actually that AA is successful in keeping you living longer.



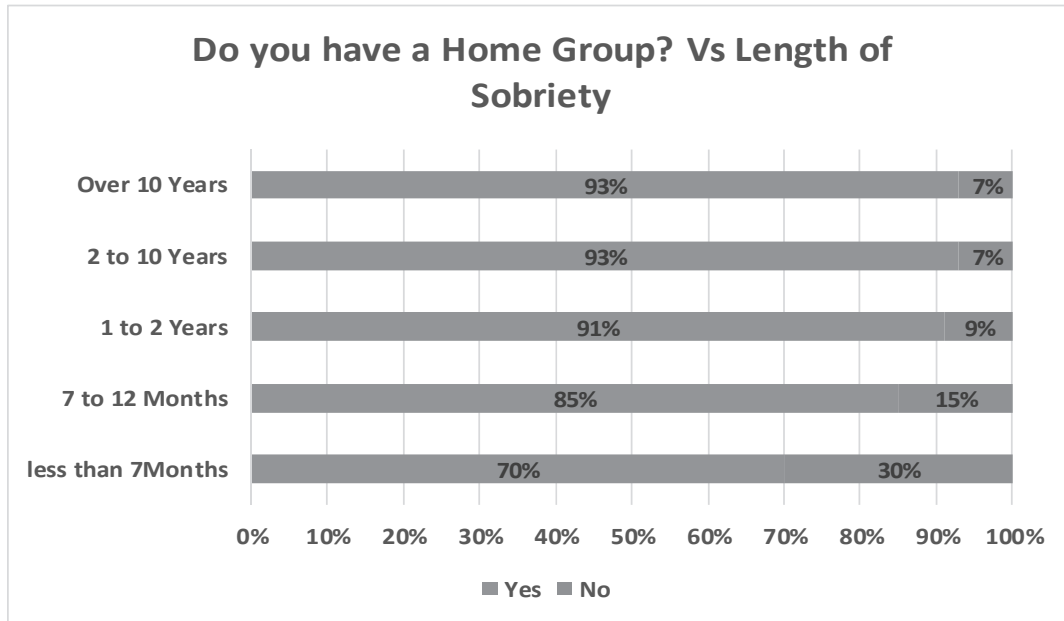
The graph above illustrates the importance of frequent attendance at AA meetings especially in early recovery.

At the top we have the people who are coming 5 times a week and for people who have less than a year's sobriety they find they have to go 5 times a week 48%, that actually fits in quite well with the problem that people have when they become alcoholic and that is, that your brain is dysfunctional and it is dysfunctional because the impulse centre in your brain and your memory centre is not working strongly enough to stop your thinking brain so you still forget the bad times that you have and you don't think it through logically, you don't remember so you need to artificially remind yourself and reinforce the thinking part of your brain and that is why it is important to go 5 times a week.

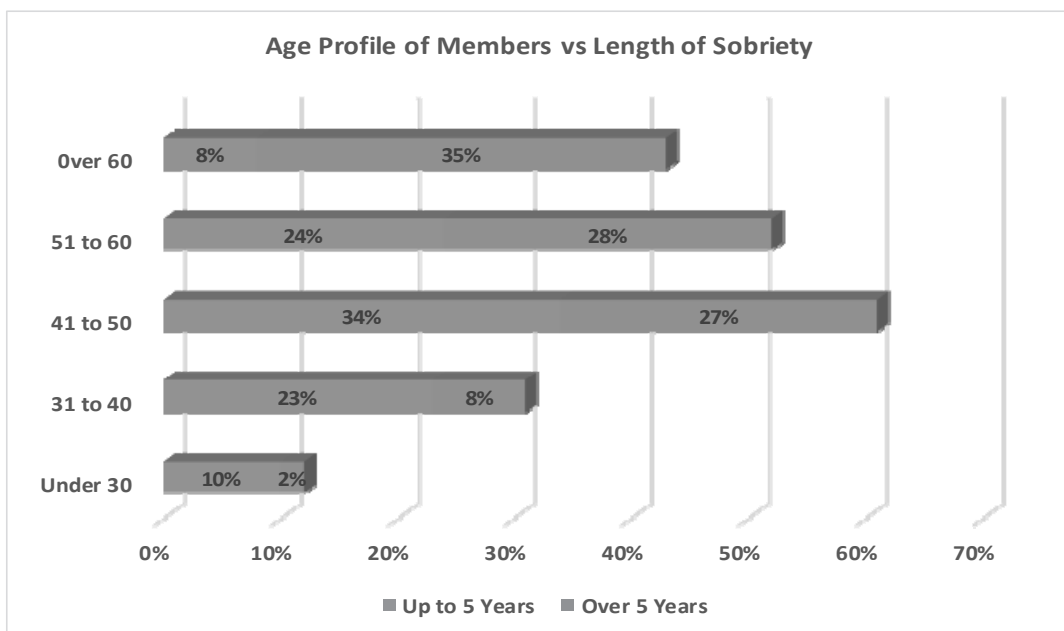
As you go up in years, over ten years, you find that some people for whom the illness is so severe that they still have to go 5 times a week 15% and you can see that this is a spectrum disorder in which you get a variety of intensity of the illness and people automatically work it out how often to go. Then you find people who go once or twice a week, after 10 years sobriety, is at 45% and that goes to show how well the programme of AA works. This gives us a lot of evidence of why people should attend a lot at the beginning of their tackling the illness and why over the years people don't go as frequently.

The graph below, illustrates the importance of having a home group to achieving and maintaining recovery.

93% of members with 2 or more years sobriety have a home group.

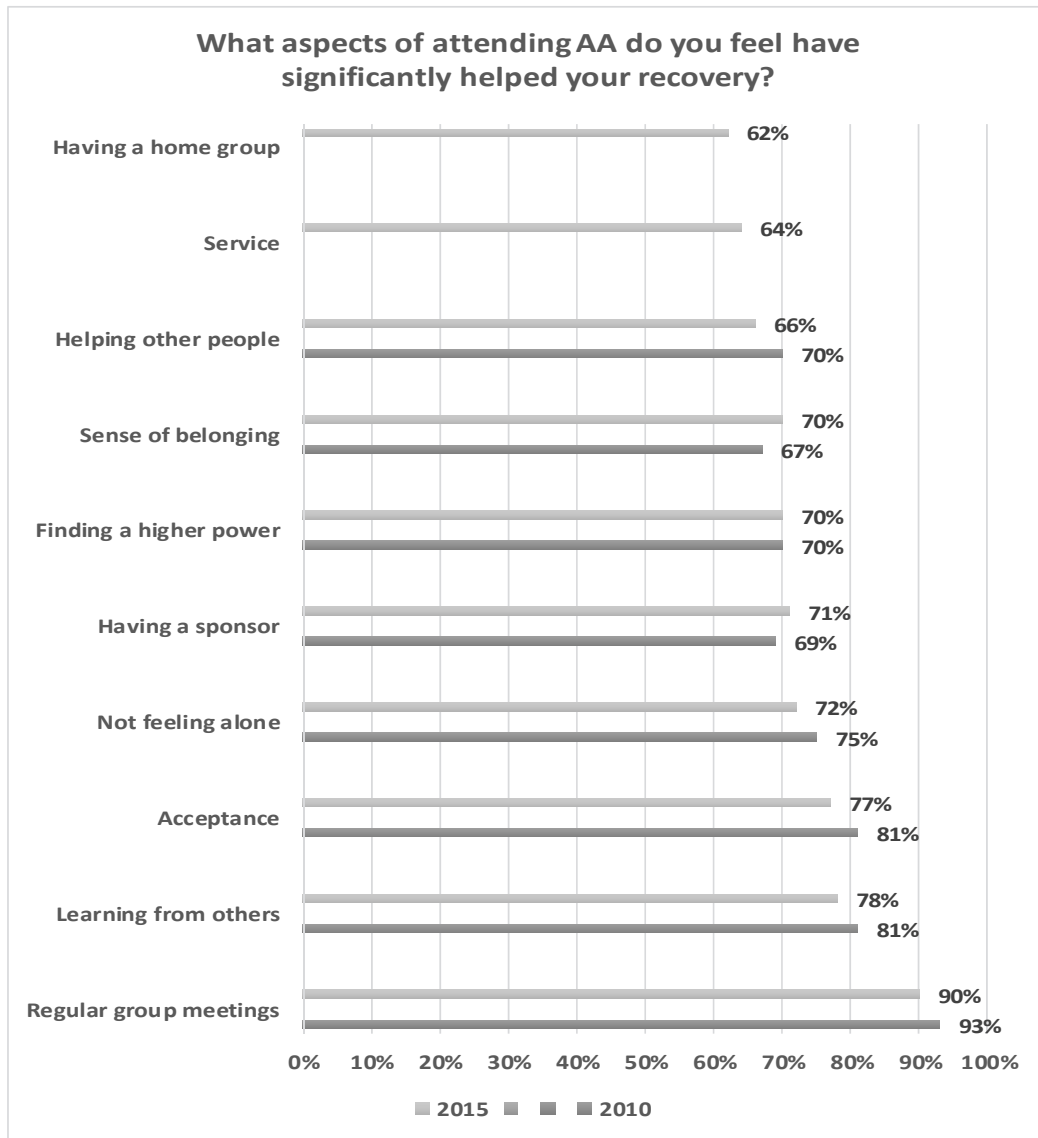


If you are less than 7 months sober 70% of you say that you have a home group but a third of you don't have a home group and I think it is important to get a home group and when you get to over 10 years sobriety 93% of people have a home group, so there is something about having a home group helps to keep people sober. I think this is a very strong message to give to the newcomer, get a home group and keep coming to it, you can change it later on, but the concept of the home group is important.



The above chart illustrates that AA is attracting an increasingly younger membership. Over 40% are under 40.

This shows that 12% of people are under 30 years of age and under the age of 40 it is 30% and it is part of our purpose trying to attract the younger people. The other thing to remember is alcoholism takes a while to develop in individuals and to come to the Fellowship for help.



90% of people in both surveys said going to regular group meetings significantly helped their recovery, listening and learning from others and the question of acceptance, lots of people felt that once they got acceptance it took away a lot of tension and not feeling alone.

Finding a higher power 70% in both surveys felt it was important and what it shows is that 30% of people didn't think it was important and yet they go to AA and are getting in recovery so you can say to people if you have not got a higher power, Ok it does not matter, there's lots of other things that are going to help you get well in Alcoholics Anonymous.

All of the data is at GSO and people can have access to that.

The people that have given the lowest response rate were the areas with the biggest areas of population and I don't know why that is: Scotia, Glasgow, London South and London

North all had very low response rates and it was the same groups that happened last time and that is something for the next survey group to address.

The survey team was selected by the Executive and we are meeting once more to take back any feedback from here and I would like to convey my thanks to the team who work very hard to formulate the questions which is difficult and then to produce the pamphlet.

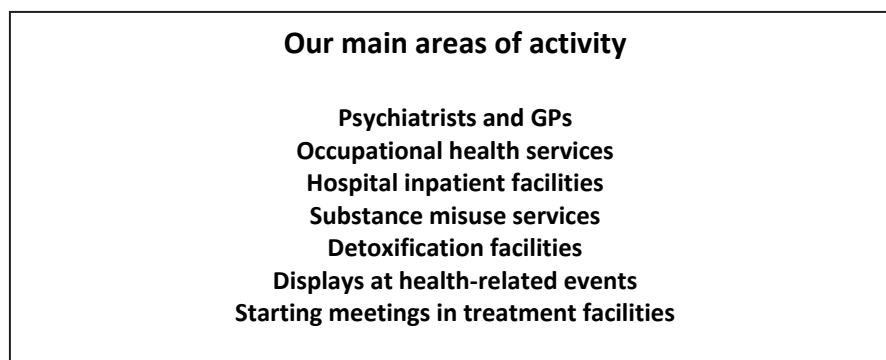
Thank you very much.

Health

(Geoff H and Nigel P)

Good evening Conference, my name is Geoff and I'm an alcoholic. Nigel and I would like to spend the next 20 minutes on sharing some aspects of the health discipline with you. I am rotating out of the health discipline after this Conference but Nigel is continuing and we are going to share this presentation, with Nigel doing the first half and myself the second and I will hand over to Nigel to start the ball rolling.

Hello Conference, my name is Nigel and I am an alcoholic. When we say carrying the AA message what we mean is to explain to professionals the message that AA has and the work that AA does and the success it enjoys in long term recovery. In these days of increasing targets and reducing budgets naturally we are a resource which they describe as successful outcomes at no cost to them is doubly attractive.



You can see our target audience and some of the things we do to improve our contact with them and in knowledge of AA. In the past year we have been successful in using a new method of doing this when addressing larger groups of professionals we run a short AA meeting within their meeting so it can observe what happens, after which we let them become involved in something similar, but it's not an AA meeting, to experience it for themselves. This conveys the sense of the meeting not by talking about it, which may or may not be successful but by opening the hearts and minds in ways that can make them capable of experiencing that which cannot be described. It better enables them to see that what we seek to achieve is not simply a psychological solution but rather a spiritual one.

The Health Sub Committee comprising of myself, Phil H, Ranjan B, Geoff H, John McC and Andre M and they look after a number of Regions and I am very grateful for the work they do and it's a very busy team. We currently have one vacancy on it and this vacancy means that we cannot do what we would like to do. If you can think of someone who would like to fill that vacancy, perhaps that person might be you or someone you know, please come and talk to me about it.

We get involved in looking at the way we work right across the service structure and try to find the most successful experiences and share them across the discipline. Each member of the Committee has a number of Regions which they specifically get involved with and we ensure that they have all the help and support we can provide.

The team also looks at our documents and guidelines and ensures that they are fit for purpose, for example some of the work we do can cause problems for groups especially when a group finds itself swamped with newcomers from treatment centres. How can we best work with the treatment centres and in order to best deal with this we have been developing a pamphlet regarding AA in treatment centres. We are also looking at the current video we have available to show professionals and have come to the conclusion that this could be improved in a number of ways so we are looking at how best to do this.

We hold regular seminars for our Health Liaison Officers and this year's was very successful. We invited Tony Mercer from Health Services England to tell us what more we can do to get our message out there to the people in his organisation. This, combined with talks from both the Sub Committee and others involved in this service area and PI proved to be very successful in helping our liaison officers. This did not happen by accident and involved a lot of work by the Sub Committee.

I would like to talk about cooperation with Public Health England (PHE) which Nigel has already mentioned. We have had a three year relationship of cooperation with Public Health England and the core of that has been our attendance at the Mutual Aid Reference Group within Public Health England in London. That group is a multi-agency group consisting of commissioners, treatment providers and members of the various mutual help organisations including our own, of course. The purpose of this group has been to steer, if you like, the project that Public Health England have had running for three years now called Improving Mutual Aid Engagement, in other words how to encourage people in treatment to attend mutual aid meetings.

As a consequence of that the group has produced a number of resource documents, seven in all, for commissioners and providers and the reason I mention this is even though they are not meant for our Fellowship, they are meant for professional people, AA is mentioned in all of them, a description of AA, what we are able to offer and how you can become involved in AA together with our contact details.

The core of the actual work in terms of cooperation, because the steering group is all it is, a steering group, we have constructed a communication network throughout the country where contacts within our AA Regions are in contact with the Substance Misuse Leads in PHE centres. Unfortunately, there is a lack of co-terminosity between our two organisations and in the Health Report you have all received, you will see a couple of tables we have put in which illustrates the problem and it also shows how we have been able to match up the two organisations throughout the country. Various degrees of cooperation have occurred throughout the country between our Fellowship and members of PHE.

If PHE is effective in encouraging commissioners and providers to encourage in turn people who are in treatment centres to attend AA, if they had been doing this over the last few years, you would expect to see an increase in our membership of people who first heard about AA whilst in a treatment centre. Whilst this cannot emphatically be proved I think these results are quite encouraging. Just 13% in 2010 claimed that had heard about AA whilst in a treatment centre and that went up to 18% this year and if you consider those

who came in, in the last five years, it is 21%. Just for comparison purposes in the American survey it shows 32% of the people in their Fellowship heard about AA whilst in a treatment centre so I am hoping this trend continues over the next few years.

Nigel has referred to the Health Seminar and I would also like to say a little bit about this. It was a really good event, around 70 people attended and all of the Regions were represented including Continental European Region (CER) and the newly-appointed HLO for CER, Toby.

Nigel also referred to Tony Mercer, and Tony is Health Improvement Manager for Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco in the West Midlands Public Health England centre but he also has some national responsibilities, he gave a really useful address in which he mentioned the considerable evidence-base which shows that people are more likely to achieve recovery when they attend mutual aid meetings at the same time as being in treatment. This evidence-base is mainly American but from the statistics coming up from our survey, could well contribute to a British evidence-base because it clearly shows that if you go to meetings of AA and carry on going to meetings of AA you will stay sober.

Tony Mercer was asked what worked and didn't work and he said that there were a lot of myths out there about our Fellowship that you have to believe in God and that it is a religious programme and that he did his best to defuse that myth. He said what worked the most was where there was good local arrangements between treatment facilities and our Fellowship and there are lots of good working examples of that in various parts of the country – especially in West Midlands and our two London Regions and, in fact, the first two pilot schemes began in the two London Regions.

Experience of Health Liaison work. Whilst we were planning this we thought it important to HLOs who were at the seminar and who were perhaps new in post for an experienced HLO to say a little bit about their work and John McC, Sub Committee member, offered to do this and talked about his experience of Health liaison in the Glasgow Region. He mentioned that during the first six months of working with the local addiction service some 96 12th Step calls were received and that is a fantastic number when you think about it.

However, with the building of the new Southern General Hospital in Glasgow new arrangements were made and new policies brought in which interrupted their work. In the new addiction facilities the patients were in single rooms which threw up issues of safety and safeguarding and so, first the first time to my knowledge, clearance had to be sought for the people going in. All of those disclosures now have gone through and John tells me this weekend that they are beginning to move forward again. We are in an entirely different world now and whilst we have had this a long time in Prisons perhaps we will encounter it more in health liaison.

The Cornwall Roadshow initiative. The reason why we had this was because the Health Liaison function is integrated into the broader PI function in Cornwall and they have had a number of successful Roadshows with professional staff and all of these Roadshows were shown on their website. They issue records of attendance to the doctors who attend for the purposes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and they say since they have been doing that attendance at these events has increased.

Andre, of the Health Sub Committee, gave an overview of the Health discipline on the AA website and I would encourage you to have a look at it and also all the resources we have

produced over the last few years are on the website under Members, Discipline, Health and the resources are all downloadable.

Finally, Ranjan and Stephen from London Region South and Robin from South East Region gave an AA presentation on AA demonstration meetings and a number of these have taken place over the last year, both here and mainland Europe.

A typical pattern is that there is a 30 minute AA meeting given in the presence of professional people on their premises and they can either sit in the circle or observe and the AA members in this circle share their experience, strength and hope in the usual way. After an interval, a second meeting is formed and the professional staff are invited to share along with the AA staff. There is absolutely no pressure and the evaluations we have received afterwards have been really first rate because most of them have said that they felt part of the proceedings, and the most telling thing is that most of them said they feel more enabled and more encouraged to encourage in their turn, the clients with alcohol problems who they are working with. This is an instrument really, one of many, which hopefully will encourage more people to come to our Fellowship.

It is important to stress that the second meeting is not a formal AA meeting as we know it, it is a demonstration meeting to give an opportunity for professional staff to have a feel of what it is like to sit in a circle and to listen to and share with other people, because they then have an understanding of how it will be for their clients, who always express some form of anxiety or reluctance.

To anybody in the audience who has not been to a seminar of any discipline, when the opportunity rises to grasp it and I, personally, have always got a lot out of these seminars and I would like everybody to have the experience.

Thank you.

Telephones

(Judy F)

Good evening everyone, my name is Judy and I am an alcoholic. The discipline I am responsible for is telephones.

In March 2015 we updated our Terms of Reference which enabled us to increase our Committee members by two, we now have six members in total which I hope will enable us to become more efficient and effective.

In 2015 last year Conference agreed that we could change our national 0845 number to an 0800 non-geographic telephone number and it is proving to be quite successful as you will see. The contract for the 0800 number was signed by Roger at GSO in July last year and the contract for the 0845 number was renewed and signed in October last year. It is envisaged that as the call volume to the 0845 number reduce and the new 0800 number becomes familiar and established, the 0845 number can be discontinued. That will, of course, depend on how the volume of calls to the 0845 number decrease and it will also have allowed sixteen rather than eighteen months for our documentation and literature to be changed.

The adoption of the 0800 number proved to be fairly seamless. Initially some areas did encounter some problems with the routing of mobile telephone calls and for that reason we asked BT to check on the 0800 connection, which they did, and it was found that they were updating and replacing their equipment and that was what was causing all the problems. The problems have now largely been resolved but we still get mobile phone calls dropping down in different areas. What BT did was to install new hardware while still running the existing equipment and that was due to be completed on October 19th last year and hopefully it is completed now. In spite of that the 0800 number proved to be extremely successful and you can see on the following chart:

Call Statistics:		
	0800	0845
July:	4,160	1,282
August:	4,041	1,019
September:	4,642	709
October;	4,173	494
November:	4,193	498
December:	4,661	468
Total:	25,870	4,470

	2014 0845 number calls	2015 0845 number calls	2015 0800 number calls	2015 Total calls	2015 v 2014
July	4,062	1,282	4,160	5,442	+34.0%
August	4,366	1,019	4,041	5,060	+15.9%
September	3,967	709	4,642	5,351	+34.9%
October	4,000	494	4,173	4,667	+16.7%
November	4,174	498	4,193	4,691	+12.4%
TOTAL	20,569	4,002	21,209	25,211	+22.6%

The above shows answered calls only. The table shows the average monthly increase in calls received on the 0845 number in 2014 and in 2015 the last column gives you the figures for 2015 verses 2014 and it is a 22.6% increase in calls received.

In real terms AA has received almost 6,000 more calls in the period from July to November compared with the same period in 2014 which shows that we have made the right decision in changing to the 0800 number.

Since 2015 AA has consistently received over 4,000 calls to the new Freephone number every month whereas the volume of calls to the 0845 number have declined from 1,282 calls in July last year to 498 calls in November last year.

The average length of the calls, the time people are on the telephone, has declined from 5.1 minutes in 2014 to 4.8 minutes in 2015 over the same five month period. Similarly calls

which last over an hour in duration has fallen from 53 in 2014 to 48 in the same period in 2015.

There has also been a noticeable increase in the call volumes from mobile phones to both numbers. During the period July to November in 2014 9695 calls were received from mobiles which represented 39% of the total of 24,624 calls. That total includes ineffective calls that that were ring tone non reply or not answered for some reason. During the same period in 2015 14,852 calls came from mobiles, that represented 48% of the total volume of 31,166 calls and, again, that includes ineffective calls.

Mobile calls volumes July – December, 2015:	
0800	0845
14,883	3,287
Combined total of 18,170	

As you can see above there is a huge difference between the calls going to the Freephone number and the calls going to the 0845 number and, again, it proves that we made the right decision at Conference last year to change the number.

The Regional Telephone Liaison Officers' Meeting in August last year was really well attended and I think that every Region was represented including the Polish Intergroup in London and Continental Europe.

We voted on producing a quarterly newsletter and before Christmas we produced a preliminary newsletter and in January we produced our first newsletter. The next newsletter is due towards the end of April and is underway now.

There was also considerable enthusiasm for the proposed seminar in August this year and Regional TLOs were asked to suggest topics for this, which they have done and we hope it will be well attended. All Intergroup and Regional TLOs are invited to attend.

We can ask ourselves three questions: Have we been efficient, effective and economic? I believe we have because the figures seem to prove that and the fact that it is being effective is, again, proved by the statistics. Whether we are going to be economic or not, well we will find that out in the future and hopefully we will get more people into the Fellowship.

Thank you.

AA Service News Update

(Joe H)

The AA Service News is the principal medium for communication of service within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Great Britain.

Articles within it give particular emphasis to matters affecting our primary purpose - which is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. There have been a large variety of articles donated over the past twelve months reflecting a wide range of experience within the service of the Fellowship, as well as giving insight to the nature of the services in the Fellowship at all levels of service.

AA Service News has been produced and circulated quarterly. Two editions are given over to Conference questions and its recommendations. The remaining two editions are themed around the articles supplied. I would like to give a special mention to GSO staff who coordinate the production and enable it to go out on time. Thanks also to the many volunteers who gather four times a year on a Saturday morning at GSO and pack the envelopes. This is no easy task as at times there are several flyers and/or reports per envelope. To those people a very big thank you.

For the future it would be very beneficial to AASN if members of the Fellowship and non-alcoholic trustees (NATS) reflected on the service opportunities the Fellowship offers them and how they deliver that service, and commit their reflections to paper. Also people who having given service to the Fellowship and rotated out, they are asked to provide their personal perspective of the work they carried out.

It is this sharing of this service experience that not only benefits individuals but the Fellowship as a whole. We might think that everyone carries out this or that service in the same way, but it's the social, geographical, demographical nature of an intergroup, (or region) as well as its resources that makes each service opportunity unique in how it is delivered. If you have had a service event in the recent past please share it with AA Service News.

Three copies of AASN are posted to the mailing contact for all Groups in the GB Service Structure. It is also posted to all Intergroup and Regional officers and the General Service Board. AASN is free of charge to all recipients. If you do not see AASN appear at your Group ring and check the mail contact on your PINK SHEET held at GSO.

Archives Update

(Tom B)

The work of the Archives Sub-Committee continues on the production of THE HISTORY OF THE AA SERVICE STRUCTURE OF GB AND ENGLISH SPEAKING EUROPE. While this work has been hindered slightly by the absence of a Fellowship Archivist we are hoping to remedy this by the time you read this at Conference, we aim to have draft copies of the various disciplines history's for review at the Sub-Committee meetings in May this year.

In the absence of a Fellowship Archivist, a word of appreciation goes to Stephen S, ex Fellowship Archivist now of GSO, who has been doing sterling work as a stand-in and gives his time freely. Stephen has recently unearthed a lovely article on Nell Wing, who came to work for the ALCOHOLIC Foundation (old name) in 1947 and shines a light on the very early days and gives an intriguing account on its development through to 1973 when the Archives Committee was set up as a standing Committee of the GSB, and Nell became the Fellowship's first Archivist.

Finally I would like to urge you to take note, if your Region or Intergroup hasn't got an Archivist maybe to encourage someone to fill this role, our annual Archivist meeting this

year was attended by only 16 Archivists, which is very disappointing considering how many Intergroups and Regions exist in our Fellowship.

Armed Services Update

(Brian J)

It is a great honour and privilege to serve as the Board Trustee with responsibility for Armed Services. Before I present the report firstly I would like to give my vote of thanks to my predecessor Robert M and the members of his sub-committee for all the sterling work he and his officers did on behalf of the Armed Services.

I would also like to give a huge thank you to all of the Groups, Intergroups and Regions who have been 'Carrying the Message of Alcoholics Anonymous' to the Armed Services and their families. No initiative goes unnoticed and my grateful thanks to all members concerned for their hard work and for making my role a great deal easier.

Excerpt from Guideline 21:

AA And The Armed Services: 'Intergroups and Regions are responsible for the appointment of an Armed Services Liaison Officer [ASLO] to work in conjunction with other Intergroup and Regional officers. The role of the ASLO is to establish and maintain communication between Alcoholics Anonymous and The Royal Navy, The Army and The Royal Air Force and to report back at all levels within Intergroup or Region. It is also important to cultivate similar contact and communication with Community Welfare Officers and organisations such as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and Veterans-U.K. Familiarity with the local area and a thorough working knowledge of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain are vital before accepting the role of Armed Services Liaison Officer'.

I took over from Robert at Conference last year and for the last 12 months I have been trying to feel my way into the post. To that end a Sub-Committee of 6 members has been formed and we have started to continue passing the message to serving, ex serving members and their families.

At the time of writing this update the new sub-committee has met only once where we began to update the terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee, also update the information held on the AA website with relevance to the Armed Services and agreed methods of trying to expand the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to organisations with an interest in the welfare of the Armed Services and ex service personnel. To this end we have continued to stay in contact with the organisations that are directly associated with the Services.

For example

- Director General, Army Medical Services.
- Services Medical Directorate
- Service Base Medical Centres.
- SAAFA
- British Legion.
- Combat Stress
- Help the Hero's etc.

To further widen the carrying of the message ASSC members, RASLO's and ASLO's continue to make contact with Service Bases around the country to offer AA's services to their personnel. We continue to make progress in this area with meeting being established at:-

- Faslane Naval Base
- RAF Lakenheath Fenlands

With initial contact being made at the following bases:

- Couldrose Naval Base. Cornwall
- Dreghorn Barracks Edinburgh (HIVE Centre) H.I.V.E's are Information Centres that support the Service Community.
- Glencorse Barracks (Medical Centre) Penicuik Edinburgh
- Redford Barracks (Medical Centre) Edinburgh
- Wellington Barracks North London
- 14 Regt Royal Artillery Wiltshire
- Royal Signals Establishment, Blandford Forum Dorset
- Irish Guards in Aldershot
- MoD Abbey Wood Bristol
- MoD Boscombe Down
- Imjin Barracks

Initial contacts have also been made with

- Local Councils (Armed Services Champion)
- Armed Services Covenant
- Norfolk Health-watch

Visits to ex service personnel residential units continue. For example:

- Bellrock Close Crannhill (Ex Service Personnel Residential Unit) Glasgow.

Contact has also been established at the following organisations:

- Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women
- Burma Star Association
- Community Network
- Forces in Mind Trust
- Reserve Forces and Cadets' Associations
- Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League
- Seafarers Link Charity
- First Steps / Healthy Minds / Virgin Care Limited in Surrey, in relation to a project entitled 'Surrey Engagement: Reservists and Veterans Emotional Support (SERVES
- NHS England Veterans' Tedworth House, Tidworth
- The COBSEO website listings of services charities have now been fully reviewed and all services charities with a welfare function headquartered within the London region have now been contacted.

Adverts have been placed in various service periodicals:

- Pathfinder (Resettlement Information Magazine)
- Soldier (Internal Army Magazine)

- The MoD intranet (Internal forces information web-site)

This list of contacts is not exhaustive but just examples of the good work being carried out all over the country by the dedicated team of RASLO's / ASLO's & GSO Staff

New areas for expansion are being considered, a plan of action will be formulated at the next Sub-Committee & RASLO's meeting taking place in York February 2016. Areas of interest:

- Royal Navy & Marine reservists
- Armed Services Day
- Territorial Army
- RAF Reservists
- New Services Related Charities
- Traumatic Stress Related Disorder Self Help groups

For us to fulfil this undertaking a full coverage of the UK mainland is desirable within the Armed Services discipline there are large areas of the UK we have very few or no LO's in place. This is most noticeable in South West, South East and Midlands Regions of England Wales & Scotland and to a lesser extent in London South and Eastern Regions

There are to-date 15 Regions within the UK with 102 Intergroups and 4316 Groups registered at GSO.

We have at present: 9 RASLO's and 31 ASLO's in-place. So as can be seen from these figures there are huge geographical gaps in the active coverage we are able to undertake. So if we hope to fulfil our commitment to Guideline 21 an increase in the Liaison Officers would be desirable.

Employment Update

(Sandy MacV)

Overall 2015 was a successful year for the Employment discipline.

We started the year with our first Sub Committee meeting on February 6th. This turned out to be a worthwhile meeting setting the agenda for the rest of the year.

We are still working on our Web pages.

An invite from The Northern National Convention was extended to our discipline for someone from our Committee to speak at their service forum on Employment. Maxine W agreed to attend.

April 24th was the date for our next Sub Committee meeting. The agenda for our Annual Liaison Officers meeting was set. We agreed that we would endeavour to produce our first edition of Hello ELO's for 2015 with a view to having available for the Liaison Officers meeting in June. Maxine W. reported on her experience at the Northern National Convention in Blackpool which by all accounts was a great success. Unfortunately due to ill health our Sub Committee Secretary Peter was unable to attend the meeting.

The Annual Liaison Officers meeting in June proved to be a great success with 10 Regional Officers plus our Sub Committee members in attendance. We were pleased to introduced John P. our new Sub Committee member to the fold. The enthusiasm exuded from our liaison officers proved that Employment is in safe hands.

It was agreed at the meeting that we should hold a Seminar in June 2015. This was approved at the Board meeting in September

We introduced our first copy of Hello ELO's to the liaison officers and Sub Committee. We launched it to the Fellowship on 29th June.

I was privileged to be invited to attend the Midlands Forum to talk on Employment during July in Birmingham. This proved to be a great success.

Our next Sub Committee meeting was in October. We received the unfortunate news that Peter, our Sub Committee secretary, had to resign due to his ongoing illness. We are extremely grateful for all the hard work that Peter put in during his time on the Committee and wish him well for the future.

A request for more committee members was posted on the website and also in AA Service News.

Our main topics were the Agenda for the Seminar 2015, the Employment Starter Pack and the second edition of Hello ELO's for 2015 with a view to it being launched before Christmas. Monday 21st December is the date set for the Hello ELO launch.

There is a lot of hard work being carried out by our Sub Committee members and Liaison Officers. They are carrying the message of AA to Employers, Unions, Law Firms, Councils, Health Employers and many more.

For all this great work we are extremely grateful.

With the gradual increase in Intergroup and Liaison Officers and the interest in the Sub Committee vacancies I feel that the Employment Disciple is in a healthy condition.

Prisons Update

(Roger E and Charlie R)

Number of Prisons	143
Number of Prisons holding AA Meetings	103
Number of Prisons not holding AA Meetings	38
Don't Know	2

Seminar

The year started with a very successful seminar held at York for PLO's the speakers were:

Tom Fox is the Head of Corporate Affairs in the Scottish Prison Service

Tony Mercer is a Health Improvement Manager (Alcohol and other Drugs) for Public Health England

John Mason and Ken Dawson from RAPT an agency operating in prisons delivering alcohol and drug programs

A very useful question and Answers session identified two main common difficulties experienced namely:

Security clearance

The inconsistencies in the time it takes to get clearance often resulting in the prison sponsor losing interest and moving on to another form of service

Lack of understanding of refusals of clearance

See Mutual Aid Meeting Below

Literature

Some prisons had not allowed some of our literature into their prisons

See Mutual Aid Meeting Below

Governors' Letter

A letter has been sent to all 143 Prison Governors with the intention of consolidating our relationship with those prisons who hold meetings and to introduce our Fellowship those prisons not holding meetings.

It is clear from the responses received that our meetings are highly valued also some prisons not currently holding meetings have expressed an interest in having further discussions with us.

Inside Times (The Prisoners Paper)

Currently we appear Bi monthly, we will also be writing an article that will be published in 2016. Also an article is to be written for AA Service News.

Literature

New Literature (subject to Conference approval) will be available from June 2016

Private Prisons

A meeting with G4S at their request so that they could understand what we did and didn't offer, it will be interesting to see what progress will be made in the coming year.

Mutual Aid Meeting

Both prison vetting and NOMS were represented and they were very interested in any problems we experienced with clearance issues.

Their answers were:

The security clearance forms are currently being reviewed. A Guide to completion of the forms is being produced. A copy of Guidelines issued, Timescales and Appeals procedures will be produced by the next meeting (Jan 2016) also details of the literature approval process and contact details.

The Prison Service "Through the Gate Initiative "

The intention is for a prisoner to receive a continuity of support not only when in prison but on release and thereafter in the community, we should be ideally placed to provide this service as far as alcohol is concerned.

Probation/Criminal Justice Services Update

(Clive D)

Not every Intergroup or indeed Region has a liaison officer and as a consequence reports are not submitted via the service structure. Sometimes items are "hidden" in PI or Health liaison reports and sometimes the scope of this service discipline is just misunderstood. An example of this is for one Intergroup that has excellent contacts with their local Police Force to not report this to probation "because of course it's PI."

A period of transition for England and Wales's Probation Services and Police Scotland still adjusting to their reorganisation(s) and Probation only finalised in June. This of course created the problems for access by members of the Fellowship throughout the period and of course we are still getting used to calling Probation areas Community Rehabilitation Contracts (CRC).

Where we had a good relationship before, this in a few cases, was maintained and those areas using the CHIT system were able to continue this and indeed this "system" is being used to good effect throughout England, Wales and Scotland. The Probation Sub Committee have forwarded details for use in other disciplines such as Health (Social Services) and Employment.

It has been a noticeable trend that the Fellowship is now concentrating on "dealing with" the Courts systems in England and Wales and (from received reports) Social Services/treatment facilities in Scotland.

Along with Martin W a NAT and Marnie from London Region North we have had meetings with Chief Executive of the Probation Association and hope to continue to maintain exposure with the Probation Services through this organisation

I have regular contact with Charlie R and Roger E, the Prison Trustees to review the "Through the Gate" and similar method of prisoner release and other items of common interest such as health of prisoners.

Charlie and myself have had a meeting with Sheriff Duff of the Scottish Judicial Committee, who has overall responsibility for training JPs etc. in Scotland and who promised to ensure that the Fellowship was given appropriate notice. Due to the lack of reports as referred to above it is not known if any local initiatives were formed.

At a Ministry of Justice conference a presentation was made by Andrew Selous, the Minister for Probation and Prisons, who waxed lyrical about the benefits of the official services working with voluntary sector especially mutual aid (bother I promised myself not to use that phrase!) Roger and myself have been trying to get a meeting with him.

I have also attended another of Ministry of Justice Conferences and through this made contacts with organisations organising training courses with Probation Training (Manchester College and Ingeous).

At the Chiltern and Thames Intergroup annual event for awareness with the Criminal Justice services, meetings with magistrates were arranged, unfortunately only with local benches not their national Association although I have tried.

Maybe not the disaster that many foresaw but as always for us work is to be done and I would suggest that perhaps it really is time to rename the discipline "Criminal Justice Services". Would Conference let me know?

Public Information Update

(Wullie I)

Public Information (PI), AA Members, Groups, Intergroups, Regions, the PI Sub-committee, and our Non-Alcoholic Trustees (NATS) 'Carrying The Message of Alcoholics Anonymous' to

every area of the wider community to help the still suffering alcoholic find a way out. My heartfelt thanks to everyone involved at All levels. We are often the first contact the public have with our Fellowship.

PI work can be frustrating, as sometimes we are never aware of the impact of Carrying the Message, but can also be very rewarding, knowing that our message has been passed on through work in schools, local councils, professionals, etc.

Parliamentary Events:

Our yearly parliamentary events at Westminster and Holyrood, yet again, proved to be a success. Unfortunately the Welsh Assembly event at the Senedd had to be cancelled but hopefully with resume this year (2016)

PI Sub-committee:

Members of the Public Information subcommittee met four times during 2015. Following on from our Media strategy of last year, we are encouraging more local level press coverage through Intergroups and Regions. The PI Sub-committee is developing contacts within national newspapers and broadcasters to inform them about AA – particularly the unique role of the Non-Alcoholic Trustee's ability to speak openly about the principles of our fellowship. There has been enquires and discussions about possible ways of carrying the message via screenwriters working on TV dramas and documentaries. Websites and Telephone stats showed a particular rise of web hits and phone calls around the time a prime time TV programme showed one of the characters going to her first meeting and including our website address and Helpline number at the end of the programme.

Regional PI Liaison Officers:

The Regional PILOs' meeting was held in September with ten Regions represented. A very good and encouraging exchange of ideas and best practices.

The PI Sub-committee continues to encourage Groups, Intergroups and Regions to establish, maintain and develop contacts with professionals and local media - especially to use every opportunity to send news releases about PI and other AA activities.

Press Releases

News releases were sent out about AA's 80th anniversary in June 2015 and the launch of our new 0800 Freephone number in July 2015. These were taken up by some local and national papers.

PI News

PI Service News is circulated on or about the first day of each month. This reflects the latest PI activity throughout the country. Contributions from local Group, Intergroup and Region events are always welcomed.

Way Forward

The 2015 Membership Survey data is now available to the Sub-committee and will provide material for a news releases for local, regional and national media.

Considerable work continues on updating and simplifying PI content on the AA website, as well as ensuring the latest new releases and other information are shown.

There was discussion at the Regional PI meeting In York about the possibility of holding additional AA Awareness Events in January as well as in November.

There is discussion around updating our videos for the website and outside distribution and presentations and the possibility of using audio podcasts telling members' stories.

Roundabout Update

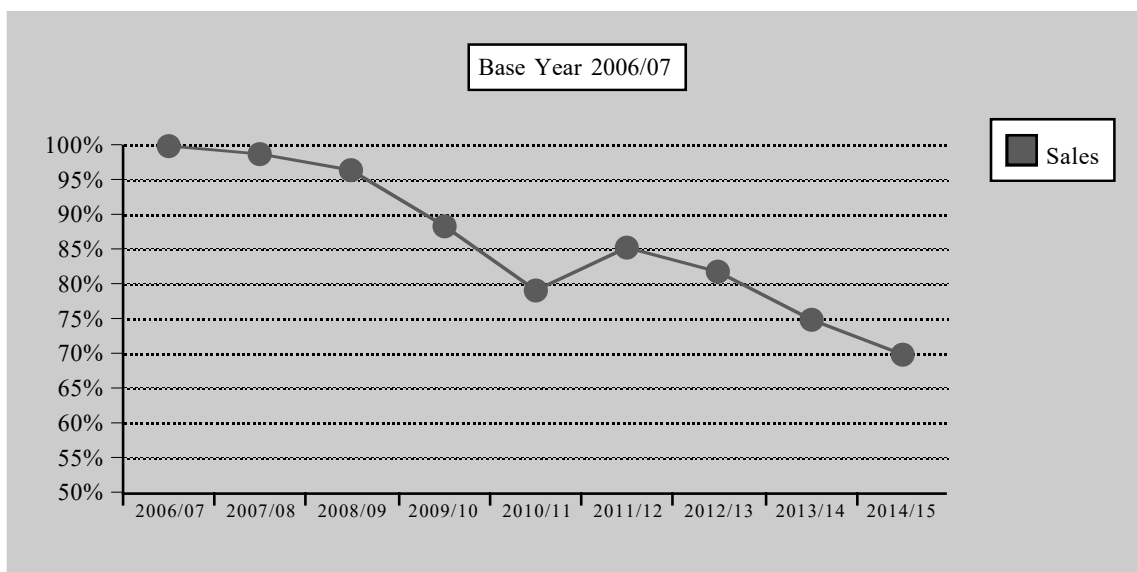
(James K)

The report to last year's Conference started with a considerable amount of optimism. The magazine had gone through a difficult spell, but had come through the problems with reinvigorated enthusiasm. A new editor had taken up post, and the number of articles sent in had increased considerably.

The same report, however, finished with a note of caution - there was a lack of volunteers to help put Roundabout together each month. And this past year has done little to alleviate the shortage. The Editor used to have four on the Subcommittee to assist with the production of Roundabout. Three have rotated off, and one replacement has been appointed, leaving just two assistants with one other application pending. Without fresh blood, the team will find it difficult to maintain production. There is every confidence that they will continue to bring out a magazine each month, but there may be people in your group, intergroup or region whose assistance would be valued.

The disappointments continued. Recently, there has been a new dearth of articles. Even a newsletter to all Roundabout Liaison Officers resulted in very little response. Each month, the Editor struggles to find enough original material to fill the pages. Please appeal to all members to share their experiences in our meeting in print.

Finally, there must be a mention of sales figures. In common with all print materials, Roundabout's sales have shown a continual drop over the years. Although we are still self-supporting - income is ahead of production costs - this may not always be so. As the graph below shows, the number of magazines sold in the past year is only 70% of the numbers sold in 2006/07.



Roundabout is a lifeline for members of AA who cannot get to meetings. If you contribute to the survival of the magazine - by subscribing, by writing or by helping to produce the magazine - then you are performing a valuable service to AA as a whole.

SHARE Update

(Helen S)

There appears to be a lack of interest from the Fellowship in supporting our "Meeting between Meetings" into the future.

Traditionally, the magazine is produced *by* Members, *for* Members. Without the whole-hearted support of the Fellowship – at every level of the Service structure – it cannot continue to exist. SHARE is a very useful tool for Members to have in their Recovery Toolbox.

SHARE urgently requires a steady and continuous stream of articles, letters, and photographs. There is a two-month lead time for each issue (e.g., articles received in April will not appear before June). Some months, there are not enough articles to fill the pages!

If insufficient articles are received, the Editorial Team is obliged to write *your* article for *you* in order to fill the issue. On several occasions, the Editor has 'threatened' to leave blank pages with the message: "This is where your article *could* have been." Experience on the Steps, Traditions and the Concepts are always needed.

At Group, Intergroup and Regional level Members do not step forward to do the service required to support SHARE. The job of the Group Reps/Liaison Officers is to: 1) increase Group and individual sales; 2) talk about the value of SHARE magazine to their Groups, Intergroups and Regions; and 3) encourage and garner submissions of articles, letters and other relevant material for inclusion in the magazine.

Positions on the SHARE Sub-Committee, which is the team of Members who produce SHARE each month, are on a rotational basis. Members do not respond to SHARE's vacancy adverts for people to serve on the Sub-Committee. Positions go unfilled for months. At the time of writing, the advertisement for SHARE Editor has been running for over a year. When the 'acting' Editor rotates off the Sub Committee in late 2016 there will be no one to take his place – and no one to train a prospective new Editor.

- In June, the Editor pulled out all the stops: the 80th Anniversary issue was an enormous success and sold out completely.
- The 2016 Calendar is absolutely beautiful and healthy sales are expected for both Calendar and Diary.
- Another coup was the very popular December issue. It was beautiful and articles received were just right for what is, for some, a difficult time of the year.
- Despite the lack of Fellowship support, production targets continue to be met and apart from the January issue (when GSO is closed at the end of December) the magazine is going out on time.
- SHARE stands are available from GSO for conventions and mini-conventions.
- Current vacancies are for: Editor, Reader and Fellowship Calendar & Diary Editor, as well as many vacancies at Group, Intergroup and Region level.

- For 2014/15, overall sales are slightly up on the previous year and are holding fairly steady.
- Members are now able to purchase subscriptions by “bank transfer”.

In order for SHARE to prosper, it is vital that Members of the Fellowship *actively* support our “Meeting between Meetings”. Ultimately, the Fellowship will decide the future of SHARE Magazine.

18th European Service Meeting Update

(Brian J)

The European Service Meeting was held on 16/17 October 2015 at the Park Inn Hotel, York. Brian J and Geoff H represented AA GB.

Friday 16th

Countries Represented at the 18th ESM were as follows:

Austria, Belarus, Belgium (Flemish Speaking), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, German Speaking Europe, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland (French Speaking), Ukraine.

The delegates arrived and completed registration by 1500. ESM 2015 then commenced with the Preamble read by Roger B, General Secretary GB, followed by the Welcome and Opening address delivered by Penny A (Chairperson).

The 12 Traditions were then read followed by the Orientation delivered by Roger B, General Secretary GB.

A roll-call of countries taking part was carried out with all delegates introducing themselves. A report of the World Service Meeting 2014 was delivered by Lotte R, Austria, followed by a Keynote address delivered by Mary C, GSO, New York.

There was a brief report on the ESM Fund, followed by the presentation of the individual countries report highlights delivered by each participating country.

This session was completed and closed with the Serenity Prayer.

Saturday 17th

The Delegates were split into 3 committees to discuss the following topics

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|------------------------|---------------|
| • Committee 1 | Service | Chair: Colin T | Malta |
| • Committee 2 | Recovery | Chair: Loreta B | Lithuania |
| • Committee 3 | Unity | Chair: Geoff H | Great Britain |

On completion of discussions Chair-Persons / Alternates for the 19th ESM 2017 were elected. These are as follows

Committee 1

- | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| • Chair 2017 | Rita M | Italy |
| • Alternate | Dagur H | Iceland |

Committee 2

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------|
| • Chair 2017 | Kornelija Z | Latvia |
| • Alternate | Sune H-S | Denmark |

Committee 3

- Chair 2017 James O'B-C Spain
- Alternate Marjatta K Finland

After lunch a question and answer session was conducted.

Topics included

- Internal & External Communications (Skype, Face-Time etc)
- Sponsorship (Difficulties in finding qualified persons)
- Internet and Social Media (Anonymity, Safety)
- Twelve Step work (Difficulties in getting experienced volunteers)
- Service Posts (Difficulties in getting experienced volunteers)
- Speed of Action (Time taken to implement ideas)

On completion the Delegates were again split into 3 different workshops as follows:

- Workshop 1 Is AA Working?
- Workshop 2 Helping Newcomers
- Workshop 3 How to carry the message outside of AA (Prisons, Hospitals, Schools etc)

On completion of the workshop topics, Chair-Persons / Alternates for the 19th ESM 2017 were elected.

They are as follows

2017 Topic Preparing New People for Service

Chair 2017	Pawel W	Poland
Alternate	Brit A	Norway

2017 Topic Sponsorship in AA

Chair 2017	Marjatta K	Finland
Alternate	Brian J	Great Britain

2017 Topic Understanding of Principals before Personalities

Chair 2017	Jasna C-P	Slovenia
Alternate	Jurgen R	German Speaking Europe

Presentation of all three Committee findings, followed by discussions of the individual Committee findings, then took place.

A further Question and Answer / Open discussion session then took place continuing the topics highlighted above. This was followed a Share Meeting which closed with the Serenity Prayer.

Sunday 18th

The session opened with the presentation of all three Workshop findings, followed by discussions of the individual Workshop findings.

On completion of the workshop discussions there then followed the appointment of the 2017 ESM Chair and Alternate Chairs:

- Chair Michal S Czech Republic
- Alternate Chair Alunia D-K Poland

This was followed by the appointment of Delegates to represent the ESM at the 2016 World Service Meeting:

- Delegate Jurgen R German Speaking Europe
- Alternate Delegate Sune H-S Denmark

The closing addresses were delivered by 4 delegates chosen by Penny A (Chairperson) they were: Seamas B (Ireland), Gita T (Latvia), Gunnar M (Sweden), Mykhailo A (Ukraine).

This was followed by an address from Greg T, General Manager, GSO New York. The meeting was then closed with the Serenity Prayer delivered by each participating country in their native language.

Full details of the findings discussed within the Committee and Workshops are detailed in the full ESM 2015 Report, which has now been published.

Last, but not least, I would like to give a huge thank you for the tireless work put in the whole weekend by the GSB Staff: Angela, Chris, Jenny, Roger and Sophie, without whose organisational skills and efforts the Service meeting would not have run so smoothly. Thank you once again

Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting Update

(Roger B)

How it all started

In 1998 when the South African Board of Alcoholics Anonymous had their annual general meeting two representatives from GSO New York and one from GSO Great Britain attended. Their purpose was to talk to the SA Board about opening up Africa so that a Service Meetings structure could be created in like those in USA/Canada, South America, Europe, Australia/New Zealand and Far East areas.

In the era of Apartheid no other African nations had been willing to engage with South Africa. With the free elections held in 1998 the time seemed right to start making approaches to other African countries in order to find out whether and where A.A. might exist.

It was decided to begin just with the Sub Saharan countries in which English was likely to be spoken (formerly British colonies). And so began the task of finding telephone numbers and addresses for likely institutions and the major churches in the relevant countries.

Slowly but surely it became possible to put together a list of which countries had AA, which had heard of us but didn't have contacts and which had never heard of us but wanted AA. In some places there were expatriates – usually from the USA – who were running English speaking groups for other expats. The aim, however, was to put together groups of local people, speaking the indigenous languages as well as English who would be around all the time and help each other to build what could eventually become a coherent service structure.

Eventually in 2003 the first SSASM Meeting was held in Johannesburg. The delegates were mostly poor and came from areas where there was no AA money to help them. One man walked 21 kms to the airport to get his plane to Johannesburg. Another had borrowed a fine white suit to wear to the meeting as he had no decent clothes of his own.

The meeting was funded in its entirety by AA New York/Canada and AA Great Britain. In one session of the meeting self-support was discussed and the delegates were encouraged to teach the concept of self-support throughout their areas. Reports were later received of groups using church halls and paying their rent by painting these halls twice a year and keeping the church gardens neat and flourishing.

The plan was to try to get at least one dedicated AA telephone number in each country and so that people in need of help could make contact. A great deal of literature was donated by the two sponsoring countries for the delegates to take back with them.

During the mid 2000s Monica P. was sponsored into taking over the administration and much of the work she did was by necessity a continuation of that started by Jean G. always trying to penetrate new areas there had been a suggestion that an embryonic AA community existed.

Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting: June 2015

After a long flight Willie and I arrived in South Africa - boy was it cold - even by South African winter standards and discovered that the lodge where we were staying only had heating in the meeting room we were to use.

The reach of SSASM continues to serve twelve countries, each entitled to two delegates. Angus McG had taken over as Service Meeting Administrator/Convenor and did a fine job.

Phyllis Halliday General Manager and Rick Walker from the International Desk of GSO (US & Canada), Willie & I were there representing the GSOs/Boards of the sponsoring countries, to observe and give encouragement.

We started to gather slowly at first from Thursday 4th June, as delegates began arriving constantly over the next two days. By 6pm on Friday everyone was accounted for and the Meeting started at 8pm and the session closed at 11 pm. towards midnight. The evening was spent with introductions of first term delegates, greetings to those returning for the second time and acceptance of the minutes of the previous Meeting.

The Keynote address was given by Phyllis entitled 'Let it begin with me - a gathering of accountability' which gave the weekend a very positive and enthusiastic start to the proceedings.

This was followed by Rick who talked about Literature Translation and Licences - a topic often not understood and dear to the heart of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Last of the introductory addresses was given by Willie who talked about our General Service Conference with snapshots of how it works.

Saturday began bright and early and no warmer! With many attending an A.A. 'early bird meeting' at 6am.

Agenda sessions got underway at 8am after a hearty breakfast. The morning was taken up by reports from each country as to progress made and set-backs since the last meeting followed by a workshop on the meeting theme. It was evident from many of the reports that AA is very much in its infancy in most of the Sub Saharan nations with few meetings and members. It certainly made me realise once again just how fortunate we are to have a mature Fellowship structure at home and also how committed our African friends were to sustain their recovery by going to the lengths that our early members did against the odds.

Mandy from GSO RSA and Corrie the National AA Literature chair set up an impressive literature display during the lunch break and delegates had the opportunity of sampling and buying AA literature and arranging future purchases. Obtaining literature for most African countries is a tedious and costly process, where funds are often minimal or even non-existent, even where it has been ordered it can disappear in transit.

The afternoon was spent in workshops and reports-back on topics submitted by the delegates themselves moving into discussion and question and answer sessions. Here lessons and experience was shared in extending the hand of AA where it has not yet reached. At 6pm the day's agenda was concluded and tired delegates and sponsors were allowed to relax. The meeting was much more settled this year and I certainly felt it was consolidating and wanting to take forward the results of the 2013 Service Meeting. A great enthusiasm was evident with many new concepts and ideas for inter-nation cooperation and projects being discussed and starting to be planned.

Sunday once again began with the 'early bird meeting' and sessions commenced at 8am. Although there was an awareness and sadness that the meeting was coming to a close, there was a stronger feeling of excitement and hope throughout the assembly. The business of electing the next chairperson and other necessary items were dealt with speedily and the balance of the morning given over to observations and comments from delegates. The whole spirit of this session built on the promise of 2013 to extending the reach of the mature Service Structure in South Africa with its GSO and General Service Board (AA has been in existence here since the 1960s) to encompass all the other emerging AA African nations represented. The project is being slowly implemented as Countries come on board.

Once again I felt hugely privileged to attend the SSASM and be part of carrying the message internationally as part of our commitment expressed in the AA Pledge and the legacy Bill W left Great Britain through the royalties from the Big Book, 12x12 and As Bill Sees It. I know Willie feels the same.

National Conventions

Northern National Convention Update

(Geoff H)

The Forty-first Northern National Convention duly took place on 27/28/29 March 2015 at Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. A total of 865 people registered over the weekend. There was a full programme of meetings over the entire weekend, which included meetings for Al-Anon and Alateen. Two simultaneous marathon meetings took place until 1.00 am on the Friday and Saturday. There was also a service seminar that had speakers who shared on archives, employment, telephones, probation/criminal justice services and armed services. Entertainment was provided on the Friday and Saturday evenings with a DJ and open mic sessions. AA-related films were shown continuously during Friday and Saturday.

The opening big meeting on Friday evening was designated as an open public one, and was shared with Al-Anon. Dr Chris Daly, Non-Alcoholic Trustee, was also a speaker, and his share was warmly received by the audience. This meeting was attended by the Mayor of Blackpool, Councillor Val Haynes, and her Consort Mr Alan Haynes. The mayor subsequently sent us the following letter:

Thank you very much for inviting Alan and I to join you at your open session on Friday night. We had a very informative evening.

Despite having been Deputy Mayor three times and a local Councillor for nearly 20 years, until I received your invitation I had no idea that your convention had been held in Blackpool for all these years. It is remiss that it is not recognised when so many delegates from around the country attend the convention. It is only right that there should be some recognition of the number of visitors you bring to our town and the boost to our economy outside our normal season.

I found the four speakers very informative, giving an insight into the good work of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon.

For the first time, a young people's meeting took place, which was attended by about 200 people. The three speakers ages were 21 (10 months sobriety), 24 (3 years sobriety) and 33 (13 years sobriety) respectively.

The Final Gathering (spiritual meeting) countdown produced one person with 52 years sobriety and two at 24 hours each. The former presented the other two with a copy of the Big Book.

Two very impressive archives displays were presented by Stephen S and Charlie C, Fellowship Archivist and North West Region Archivist, respectively.

Income for the convention was £13,700.79; expenditure was £12,115.66; surplus was £1,585.13 (which was sent to GSO along with takings from the pots which amounted to £1,601.89).

Once again, Michaela L, NNC Secretary, designed, administered and analysed her excellent questionnaire. The full report is far too detailed to reproduce here, but a summary of the results is tabled below:

QUESTION	% YES	% NO	% N/A
1. Is this your first visit to the Northern National Convention?	35%	65%	0%
2. Would you come again?	97%	2%	1%
3. Did you enjoy the open public meeting?	89%	3%	8%
4. Did you enjoy the Saturday night dance?	59%	10%	31%
5. Did you enjoy the archive display	72%	2%	26%
6. Did you enjoy the open mic.session?	54%	5%	41%
7. Did you enjoy the workshops?	46%	3%	51%
8. Did you enjoy any of the films?	35%	1%	64%

The response to question 2 indicates that 'Keep Coming Back' is still alive and kicking at Norbreck!

Scottish National Convention Update

(Charlie R)

The 2015 Scottish Convention was again held at the Corrin Halls in Oban. We are happy to report that this year's convention was fully self-supporting, showing a surplus of £153.29. The 7th Tradition pot money sent to GSO.

The sale of AA literature was above average.

The atmosphere at the Convention was pleasant, relaxing and enjoyable. We must thank the supporting Regions for the quality and content of their Speakers contribution.

We must take this opportunity to thank the Convention Committee for all their diligence not only at the Convention itself but for all their hard work throughout the year.

Planning for the 2016 Convention, which is also our 60th, is at an advanced stage. We are looking forward to welcoming all members to Oban, which is the gateway to the Islands, on the 6th, 7th and 8th May 2016.

Southern National Convention Update

(Tom B)

The Southern National Convention took place at Mill Rythe on Hayling Island on the first weekend of September 2015, it was a complete sell out and it was fully booked for next year 2016 before the Convention finished on the Sunday. It was generally felt that it was a huge success and this view was expressed by committee members and attendees alike.

It was a profitable event with 10,000 raffle tickets sold out. Accounts for 2015 were all signed off as verified and accurate by the Regional Treasurers from South Midlands and Eastern Region.

The budget for 2016 has been agreed by the Regions and a payment of £3749 sent to GSO.

The six sponsoring Regions, plus the Board Trustee, agreed no changes to the Terms of Reference are required for 2016.

The Southern National Convention Committee work most effectively when we have a full quota of members, the six Regions can be of great help here if they can supply two reps from each, this is not including members serving on the SNCC Executive Committee.

The Committee are currently working hard to make this year's event as successful and enjoyable as last year, again it will take place over the first weekend of September (2nd, 3rd & 4th). If you are there I hope you enjoy.

Welsh National Convention Update

(Judy F)

Once again we were able to offer a warm welcome to our Convention which was held in the beautiful heart of Wales on 29th – 31st May, 2015. The venue was again, The Metropole Hotel, Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells, Powys. The theme was 'Just for Today...Dim ond am heddiw'. The number of members attending is slowly increasing – more people are staying in the hotel.

Charlie C, an Archivist from the North West Region, brought his 'road show' of National Conventions. This was an excellent display and created much interest. The Committee also created a 'Sobriety Tree' which proved to be immensely popular; a total of 1,459 years, 2 weeks and 1 day sobriety was recorded.

The meetings were very well attended and the speakers were eloquent, lively and entertaining, carrying an excellent message. There was a Welsh meeting where simultaneous translation was provided. The problems that were highlighted with the translation after this meeting have been addressed. Come and Go meetings ran throughout Saturday until late. The entertainment again was enjoyed by all those attending.

A presentation was given by our Joe H. who is Treasurer to the General Service Board. Sadly, this, as in previous years, was not as well attended as we had hoped.

Plans for the convention in 2016 are already well underway. Speakers have already been approached and the workshop planned. The dates for 2016 are 10th – 12th June, and the theme will be 'Sobriety – an exciting journey...' In the Welsh Language translated as 'Sobrwydd – taith gyffrous...'

And, finally, the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of the Committee involved in planning this event is apparent in that our Convention is slowly increasing in popularity. We hope to continue to provide, as always, 'a welcome in the hillside...'

Parliamentary Events

Houses of Parliament Event Update

(Carol H)

The aim of the Presentation is to explain the effectiveness and work of Alcoholics Anonymous to Parliamentarians of all political parties and to members of relevant professional groups with a view to establishing a relationship with AA at the local level.

The committee responsible for organizing the event is composed of members from London Regions North and South together with members from adjoining regions, particularly South East Region.

Last year's presentation was held in the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, on 9th June and was well attended; for the majority it was their first time at the event. Seventy people registered with fifty attending.

The now traditional format of two professional and two AA speakers were used. The professional speakers were Paul Myles, a Non-alcoholic Trustee who had just rotated from the Board and Sarah Flowers, a Non-alcoholic Trustee who had just joined the Board.

Both Sarah and Paul stressed the importance of professionals attending AA open meetings to understand how we function.

Our AA speakers Penny G and Adam M delivered eloquent testimonies to the way in which AA had turned their lives around. Both had joined at a young age which was helpful in breaking down the stereotypical image which many people still hold.

Preparations are well under way for the next presentation to be held in May 2016.

Scottish Parliament Event Update

(Sandy MacV)

The 10th AA Awareness event at Holyrood took place on the evening of 7th October, 2015 and was hosted by Dr Richard Simpson MSP, Labour.

He commented that the AA awareness event comes at a time when Scottish society and its relationship with alcohol is the subject of much debate.

Sandy MacV, Trustee for the Scottish Parliament event chaired the meeting and gave a power point presentation and an overall view of what AA is and is not. He explained the roles of liaison officers within the Fellowship and the part they play in co-operating with the professional community. He stressed our policy of Cooperation and not Affiliation

Martin Weegmann (Non Alcoholic Trustee) - gave a presentation headed "ways out of addiction" and asked the question - what is recovery?

Tom Fox – Head of Corporate Affairs Scottish Prisons spoke to us on the work of AA within the prison service.

Lorraine M- shared her experience, strength and hope which was very well received by all attendees.

There were 21 professionals in attendance who all received folders with AA literature at registration. All guests came from a good cross-section of the professional community and entered into a lively question and answer session near the end of the event. A buffet provided the opportunity for networking.

Unfortunately Dr Simpson our host, had to leave just before the end of the event.

The meeting was closed by Sandy MacV - Chairman who thanked the speakers, attendees, AA and board members for their attendance and contribution to the event.

Overall it was felt that the event was a success.

Open Forum

(Non Voting Session)

The final session of Saturday evening was given over to an 'Open Forum' with contributions from the floor ranging over a wide spectrum of AA's service structure.

The evening ended at 10pm with Jim asking all to join him in saying the Serenity Prayer, following which the preliminary Committee Reports were distributed and the opportunity given for Regions to discuss these.

SUNDAY 24 APRIL

Jim welcomed everyone back to the final session of Conference, asked for a few moments silence to remember why we are here, to remember the still suffering alcoholic and gather thoughts before the morning session.

As agreed at Conference 1995 each recommendation will be voted on and whether or not it is a two-thirds majority will be recorded.

Jim then invited the Chairs of the six Committees to present their respective reports which were fully discussed and adopted.

These Committee Reports are included in this report on the pages indicated below:

Committee No. 1	Pages	61-62
Committee No. 2	Pages	63-64
Committee No. 3	Pages	65-66
Committee No. 4	Pages	67
Committee No. 5	Pages	68-69
Committee No. 6	Pages	70

ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR CONFERENCE 2017

The nominations received on Friday evening were presented and, after a vote, Amanda S (London Region South) was duly elected.

CONFIRMATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

(Willie MacD, Chair GSB)

My name is Willie and I am an alcoholic. This is my eleventh Conference and I would say it's been the best one yet and I don't say that for the sake of saying it. The feeling that this Conference has generated and the Open Forum last night was amazing, with people honestly putting across their views and nobody really disagreeable, it was absolutely fantastic. You have that message to take back, fighting at Conference – never heard of it, never seen it.

It was the quickest I have seen the Board reports go through and the Committee Reports which was amazing.

Now to the ratification of new Board members and we have five present this morning and one who will be ratified in her absence. I will come to the non-alcoholic Trustee who is here this morning:

Nick Holroyd
Sharon Kirk (in her absence)

We are very privileged to have Sharon and Nick coming on to the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Board is looking forward to working with them both.

Our new alcoholic Trustees:

Jim F (Scotia Region)
Peter F (South East Region)
Tom H (South West Scotland Region)
Denise H (North West Region)

Welcome to the Board of Alcoholic Anonymous Great Britain, I wish you all well and hope you have a fantastic time on the Board.

Now, to the sadder part of Conference, the goodbyes and last year at this time we said goodbye to two Trustees and one of them was Phil W, our past Vice Chair, and sadly Phil passed away last month. He was an exceptional character and we gave Phil the lead role in the Young Peoples' Project and he led it and carried it out and I'm sure he will be looking down on us today and seeing that we have put the Young People into the structure which was passed here this weekend. I miss him, the Board miss him and all those who knew him miss him.

Although we said goodbye to Martin Weegmann on Friday night, I want to acknowledge Martin in his absence for the record and thank him for all the service work he has done for Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain.

Tom B (London Region North) an amazing man and it has been a privilege and pleasure working with you. Tom's disciplines were the Houses of Parliament, Southern National Convention and Archives. He represented Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain at the Irish and Polish Conferences and, Tom, I thank you for all your hard work, loyalty, trust and commitment.

Tom S (South East Region). It has been a privilege getting to know you, Tom and Tom's disciplines were Electronic Communications, Conference Steering Committee, Nominations and he represented Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain at the Irish and Danish Conferences. Whether it is coincidence, or God sent or whatever you want, Tom came along at the right time for the Board and along with Willie they developed the website to where it is today and they had the expertise to do that. The website has come a million miles away from where it was four years ago and for that AAGB will be grateful to you for the service you have done.

Personally, you are someone I have trusted and I've learned from your experience and we have spent a lot of time together and I will miss that.

To both Tom B & Tom S please go with the gratitude of Conference and we wish you well in the future.

My thanks to Jim, the Conference Chair, who has done a magnificent job this weekend and also the six Committee Chairs for their excellent work.

My thanks also to our General Service Office staff who are here today lead by Roger, our General Secretary, Office Manager: Angela and Sharon, the Conference Co-ordinator. Karen our Management Accountant, Jenny, Keith and Tony.

I would also like to add my thanks to the staff in our London and Glasgow offices who can get forgotten about but you are all part of the GSO staff.

I have another goodbye to say from Conference. Angela our Office Manager is retiring after 27 years, early retirement, I might add! I first met Angela in this hotel at my third Conference in the lift, I was at the start of my non-smoking campaign and the hotel had given me a smoking room so Angela offered to swap rooms with me and ever since then we have been friends. I have to thank Angela, on behalf of Conference, for all your service, hard work and going beyond the call of duty in your roll as Office Manager. It has been a privilege and honour to work with you and on behalf of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain I thank you and wish you good health and a long and happy retirement.

I would now like to introduce the new Chair, after I finish today, of the General Service Board of Great Britain, Geoff H. Geoff has been shadowing me for the past year and it has been a privilege working with you over the past four years but especially in this last year and I know that AAGB is in safe hands under your chairmanship.

I want to thank each and every one of you because without you Conference is not possible. This Conference is about to finish but the message from this Conference is about to start with each and every one of you taking the message from Conference back to your Regions, Intergroups and Groups and members of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our Board is not gender balanced equal and to me it is a big loss to AA for not getting the ladies to come forward but we cannot do anything unless you put your name forward. You have a lot to offer and perhaps one day we will see the Board of AA being equal with men and women because we are a Fellowship of men and women. If you are considering it please put your name forward.

Anyone over the weekend who is not sure what this has been all about, feeling a bit lost and a bit overwhelmed, thinking everyone knows more than me, I'm not coming back – well that is how I felt at my first Conference and my second Conference. I didn't want to come back, I had isolated myself and what saved me was the morning meeting at 7am where I discovered that people were feeling the same as me and I was not alone. From that day I went from strength to strength. Eleven Conferences later I am still learning and still don't know what is happening!

I would like to say my goodbyes to everyone, I have had a ball and two years ago when I took over as Chair and was chairing my first Board meeting, I was talking to a new Trustee who was saying that I was in a unique position and very honoured and then he described me as 'the wee jagged bit at the bottom of the inverted triangle'! I felt pretty good and then he went on to say 'you have all that weight and responsibility on your back' and that wiped the smile off my face.

What I found out from experience was that I had a General Secretary, I had an Exec Committee and a Board of Trustees as well as the General Service Office staff, I had sub committees, Conference, Regions, Intergroups, Groups and members of Alcoholics Anonymous, a structure and all I had to go was ask.

For everybody who helped me along this road, because I could not have done it myself, I want to thank each one of you and thank Alcoholics Anonymous for saving my life. I have enjoyed every minute of this and in the spirit of rotation I leave and I thank you for my life.

Close of Conference

(Jim F)

Fellow delegates my name is Jim and even after all your hard work this weekend I am still an alcoholic. I can hardly believe that it is now time to close our Annual Conference.

These are a very busy few days with long hours of discussion and debate, however they seem to go exceedingly quickly. Can I thank you all for your service this weekend. To those of you who finish your Conference term today I wish you well as you journey on in the Fellowship. It does not have to finish here. Keep checking the Service News and you will see vacancies for the various sub committees arise. Please do not think that someone else will do it better, if you have an interest, throw your hat in the ring and let your higher power decide.

To those of you who may hear criticism of Conference from those who have never been and, will in all probability, never come, you have at least your own experience to share with them. In particular, if you hear criticism of the quality of the Conference questions ask those critics to submit their questions before the 31st August 2016 for inclusion in next year's agenda. If they do not know how, give them a copy of the How to ask a Conference Question leaflet.

I am sure you would like to join me in thanking all the staff from the office who have worked tirelessly to make this Conference a success.

I would also like you to join me in thanking the hotel staff for all they have done to make us feel so welcome this weekend.

May I wish you all a safe journey home and I do hope that this Conference experience has enhanced your appreciation of the Fellowship and all that it does in pursuit of our primary purpose of carrying our message to the still suffering alcoholic and giving them the opportunity that we have of being Happy Joyous and Free.

Thank you very much.

Jim closed Conference by asking everyone to join him in saying the Serenity Prayer.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

The Fifty-Second General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain will be held at the Park Inn, North Street, York on 21-23 April 2017.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

COMMITTEE No. 1

CHAIR LISA D SOUTH WEST REGION

SECRETARY JO F EASTERN REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

- 1. Over the years, Conference has addressed the matter of AA members who have disabilities. But what about people who are hearing impaired? This is a disability that is invisible. Do we always ensure at meetings, including Intergroups and Regions that everyone present can hear everything that is said. In not ensuring this, we are failing in our primary purpose of carrying the message. No amount of writing articles, no amount of talking about it, can ensure that it is addressed at every meeting. Would Conference review this matter and make recommendations in ways that meetings, including Intergroups and Regions, can address this matter at every meeting.**

The Committee reviewed this matter and agreed that there was a general lack of awareness within the Fellowship of the needs of the hearing impaired. With a view to this, the Committee felt that one way to address this matter at every meeting, including Intergroups and Regions would be in the production of a table top tent card distributed to all groups.

The Committee recommends that the Board produces such a card for Conference approval 2017.

The Committee further recommends that the Literature Sub-Committee updates existing AA literature such as, Hints and Suggestions 2002, 'Disability and our Primary Purpose' article (Paul F), Conference 2011, Committee 3, Question 2 suggestions, with a view to the production of a leaflet for 2017 Conference approval, specifically to raise awareness of the needs of hearing impaired members, distributed to all groups and be considered for insertion into the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

The Committee further felt it would be helpful if the Editor of AA Service News requests and publishes articles from hearing impaired members within the Fellowship of their experiences related to their disability whilst attending all meetings.

It is hoped this could eventually be widened to cover other disabilities.

The Committee understands and accepts that this is not an exhaustive list.

Voting: Unanimous

2. Would Conference consider ways of raising awareness of the “Twelve Concepts Checklist Great Britain”?

The Committee discussed this matter in depth and the feedback from the Fellowship seemed to reflect a lack of awareness of the Concepts Checklist and understanding and value of the concepts generally.

Whilst reviewing and discussing last year’s ‘Committee 6’ recommendations regarding the 12 Traditions checklist, this Committee recommends:

1. The Concepts checklist be referred to the Literature Sub-Committee to be reformatted into a leaflet.
2. This leaflet ought to be:
 - a. On the literature list as a free item.
 - b. Prominent on the AA GB website.
 - c. Considered for inclusion in Share, Roundabout and AA Service News.
 - d. Distributed freely to all Groups.

To further raise awareness of the Concepts Checklist, this Committee recommends its use in the following contexts:

- a. In workshops at Region, Intergroup, Forums and Conventions.
- b. By Regional representatives and Group Service Representatives highlighting it to Intergroups and Groups.
- c. By using it in the sponsorship process.

Voting: Unanimous

3. Review new section to be added to The Group under Participation in The Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

The Committee accepts the new section and recommends that it is added to “The Group” under Participation in the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

Voting: Unanimous

4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Jo F of Eastern Region as Chair of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2017.

5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Anne W of South East Region as Secretary of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2017.

All recommendations on Committee No. 1 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

COMMITTEE No. 2

CHAIR MARK S NORTH WEST REGION

SECRETARY HOLLY A SOUTH WEST REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

1. Conference represents the conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain.

Would Conference share its experience on how best to prepare delegates?

Considering the amount of responsibility and trust placed in delegates, are the existing guidelines and literature sufficient and being adhered to?

The Committee recognises that preparation for delegates is well outlined.

The feedback and conscience delivered to delegates suggests that the following activities being carried out in some Regions could be considered good practice:

- a) Sponsoring in to the role by someone who has experienced Conference
- b) Service workshops run by the Region/Intergroup after delegates and alternates have been selected
- c) Delegates should be aware of their responsibility, and be familiar with the relevant handbooks and literature
- d) Some Regions hold up to 7 additional meetings in a year for delegates and alternates to discuss questions and Conference agenda items, and to share experience
- e) The experience of some Regions in using video and/or telephone conferencing has proven very useful, in particular for areas where meeting face-to-face is difficult for reasons of geography etc.
- f) Pre and post Conference meetings to gather responses and to report back to Regions, Intergroups and Groups
- g) Delegates should be aware that support from experienced delegates, past and present, is always available

The conscience carried to this Committee suggests that the existing literature is sufficient, and is being adhered to by each Region to the best of its ability, when selecting and preparing delegates for Conference.

This decision was unanimous.

2. Would Conference discuss the value of the use of sobriety chips within the Fellowship?

The overall conscience of the Fellowship carried to this Committee recognises the value of the use of sobriety chips.

The feedback indicated that sobriety chips instil a sense of gratitude and belonging, particularly amongst newcomers who generally felt proud to receive them.

However, this Committee asks the Fellowship to be mindful of Traditions 4, 6 and 7, and the pamphlet 'The Pot', which make it clear what the pot money should/should not be used for.

The decision was unanimous.

3. Review new Chapter 12 – Young People’s Liaison Officer, The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.

Having reviewed the proposed new Chapter 12 of the AA Service Handbook GB, this Committee recommends the document, with the following changes:

- a) The role should be referred to as YPLO throughout the description (after the initial introduction of each section, where it is referred to in full). Eg. Intergroup YPLO/Region YPLO.
- b) Include the recommendation of Conference 2015 –
The YPLO will be someone who came into AA at the age of 30 or younger, and so will have experience of getting sober at a young age, the better to relate to the particular problems faced by young people seeking to live sober. **“They should have a good working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions”**

with the addition of **“and the AA Service and Structure Handbooks GB.”**

(Under 12:2:1)

Unanimous

4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Holly A from South West Region as Chair of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2017.

5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Ron D from Continental European Region as Secretary of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2017.

All recommendations on Committee No. 2 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

COMMITTEE No. 3

CHAIR AMANDA S LONDON REGION SOUTH
SECRETARY SID D EASTERN REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

1. Inventory Question

Would the Fellowship consider that Conference discuss and review two standard annually recurring questions.

In the spirit of Love, Service and Mutual respect would Conference please consider:

1. **How well we as a Fellowship, in all of its separate elements - Group, Intergroup, Region, GSO and GSB have fulfilled our Primary Purpose over the past year?**

To this end consider specific and general actions and reports from all levels of the AA Service Structure. Make suggestions for improvement.

2. **How well have we as a Fellowship used the funds raised through our 7th tradition for our Primary purpose and other activities over the past year.**

To this end consider specific and general actions and reports from all levels of the AA Service Structure. Make suggestions for improvement.

This Committee acknowledged the considerable and valuable feedback from the Fellowship on taking inventory and fulfilling our primary purpose within our structure. Ultimately this Committee unanimously voted against having the two standard annually recurring questions, for the following reasons:

1. The Fellowship already has the means to assess how well it is fulfilling its primary purpose, through taking inventory at every level, i.e. at Group/Intergroup/Region/GSO/GSB.
2. "The General Service Conference therefore begins with the Group Conscience. It also leads back to the Group, since the Group has the final responsibility not just for initiating, but implementing the decisions agreed upon by Conference." (The Role & Function of Conference - Committee No.3 Conference 2010).
3. "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." (Tradition 2 – Short form)
4. There were concerns that it could constitute an audit process (in considering the "specific and general actions and reports from all levels of the AA Service Structure"). This would be contrary to Tradition 4 - "Each Group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other Groups or AA as a whole."

5. It reduces the scope and number of new questions for Conference from the Fellowship.
2. **Would Conference consider the feasibility of holding a single celebratory convention in 2022 to mark the 75th year of AA in Great Britain? This could be along the lines of the 50th anniversary celebration held in 1997. The 50th year anniversary event involved the participation of all 16 regions of Great Britain and Continental Europe and was held at a convenient central location in order to maximize participation across the whole Fellowship.**

This Committee unanimously agrees that it is feasible to hold a single celebratory convention in 2022 to mark the 75th year of AA in Great Britain.

Therefore, we recommend that the Board (GSB) appoints a convention committee, formed from the Regions as soon as possible and pays special attention to the following:

1. Finance (aim to be self-supporting)
 2. Location
 3. Lessons learnt from the 50th Anniversary celebrations
-
3. **Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2017.**

The Committee elected Sid D of Eastern Region as Chair of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2017.

4. **Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2017.**

The Committee elected Stefan S of London Region North as Secretary of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2017.

All recommendations on Committee No. 3 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

COMMITTEE No. 4

CHAIR MIKE P LONDON REGION NORTH
SECRETARY TIM W SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

- 1. Would Conference consider making AA pamphlets available online? If so, would Conference consider making such materials available not just to view but to save, distribute, and print?**

The Committee recommends that where possible pamphlets be made available online to view, save and distribute electronically in read only format with printing disabled.

In order to maintain high quality reproduction, the Committee recommends that printed material continues to be ordered from GSO GB.

Voting: Unanimous

- 2. Would the Fellowship consider to what extent Conference truly represents 'the practical means by which the Group conscience in AA GB can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole'?**

The Committee considers that Conference adequately represents the conscience of the Fellowship. The existing service structure enables this process to the extent that representatives of Groups (GSRs), Intergroups (Region Reps) and Regions (Delegates) act as a conduit for the group conscience.

The ultimate responsibility for this process starts and ends with the group. Where there is full engagement, it is hard to conceive of a more effective alternative.

Voting: Unanimous

- 3. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2017.**

The Committee elected Pauline B of North East Region as Chair of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2017.

- 4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2017.**

The Committee elected Matt S of Continental European Region as Secretary of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2017.

All recommendations on Committee No. 4 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

COMMITTEE No. 5

CHAIR CARMEL G SOUTH EAST REGION

SECRETARY MARK B NORTH WEST REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

1. Could the Fellowship discuss the advantages and the means of making the Archive at GSO York more accessible?

"We need to preserve the richness of our heritage to ensure the future"

Bill W

- 1) This Committee considers that the advantages of making the Archives more accessible to include:
 - a) It inspires members to a better knowledge of AA history.
 - b) Creates an accessible resource for members taking up service positions.
 - c) Encourages members to save material.
 - d) Nourishes a sense of belonging.
 - e) Makes a resource for research.
 - f) More people can see it.
 - g) Separates fact from myth.
 - h) Carries the message.
 - i) Shows us how the Traditions work.

- 2) This Committee recommends that the Board conduct a feasibility study to improve access to the Archive including but not limited to, the following means:
 - a) Digitisation.
 - b) Online catalogue.
 - c) Raising awareness through "*Past Particles*" (Archives newsletter).
 - d) A virtual tour of the Archive.
 - e) More Archive Roadshows.
 - f) Raising awareness of existing archive-related material.

Voting: Unanimous

2. Would Conference consider the necessity of having dedicated Conference Delegates from Share and Roundabout and make a recommendation.

This Committee considers that there is no need for dedicated Conference Delegates from Share and Roundabout and recommends the practice be discontinued.

The Committee is of the opinion that Share and Roundabout would be adequately represented by their Trustees.

Voting: 17 in favour; 3 not in favour.

The minority view is that the loss of delegates diminishes the status of the two publications at a time when all print publications are under threat from online, and raises questions about participation in line with the Concepts.

3. Review Violence and Personal Conduct – The Group pages 82-85, The Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

This Committee has reviewed the revisions to Violence and Personal Conduct – pp 82-85, and noted the errors that the Literature Sub-Committee highlighted to us. With the proviso that these errors are corrected, we commend this revision to Conference.

Voting: Unanimous

4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Andy K of Scotia Region as Chair of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2017.

5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Kenny M of South West Scotland Region as Secretary of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2017.

All recommendations on Committee No. 5 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

COMMITTEE No. 6

CHAIR BRUCE B SCOTIA REGION
SECRETARY JUDI H MIDLANDS REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

1. Would Conference share experience and make recommendations on the conduct, frequency, and content of Group Conscience Meetings within the Fellowship?

It is our experience that the 'Group Conscience' takes many forms, both in structure and regularity. For example, some groups incorporate both the business element with the group inventory and some keep them separate. Some meet frequently and some less regularly. What is apparent is the group conscience is a vital tool in the maintenance of a healthy and well run meeting, enabling it to fulfil its primary purpose of carrying its message.

In making recommendations the Committee is mindful of the autonomy of the group. The Committee requests that the Literature Sub-Committee be asked to review the background information and other existing AA Conference approved literature with a view to consolidation, and bring back their recommendations to Conference 2017.

Voting: Unanimous

2. Should donations be made to Churches and other venues that refuse to accept rent from AA Group Meetings held at those venues?

In line with Traditions 6 & 7, this Committee agreed "Yes", if rent is not accepted, a financial donation or an offer of assistance may be made in agreement with the venue.

Votes
Yes: 16
No: 1
Abstentions: 0

3. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected Sophie F of North West Region as Chair of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2017.

4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2017.

The Committee elected John P of Eastern Region as Secretary of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2017.

All recommendations on Committee No. 6 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2016

LIST OF DELEGATES

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN: **JIM F** (Scotia Region)

GENERAL SERVICE BOARD

			COMMITTEE NUMBER	TERM OF SERVICE
Willie	MacD			
Tom	B		5	
Clive	D		1	
Roger	E		1	
Judy	F		2	
Peter	F	(Elect)	2	
Denise	H	(Elect)	4	
Joe	H		6	
Carol	H		6	
Tom	H	(Elect)	4	
Geoff	H		3	
Wullie	I		2	
Brian	J		4	
James	K		5	
Sandy	MacV		6	
Nigel	P		4	
Charles	R		1	
Helen	S		5	
Tom	S		3	
Nick Holroyd		(Elect)	3	
Ash Kahn			5	
Martin Weegmann			6	

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

Roger B General Secretary
Sharon Smyth
Chris North
Angela Varley
Karen Martin
Jenny Pryke
Sophie Perring

SHARE

ROUNDAABOUT

Flora	M	4	3
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**COMMITTEE
NUMBER**

**TERM OF
SERVICE**

EASTERN REGION

Jo	F	1	2
Clive	K	2	3
Sid	D	3	2
Phyllis	H	4	1
Kevan	D	5	2
John	P	6	1

LONDON REGION NORTH

Fred	C	1	3
Ann	O'K	2	1
Stefan	S	3	1
Mike	P	4	3
Ruth	F	5	A
Evie	G	6	A

LONDON REGION SOUTH

Stephen	M	1	3
Allen	A	2	1
Amanda	S	3	3
Brian	A	4	1
Ranjan	B	5	3
Wayne	L	6	3

MIDLANDS REGION

Michael	E	1	A
Caroline	G	2	3
Paul	S	3	2
Dean	M	4	2
Veronica	S	5	A
Judi	H	6	3

NORTH EAST REGION

Graham	S	1	3
Carol	P	2	3
Phil	M	3	1
Pauline	B	4	2
Denise	Y	5	1
June	R	6	1

**COMMITTEE
NUMBER**

**TERM OF
SERVICE**

NORTH WEST REGION

Phil	H	1	2
Mark	S	2	3
Carl	B	3	1
Eileen	D	4	1
Mark	B	5	3
Sophie	F	6	1

SOUTH EAST REGION

Anne	W	1	1
Eddie	C	2	3
Guy	D	3	3
Frank	L	4	3
Carmel	G	5	2
Theresa	N	6	A

SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION

Paul	M	1	1
Belinda	M	2	2
Cas	S	3	1
Tim	W	4	3
Sandi	A	5	1
Lindsay	K	6	2

SOUTH WEST REGION

Lisa	D	1	3
Holly	A	2	2
Philomena	H	3	1
Mike	S	4	3
Rosemary	C	5	2
Rob	D	6	3

WALES & BORDERS REGION

Hywel	P	1	2
Stuart	B	2	A
Jonathan	P	3	2
Neil	W	4	2
Jenny	D	5	2
Martyn	M	6	3

**COMMITTEE
NUMBER****TERM OF
SERVICE****EAST OF SCOTLAND REGION**

Stuart	W	1	2
Hamish	McS	2	2
Ian	D	3	3
Alan	P	4	A
John	McG	5	3
John	McL	6	A

GLASGOW REGION

John	Mac	1	3
Gordon	I	2	A
Jimmy	M	3	2
Jim	T	4	3
Stevie	McC	5	2
Adam	P	6	A

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS REGION

Marco	P	1	3
James	C	2	2
Watty	S	3	3
		4	
Jan	O	5	2
Terri	S	6	1

SCOTIA REGION

Mick	F	1	1
Jacqui	McK	2	1
Michael	T	3	2
Ross	N	4	3
Andy	K	5	1
Bruce	B	6	3

SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND REGION

Linda	C	1	2
Ivie	S	2	2
Billy	T	3	1
Richard	G	4	3
Kenny	M	5	2
Jacquie	B	6	1

		COMMITTEE NUMBER	TERM OF SERVICE
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CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION

James	R	1	1
Ron	D	2	1
Rosalind	S-G	3	3
Matt	S	4	1
Roger	C	5	1
Joel	B	6	1

OBSERVERS

James	V	(Belgium)	2	2
Iliana	T	(Bulgaria)	2	1
James	McC	(Croatia)	6	1
Simona	K	(Czech Republic)	5	1
Michael	L	(Ireland)	1	1
Richard	O'M	(Ireland)	6	1
Maggie	H	(Poland)	3	1
Pawel	W	(Poland)	5	2
Ivo	C	(Portugal)	1	1
Radu	I	(Romania)	4	1
Lubomir	B	(Slovakia)	3	1

Glossary of Abbreviations used in this report

<i>AA</i>	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i>
<i>AAA</i>	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness</i>
<i>AASN</i>	-	<i>AA Service News</i>
<i>AAWS</i>	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous World Services</i>
<i>ASL</i>	-	<i>American Sign Language</i>
<i>ASLO</i>	-	<i>Armed Services Liaison Officer</i>
<i>BSL</i>	-	<i>British Sign Language</i>
<i>CER</i>	-	<i>Continental European Region</i>
<i>CMS</i>	-	<i>Content Management System</i>
<i>CSC</i>	-	<i>Conference Steering Committee</i>
<i>DAAT</i>	-	<i>Drug and Alcohol Teams</i>
<i>ECLO</i>	-	<i>Electronic Communication Liaison Officer</i>
<i>ECSC</i>	-	<i>Electronic Communication Sub Committee</i>
<i>ELO</i>	-	<i>Employment Liaison Officer</i>
<i>ESM</i>	-	<i>European Service Meeting</i>
<i>GSB</i>	-	<i>General Service Board</i>
<i>GSO</i>	-	<i>General Service Office</i>
<i>GSR</i>	-	<i>Group Service Representative</i>
<i>HLO</i>	-	<i>Health Liaison Officer</i>
<i>HSC</i>	-	<i>Health Sub Committee</i>
<i>MOJ</i>	-	<i>Ministry of Justice</i>
<i>NAT</i>	-	<i>Non-Alcoholic Trustee</i>
<i>NHS</i>	-	<i>National Health Service</i>
<i>NICE</i>	-	<i>National Institute for Clinical Excellence</i>
<i>NNC</i>	-	<i>Northern National Convention</i>
<i>NOMS</i>	-	<i>National Offender Management Service</i>
<i>NSO</i>	-	<i>Northern Service Office</i>
<i>NTA</i>	-	<i>National Treatment Agency</i>
<i>ORS</i>	-	<i>Online Response Service</i>
<i>PI</i>	-	<i>Public Information</i>
<i>PLO</i>	-	<i>Prison Liaison Officer</i>
<i>PPS</i>	-	<i>Prison Postal Service</i>
<i>PR</i>	-	<i>Public Relations</i>
<i>P/SS</i>	-	<i>Probation/Social Services</i>
<i>RECLO</i>	-	<i>Regional Electronic Communication Liaison Officer</i>
<i>RELO</i>	-	<i>Regional Employment Liaison Officer</i>
<i>RTLO</i>	-	<i>Regional Telephone Liaison Officer</i>
<i>SPPS</i>	-	<i>Scottish Prison Postal Service</i>
<i>SPS</i>	-	<i>Scottish Prison Service</i>
<i>SSAFA</i>	-	<i>Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association</i>
<i>SSASM</i>	-	<i>Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting</i>
<i>SSO</i>	-	<i>Southern Service Office</i>
<i>TLO</i>	-	<i>Telephone Liaison Officer</i>
<i>TOR</i>	-	<i>Terms of Reference</i>
<i>YPLO</i>	-	<i>Young Peoples Liaison Officer</i>
<i>YPP</i>	-	<i>Young People Project</i>

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 organised; 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 to 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.

