

FINAL REPORT

# ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GREAT BRITAIN

## Fifty-Third General Service Conference

13-15 April 2018  
The Henley Suite  
Park Inn Hotel, North Street, York

*Fellowship, Love,  
Commitment*



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# FIFTY-THIRD GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2018

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Digest of Agenda</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>General Report</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Nominations Conference Chairman 2019</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>General Service Board Report</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Finance Presentation.....	Page 10
Electronic Communications Presentation.....	Page 16
Literature Presentation.....	Page 22
Non-Alcoholic Trustees Presentation.....	Page 24
Public Information Presentation.....	Page 27
Prisons/and Probation/CJS Presentation.....	Page 28
New Videos Presentation.....	Page 32
AA Service News Update.....	Page 33
Archives Update.....	Page 34
Armed Services Update.....	Page 34
Employment Update.....	Page 36
European Service Meeting update.....	Page 37
Health Update.....	Page 39
Telephones Update.....	Page 40
Young People Update.....	Page 41
Roundabout Update.....	Page 42
Share Update.....	Page 42
Northern National Convention Update.....	Page 43
Southern National Convention Update.....	Page 44
Scottish National Convention Update.....	Page 45
Welsh National Convention Update.....	Page 45
Houses of Parliament Update.....	Page 46
Scottish Parliament Update.....	Page 47
Welsh Assembly Update.....	Page 47
Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting Update.....	Page 48
Polish Conference Update.....	Page 49
Fellowship Magazines Working Party Report.....	Page 50
<b>Open Forum</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>Final Session</b> .....	<b>54</b>
Election Chair Conference 2019.....	Page 54
Confirmation of Board Members.....	Page 54
Close of Conference.....	Page 57
Date and Place of next Conference.....	Page 57
<b>Committee Reports</b> .....	<b>54</b>
Committee No. 1 Report.....	Page 58
Committee No. 2 Report.....	Page 60
Committee No. 3 Report.....	Page 62
Committee No. 4 Report.....	Page 64
Committee No. 5 Report.....	Page 67
Committee No. 6 Report.....	Page 69
<b>List of Delegates</b> .....	<b>71</b>
<b>Glossary of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>76</b>



# DIGEST OF AGENDA

## Friday 13 April 2018

Registration and Reception

Opening Session

Committee Meetings Commence

Nominations - Conference Chair 2019

Presentation of  
General Service Board Reports  
(Session 1)

## Saturday 14 April 2018

Committee Meetings Continue

Presentation of  
General Service Board Reports  
(Session 2)

Open Forum

## Sunday 15 April 2018

Presentation of Committee Reports

Election of Chair for the Fifty-Fourth General Service  
Conference

Confirmation of  
Board Members Elect

Closing Address

# FRIDAY 13 APRIL

The Fifty-Third 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 94 delegates from sixteen Regions; 24 members of the General Service Board, Sid D - Conference Chair (Eastern Region), the General Secretary and 6 members of staff from the General Service Office. Also in attendance were 10 Observers from the following countries:

Belarus	2
Denmark	1
Ireland	2
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Romania	1
Turkey	1
Ukraine	1

Total in attendance 136.

## **Opening of Conference by Sid D (Conference Chair 2018)**

Good afternoon Conference, my name is Sid and I am an alcoholic. I will now open with the Preamble:

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

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

Welcome Conference, Trustees and Observers from abroad to Conference 2018 and a special welcome to the red dotters, enjoy your first year, the three years will pass before you know it.



It's my job to make sure Conference runs smoothly, well thanks for that, I think the Chief Whip of the Houses of Parliament has an easier job. I did ask for a whip to keep you wonderful lot in order, but was told that's a different fellowship!

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

## **FELLOWSHIP, LOVE, COMMITMENT**

### **Fellowship**

A FELLOWSHIP OF FREEDOM from Daily Reflections 18<sup>th</sup> June

. . . if only men were granted absolute liberty, and were compelled to obey no one, they would then voluntarily associate themselves in the common interest.....AS BILL SEES IT, p. 50.

“When I no longer live under the dictates of another or of alcohol, I live in a new freedom. When I release the past and all the excess baggage I have carried for so very long, I come to know freedom. I have been introduced into a life and a fellowship of freedom. The Steps are a "recommended" way of finding a new life, there are no commands or dictates in A.A. I am free to serve from desire rather than decree. There is the understanding that I will benefit from the growth of other members and I take what I learn and bring it back to the group. The "common welfare" finds room to grow in the society of personal freedom.”

I came to this Fellowship a totally broken man, or so I thought. I still had lower to go and continued to drink whilst in the Fellowship. In the last year of drinking, my heart and soul was ripped out of me and any resemblance to a man or human being had gone. I attended meetings every day, but wasn't willing to listen. At no point at this time was I made to feel unwelcome, as per our third tradition, I had a desire to stop drinking and so belonged to the Fellowship. I was given sound advice from many members and shown by example on how to stay sober. Finally one day the miracle happened, after an AA mini convention I went on a week-long drunk and finally got honest at a meeting and was supported and comforted by Pete Mac and Spiritual Paul. My sponsor Phil D, stuck by me, even though I had lied about drinking. Having finally understood my powerlessness over alcohol and unmanageable life, I was to ready to start on the programme of recovery. I went to my sponsor's house every Sunday and worked through the steps using the 12 by 12 and Big Book. I cried every time I left there until after my step five. My sponsor always told me, get your step five done, then enjoy your AA career, obviously finish the steps as well. My sponsor was taking me to Intergroup before I got sober, not sure if that was a punishment or education. My face got known very quickly at service level, which is why I have started various service positions very early.

### **Love**

I was given so much love in my early days, I can't mention everyone and those I forget will no doubt have a huge resentment against me. Every time I fell or stumbled there was someone to pick me up or dust me down, with a loving smile. My AA mum, Nancie, always checked spiritually behind my ears to make sure I was heading in the right direction, I am one of many she loves without want of reward. My AA aunties, Fiona and Vanessa supported and encouraged me through my early meetings and continue to do so today. Uncle Bob answered

all my technical questions on the programme, of which there was many. My friends Anna, Dawn, Diana, Sam and Helen showed me many ways to love, which had been clouded by alcohol. I have been shown many forms of love, my sponsor, Phil, just had to give me one of "those looks" whenever I went off the path. Service brought me to meet many new influences, Pam N sponsored me in as TLO, always spiritually holding my hand. Martin H, sat next to me at my first Intergroup and gave wonderful support and advice and still does today, leading by example. Carole P put me forward as a Conference Delegate, even though I wasn't five years sober, knowing I would be when conference came round. I also took over as Region Secretary from her, with lots more sound advice. I mentioned an AA Mini Convention earlier, which I was allowed to join the Committee. I was again shown more forms of love here, my Grand Uncle Don gave honest advice, along with my friend Vernise, who possibly has the biggest smile in the world, unless my sponsor Phil was telling a joke. I've learnt from everyone that I have come across and there are far too many to mention. My close friend Laura has been educating me for the last couple of years and I hope she continues to do so for many years to come, with the kindness and love she always gives. You may wonder why I have quoted so many people and the reason for that is my love of the Fellowship and people in it. The last person I must mention is my AA brother, Sean R, who held my hand for the first 24 hours and stills does today. I don't love everyone in the Fellowship, but I learn from everyone, this is a valuable lesson for Conference Committees. I talk often of love in all my sharing and whilst I joke around and laugh a lot, don't under estimate the fire of recovery that burns inside me or think of my confidence as arrogance. You see me standing here alone before you, but all the people I have mentioned stand with me in my heart always and give me strength to face any challenge. It is through love that I have achieved the highest position within Alcoholics Anonymous, that of being sober. Now that I have received so much love, it's my responsibility to pass it on.

### **Commitment**

Over this weekend we will look closely at the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts, but let us not forget our spiritual foundation of the Twelve Steps. All you will be asked to do, is your best. You have been sent by your alcoholic peers to represent the Fellowship and through discussion and debate we will reach an answer to the questions put before us. There may be times you will disagree and times when you want to throttle someone, due to legal reasons I suggest you don't. As I have heard in many meetings, if you love everyone in AA, you aren't getting to enough meetings. Conference must remain democratic in thought and action, as per our Concept Twelve. You have all made a commitment to this Conference here today and we have a vast diversity of experience, strength and hope. In my drinking days, I didn't have the attention span to commit to anything. Since I got sober, I have made sure I have completed service at Group, Intergroup, Region and now Conference. In my time in sobriety, I have seen a massive drop in people willing to do service. Vacancies for positions are clear everywhere. Service has helped me no end in recovery. The biggest thought I had of a drink in recovery, apart from the early days, was when I was Chair of Intergroup, but the commitment I made to the Intergroup as Chair help me overcome that feeling. I couldn't let all those people down. It's hard to explain the Third Legacy of Service to people who aren't interested. "That's not for me," tends to be the answer, but the service takes you out of you. The commitment and travel of the members of the Steering Committee, this year, has astounded me and the pleasure I have gained has been what it's all about for me. I wish I could bottle it up and give it away. I do want to give it away, but in today's Fellowship, there seems to be a divide between groups and Intergroup, Region, Conference and even Trustees. We all serve one fellowship and our common welfare is our goal. I hope that people reading this will get an insight into the Fellowship, Love, Commitment that Conference has for our

Fellowship. We are here to serve the Groups and without their input, we will always struggle to represent the whole Fellowship. I have made a Commitment to be your Chair and will ask the Fellowship what commitment are you prepared to make, to provide AA for future generations. I'm very much into technology and having to compose detailed technical statements. Today I want to make it clear, IT knowledge or great literacy is not a requirement for Conference. I'm appealing to the grass roots of the Fellowship to learn what we are all about and not think "it's just for those guys at Intergroup or Region". A commitment history in service and five years continuous sobriety, with an understanding of what and how our Fellowship works, is all that's required.

About now you're probably thinking, I wish he would shut up so we can get on with it. I will wrap up with my Uncle Bob ringing in my ears, from page 164 of the Big Book.

"Abandon yourself to God, as you understand God. Admit yours faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of Spirit and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you – until then."

Sid then introduced each one of the six Committee Chairs: Anne (Committee 1), Ron (Committee 2), Stefan (Committee 3), Matt (Committee 4), Dee (Committee 5) and Terri (Committee 6) and then asked Anne, alternate Conference Chair to give the Steering Committee report.

## **Conference Steering Committee Report**

**Anne W (South East Region), Alternate Chair**

My name is Anne and I am an alcoholic.

After my husband drunk himself to death in February 2002, all my excuses were gone, my drinking brought me to my knees and I went to see my doctor, all he gave me was a phone number for the local community alcohol team. I did ring them and about 6 weeks later I had to make a choice, do I go to Kenya in the morning and I will have to bring me back or do I go into the "Nut House" on Wednesday.

Today I am grateful that I ignored the taxi driver at the door, who was booked to take me to the airport and went into the "nut house". Two weeks later I was discharged and it was suggested I rang AA. I would like to say that I went merrily on my pink cloud but that wasn't my experience. All I did right in those early days was not pick up a drink. I got into service, eventually for the right reasons and have been ever since. When I wanted to top myself without a drink I knew that something had to change and a little old lady gave me some great advice as usual, but this time I heard. I needed to get a sponsor, work the Steps, pray for a sober day and use the phone.

I tried for quite a while and sort of got a sponsor and sort of did the Steps but eventually moved to a new area and a sponsor found me. They say when the pupil is ready the teacher appears and this was definitely true in my case. A few weeks later I went to the Blue Bonnets, I was sat in the Loreburn Hall, with my partner on one side, my new sponsor on the other and her sponsor in the next seat along and I could not have been lonelier. I was honest about how I felt, really honest. That lady took me through the Steps and taught me how to live without a drink and I'm grateful that she is still my sponsor today. She showed me love and tolerance

that I had never experienced before. Today I try and show this to others and take them through our wonderful program.

I got involved in Conference when my grand sponsor was a delegate, I went around to intergroups and meetings taking notes and having conversations in the car, this was where I really learnt. I progressed through the structure of AA, attending Intergroup and Region and when I was put forward as Conference delegate there was another delegate elect and I was overwhelmed with fear of rejection. Well I managed to get through this and was elected. I attended my first Conference in 2016, I registered, collected all my paperwork and badge with my red dot. People were kind and I soon managed to get enough courage to ask questions and people were really grateful to answer. Those of you at your first conference please ask any questions you may have however stupid you feel. We will all be really grateful to answer.

In our first Committee session I was unsure how we were ever going to get to a consensus. On Saturday evening I thought we finished at 11pm which was bad enough, but had this realisation that we reconvened as a Committee at 11pm so it could be a much later night. We did eventually get to bed and on the Sunday morning miraculously there was no bun fight and we all agreed. I was elected to be secretary for my committee in 2017. This was a whole new experience and I was so pleased to work with Jo who was our Committee Chair and seemed to take it all in her stride. I came without the same anxiety that I had the first year, but had brought some new ones and the experience was even more powerful.

I felt accomplished as I came without a red dot. The 3 days went in a blink of an eye and again I found myself in the plenary session, Jo up on the platform and feeling part of a process that works. Somehow I found myself elected as Chair for Committee 1 in 2018, and there was a moment in the plenary session where the terror started to come in as I knew what I had coming next year.

I had been given an envelope and in here were the dates for the Conference Steering Committee, and so it began. We all arrived, did our homework before each meeting, some were better at this than others of us (I include myself in that) and we started to go through the 65 questions submitted by members of the Fellowship. Some were referred to the Board, others were referred to sub-committees, some were rejected and this left our list of questions to be discussed. Then for me life got a bit complicated, again. I got referred by my GP on a 2 week cancer referral and my appointment was 2.15pm on the date of our 3rd meeting. I tried to rearrange and was unsuccessful so had to send my apologies. It made me grateful that when I was nominated for an award at work and the date of the ceremony clashed with our second meeting that I had made the right decision and arrived in York, dutifully. The results from the tests were good and they could find no cancer but as this was the 5th cancer referral in just over a year I made the decision to have a hysterectomy, my previous cancer made me high risk. Then due to another bleed, sorry gentlemen, I was moved up the list and had surgery on 21st February. I was concerned about how quick I will recover, would I be able to meet my commitment? Well here I am, I came out the other side, without a drink, with the help of my sponsor and network of special trusted friends which includes my alkies husband and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Steering Committee took place and questions were allocated to committees and it was agreed who would respond to those who had submitted questions. It is important to respond to all who have shown interest in raising questions, even if they were unsuccessful this time.

This all happened without an argument or a brawl and sometimes without me! I'm still learning about that.

This whole experience has yet again shown me the power of our amazing Fellowship, how we work, as my grand sponsor would have said, "it's the upside down triangle at work". None of this could have happened without my fellow Committee Chairs, Sid, our Conference Chair, members of the Board and the staff who work at GSO, particularly Roger and Sharon, who attend each meeting, share experience on how it has worked previously and tirelessly work with other colleagues to ensure that our Fellowship is supported in the best possible way.

I would like to thank Conference for the opportunity to be of service and also those who have helped me on my journey. I hope everyone has a good Conference and remember red dotters, we were all red dotters once - relish 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	–	11 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2018
Welsh Convention	–	8 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2018
Southern Convention	–	31 <sup>st</sup> August – 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2018
Northern Convention	–	22 <sup>nd</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> March 2019

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

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

## FRIDAY EVENING

Sid 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 2019 before handing over to Geoff H, Chair of the Board, to introduce the General Service Board Report.

### NOMINATIONS FOR CONFERENCE CHAIR 2019

The under mentioned were proposed and seconded for the Chair of the Fifty-Fourth General Service Conference 2019:

Anne W	-	South East Region
Dee Y	-	North East Region
Matt S	-	Continental European Region
Ron D	-	Continental European Region
Stefan S	-	London Region North

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

(Geoff H – Chair GSB)

Good evening Conference, my name is Geoff and I'm an alcoholic. I would first of all like to welcome you all to Conference 2018, especially those of you who are here for the first time. I hope that you get as much out of it as I have from all of the Conferences that I have attended. I would like to thank Sid as Conference Chair, the Conference Steering Committee, Sharon as Conference Coordinator, and all of our excellent support staff for putting this Conference together.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Board reports. During this evening we shall have presentations by Joe H our Honorary Treasurer, James K for Electronic Communications, Denise H for Literature and Mani Mehdikhani, Non-Alcoholic Trustee. Tomorrow evening we shall hear from Peter F for Public Information, Charlie R and Jeff B will tell us about the newly developing Criminal Justice Partnership, and Amanda S will introduce the newly produced videos for your approval. There are reports in your Conference packs for all of the service disciplines, which have been produced by the Trustees responsible for them. Please do feel free to approach any of our Trustees over the weekend should you have specific queries. Their disciplines are indicated on their name badges, and they have all been allocated to the Committees.

All Trustees have worked very hard as usual, especially so because of the Board vacancies that have existed all year. The good news is that we are now almost up to full strength, as you will see when the new Trustees are confirmed on Sunday. We are, however, very short of Non-Alcoholic Trustees, with Mani being the only one. Please do approach any professional person whom you consider is sympathetic to our recovery Programme and ask them to consider applying to be a Non-Alcoholic Trustee.

Conference last year recommended that the Board conducts a review of the three Fellowship magazines: AA Service News, Roundabout and Share. This has taken place and the report of this activity is included in the Conference pack. The Board was also asked to establish a subcommittee to give direction to future membership surveys. Because of the shortage of Trustees, this has been delayed and interviews will now take place before the May Nominations Committee meeting. The Conference recommendation to produce the Confidential Directory in digital format as the default position has now been implemented, and information regarding this was circulated with the spring edition of AA Service News.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention to be held in 2022 is very much in the planning. Fellowship members were invited to submit suggestions for an associated logo and more than 100 entries were received, and below is the logo that the sub-committee finally selected:



Alcoholics Anonymous is a world-wide fellowship and AA (GB) is very much part of that. Our Trustees have attended several General Service Conferences of other European countries during the last year as observers, just as we have observers from other countries with us here, this weekend, and a very special welcome to them too. The European Service Meeting took place in October in York, and Amanda S and Brian J represented us. The Sub Saharan African Service Meeting took place in Johannesburg in June. This Meeting is jointly sponsored, both financially and in person, by AA (GB) and AA USA/Canada, and Denise H and I had the privilege of attending. The World Service Meeting will take place in Durban in October this year, and we shall be represented by Joe H and Jeff B.

There have been public information events at the Scottish and Westminster Parliaments and Welsh Assembly during the last year. We have also supported some 21 exhibitions at various venues throughout the country, as well as supporting regional forums. Three seminars have taken place: Electronic Communications, Public Information, and Young People, which is our newest service and whose main role is to carry the message of recovery to young people and to help to integrate young AA members into service. I was personally inspired by what I heard at these three events, as indeed I am at all of the liaison officers meetings: so many good things are happening throughout the Fellowship, despite the number of service vacancies that we have. Let's accentuate the positive!

I shall end my report by thanking all Trustees, Roger our General Secretary, and all our staff at GSO, and the Northern and Southern Service Offices, for all their support and hard work during the last year. Thank you for listening and I wish you all a fruitful weekend.  
Thank you.

## Finance

(Joe H – Honorary Treasurer GSB)

Good evening Conference, my name is Joe and I am an alcoholic. I would like to deliver to you the finance presentation which is drawn from the Annual report which every group has already received. It covers the 2016 – 2017 financial year and what I aim to do is provide an overview of that year and compare it to the previous year, examine various financial trends in the Fellowship's finances and, thirdly look at a way forward given our finances.

First thing to say is that what I am putting forward is a snapshot of the account as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and at that time income had increased over the previous year by over £38,000 to £1.3m. Expenditure had also increased by £137,000 to over £1.4m and that meant that there was a movement of over £98,000 because in the previous year nearly £82,000 was a surplus and in 16/17 we ended up with a deficit of nearly £17,000.

Looking at our income, the main source of income to the Fellowship is Group and Intergroup contributions. There is also conventions, legacies, gratitude week and personal contributions which can be Gift Aided.

Publications income is another important aspect of our income as are, at the moment, our Reserves as shares and the interest we take from those shares because last year we turned from just accumulating our shares, which we stopped and started taking interest from them. The main thing about all those forms of income is that the Charity has absolutely no control over any of them, they are either voluntary contributions or something to do with a power greater than ourselves in the FTSE!

Looking at income from Publications, in terms of income that covers Share, Roundabout plus Diaries and Calendars and everything on the Literature List.

The cost of publications represents all external printing of items on the Literature List plus printing of Share and Roundabout.

Taking the income from Publications last year which increased by over £20,000 to £549,094 and looking at the cost of Publications which again increased by £69,493 to £225,418 and subtracting that from the income we have a surplus of £323,676.

What happens to that £323,676 – there are additional literature service costs that they fund and covers:

- Storage of literature
- Damaged literature costs;
- Shipping costs
- Internal printing
- Photocopying
- Postage & packaging
- Staff & premises overheads
- Public Information leaflets
- 'Free of Charge' literature
- Stationery
- Conference Reports



Each of those items of expenditure are all listed within the Income and Expenditure cost centres that appear in the quarterly account that goes out to every Regional Treasurer.

Focusing on the surplus – I have taken a quote from Bill W out of the Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017 in which he said:

“This net income to the groups and to AA’s General Services is actually the sum of a great many contributions which the book buyers make to the general welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. The certain and continued solvency of our world services rests squarely upon these contributions.”

Looking at expenditure on last year’s account at some significant items:

Professional Conferences	- £29,658 increase of £1,617
Publication Announcements	- £25,461 increase of £15,079
PI Videos	- £32,427
Web Site Development	- £5,235 Increase of £3,067
Postage	- £67,801 increase of £4,872

The Reserves Policy is based on Concept 12, Warranty 2: 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

Sufficient Operating funds are considered to be one quarter's expenditure

This gives a total Free (Prudent) Reserve of over 1.25 year's expenditure (£1.76 million). AA & CC recommended practice.

A lot of people will look at the Annual Report and in the balance sheet bottom line will see:

Net Assets	= £2,525,866
LESS	
Warranty 2 level (W2)	= £1,760,000
<b>Capital over &amp; above W2</b>	<b>= £765,866</b>

This £765.866 is the capital that enables the Charity to run its operation without dipping into the Prudent Reserve which is enabling the Charity to turn round at the end of the third part of this presentation and say this is what we are prepared to do and this is how we are prepared to use the reserves next year for the benefit of AAGB and AA abroad.

Our Investment Managers are Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) and the specific fund that we do invest in is called The Ethical Fund and as mentioned earlier we have stopped accumulating growth of shares within that Fund and now take income from those shares. The income from those shares is around £10,000 per quarter.

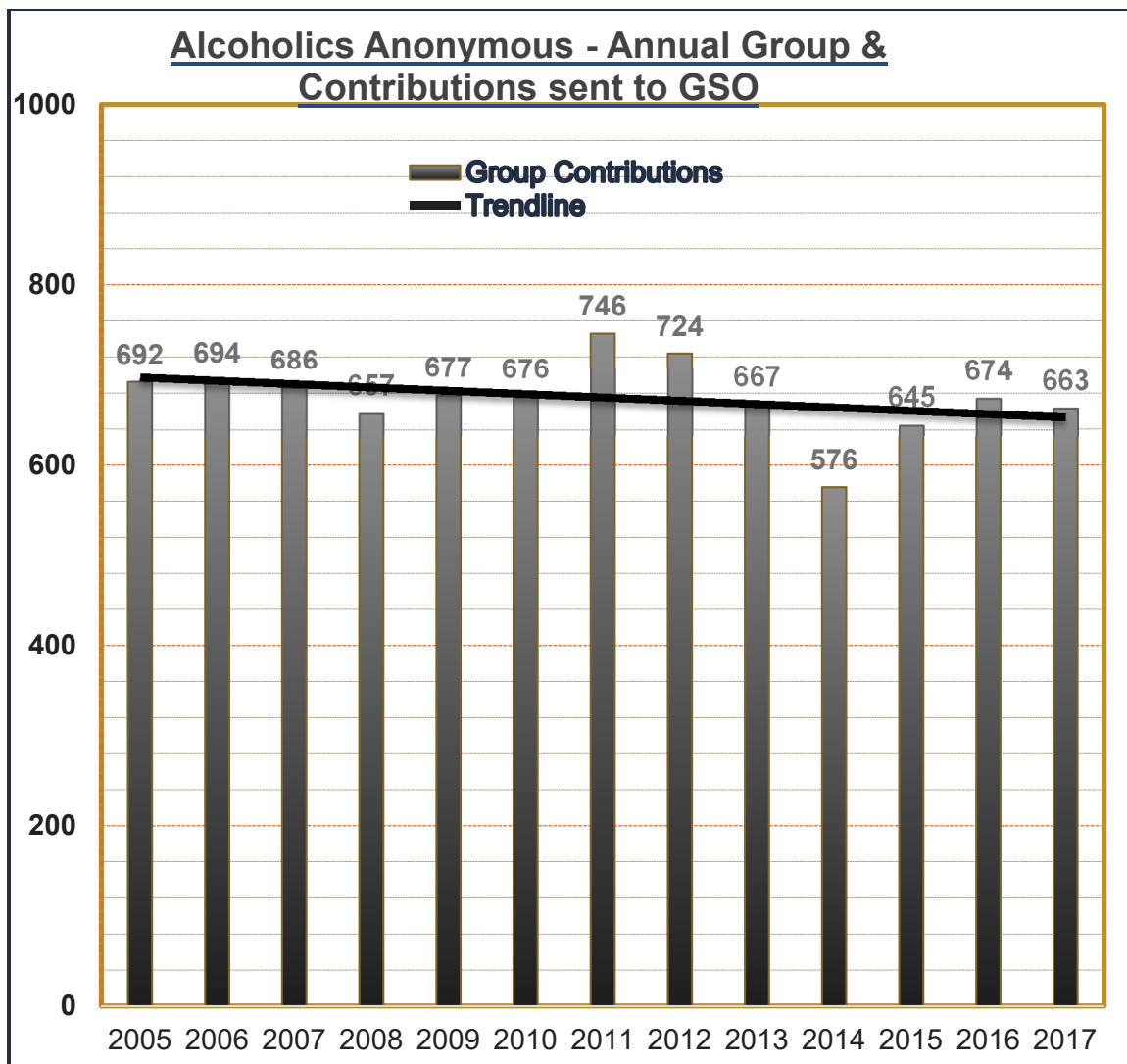
The General Service Board meets all the HMRC & Charity Commission legal and recommended stipulations relating to investments.

In line with all other UK charities AA’s investments are exempt from UK tax law.

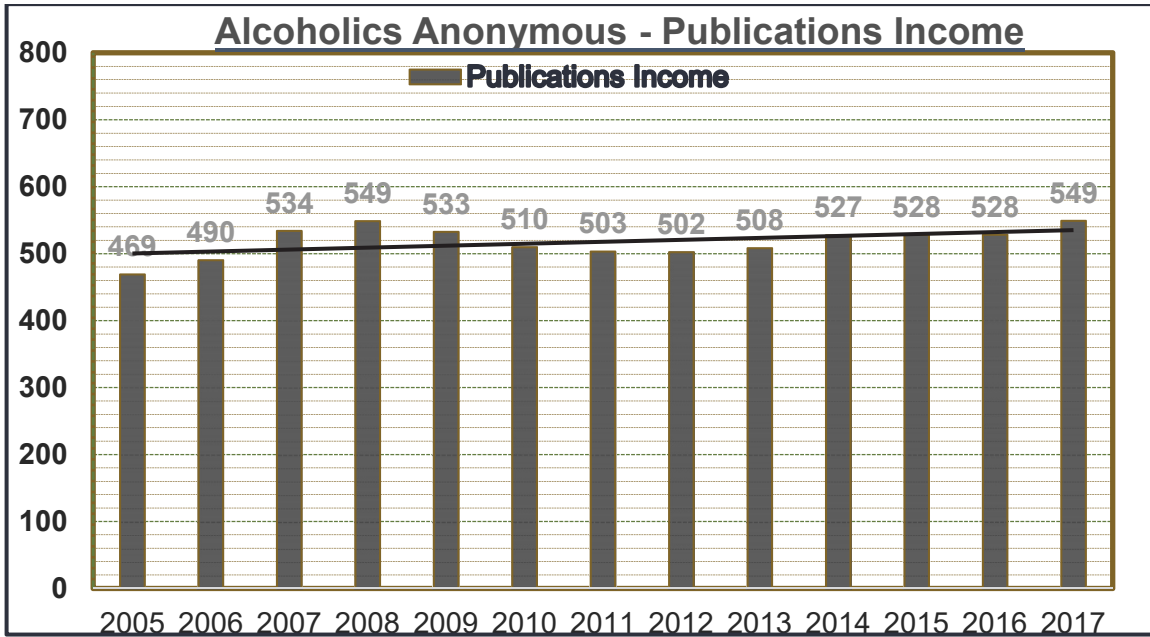
No fellowship investments are held/managed in districts that fell under the 'tax avoidance' or 'politically unstable' umbrellas.

### Analysis of Finance Trends 2005 – 2017

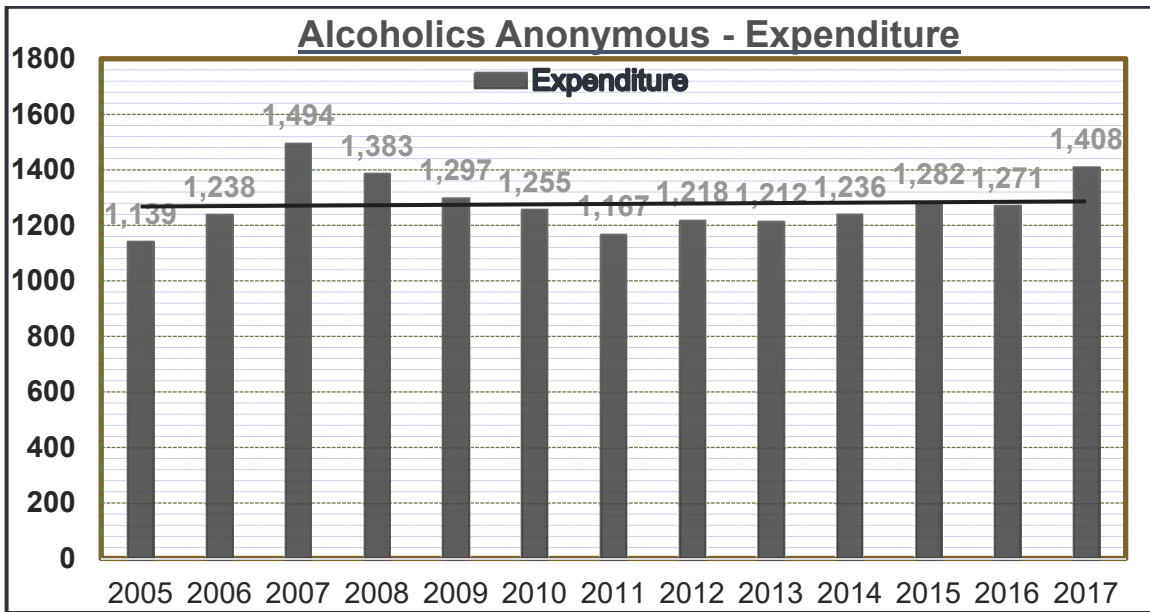
This covers Group Contributions, Publications Income, Expenditure, Net Assets/Reserves and Cash & Investments.



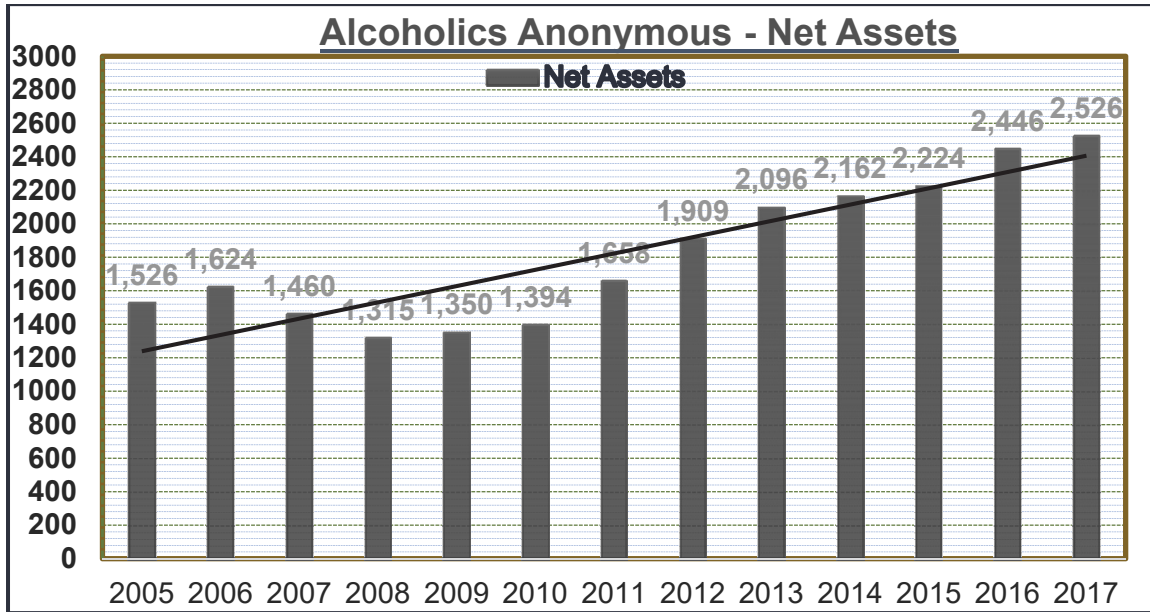
The line is the trendline and the two big spikes there were as a result of in 2010 Regional Treasurers wrote to the Fellowship saying that we needed some more money and that was the response but, as you can see, that trendline is gradually going down which indicates that the amount of money that is coming in from Group, Intergroup and Regional contributions is gradually dropping but, what it does not tell you, is the value of the money that has been donated. In 2005 we got £692,000, now that amount in 2005 bought a lot more things than £692,000 would buy in 2017 as in 2008 there was the crash and the pound got devalued. After the referendum the pound devalued by 17%. We have a situation where although contributions are quite stable the majority are in the £600,000 range. We are declining in spending power but some of you will know that there is another element to this which is counter-balancing that drop in spending power which I will come to shortly.



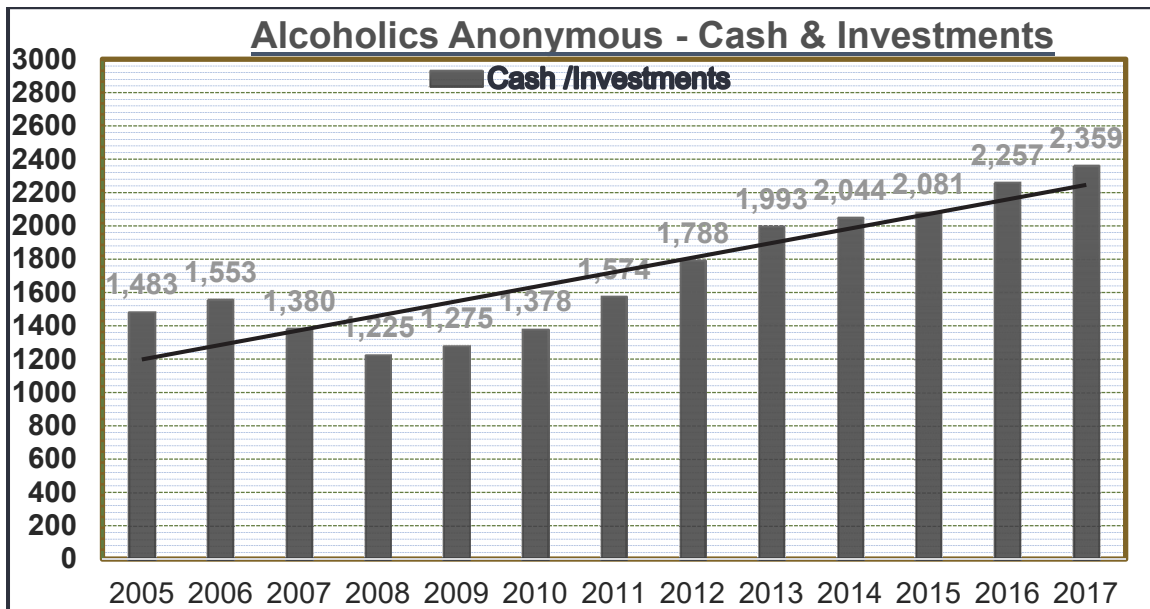
Publications income is keeping in line with spending power as it is gradually going up. The trendline here is keeping in line with the loss in spending power of the pound. Perhaps all those people who, in those years, went to Amazon and America for their literature, those customers are coming back to us and they are rising. With the increase in the amount of publications postage goes up.



Going back to 2007/8 which was when we moved from Stonebow House to Toft Green shows two big areas of expenditure. Last year, 2017, shows quite a significant expenditure but that was all based on the way forward that was put to Conference last year. In other words the aim was to support the Fellowship in GB and overseas using the reserves that we had and that's why, in a planned and controlled way, expenditure has gone up there as it was expected to do so.



The Net Assets include everything, the three accounts, two of which are restricted which are the Development Fund and the ESM Account and we cannot spend anything from those in this country as it all has to be spent abroad and includes the Unrestricted Account and everything to do with the current assets and the fixed assets. Current assets mean cash, shares etc. and fixed assets are computers etc. The value of all that is still increasing because it is driven by our investments.



Our investments are still on the up as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and it is this that is counterbalancing our drop in spending power. You have a fine balance here and it is this element of our finances which is keeping the reserves well up and as long as we have that we will be okay. It is constantly monitored by the Exec and the Board and it has put the Board in a position of putting this way forward to the Fellowship.

## The Way Forward

The Fellowship has placed us in a very stable financial situation with £765,000 above Warranty 2 level and we know that rent for AA rooms is going up, the cost of refreshments is going up for AA meetings and the aim is to try and support the Fellowship. New groups with small numbers can mean many groups just meeting expenses only.

As long as income remains stable our charity continues to take the view that the Fellowships reserves should remain at an ample level over the next 12 months and will again commit to the following four strategies:

1. Absorb all price rises and not pass them on to the Fellowship
2. Fund all projects without prioritisation for funding
3. Support the development of AA overseas
4. Fulfil all services the Fellowship has requested

Any price rises relating to Groups when this approach is deemed non-viable will be implemented on an annual INCREMENTAL basis.

1. Price rises in literature & services

The lowered value of the pound is continuing to cause some literature prices to rise, as different suppliers source paper materials from abroad.

All literature prices and subsidies will be maintained e.g. free of charge literature including the Blue Handbooks.

2. Funding of projects

The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention & the Digitising AA's Archives still require significant outlay of money, in the former it will be prior to completion. 21 Professional Conferences booked for this coming year. PI Videos project completed. 10 publication announcements booked this calendar year.

All projects will be funded in spite of price rises. Seminars or GSB sub committee meetings will not be cut back.

3. Support development of AA overseas

Again bearing in mind the drop in value of the pound, the GSB will maintain its level of contributions in real terms, to the World Service Literature fund; Sponsorship of Polish & Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting.

Our charity funded the first publication of AA literature in Bulgaria.

4. Services to the Fellowship

All services currently in place plus any subsequent services will be delivered without incurring further costs to Groups.

The suggested message to Groups, Intergroups and Regions is the same as last year (in order of priority):

1. Meet their prudent reserve
2. Finance their primary purpose work
3. When the two above are met make voluntary donations of any surplus monies to the Fellowship's account by their chosen method

I have to thank Conference very much for the privilege and honour of acting as Honorary Treasurer. It has been an absolutely marvellous opportunity for me and I have really, really appreciated it and thank you all very much for allowing me to do so, it been a real honour. Thank you.

## **Electronic Communications**

(James K)

Good evening friends, my name is James, I am an alcoholic and it is my privilege to present to you this report on the progress of the Electronic Communications Committee this year.

Tonight I would like to begin with a couple of new items on the Meeting Finder, the database of our Groups and there are two new features this year recently incorporated, symbols for disabled/wheelchair access and for hard of hearing:



If your Group should have one of these symbols showing and it does not please send in a new Pink Form and on the form there is a box to tick to say that you have these facilities available. As soon as this form is received in the office and processed then these symbols will appear on your report in the Meeting Finder.

Within the next few weeks we hope that there will be two new symbols appearing as well, one for sign language assistance and one for Groups which operate the Chit System, they are not there yet but hopefully very shortly:



Another thing that appears is the Group number. You might see that number when you receive your AA Service News under the address on the envelope and probably it is not printed anywhere else. It is of great use to the office staff if you can quote that number because it helps them to distinguish the group especially if there are two or more groups in close proximity meeting on the same night or two groups on different nights meeting in the same hall etc. and it really helps if you can quote that number.

If you want to send in a new Pink Form it is quite alright to say 'No Change' in a box if you don't actually know the name and address of your group secretary for example and you are filling it in as long as there is no change that it's fine – it's not being read by a machine it's

actually being read by someone in the office who will understand anything sensible that you write in the box!

How to find your Group's number. If you go to any of the microsites and select a particular Intergroup and then to 'List all Meetings' which shows all the local groups alphabetically and if you 'download to pdf' the Unique Identification Number (UID) is at the bottom of the group details.

When you are filling out the Pink Form online there is an invitation to read the notes before you do so and all that explanation is in there so you don't have to remember anything I am telling you now, it's all in the notes.

### Ecomm Services

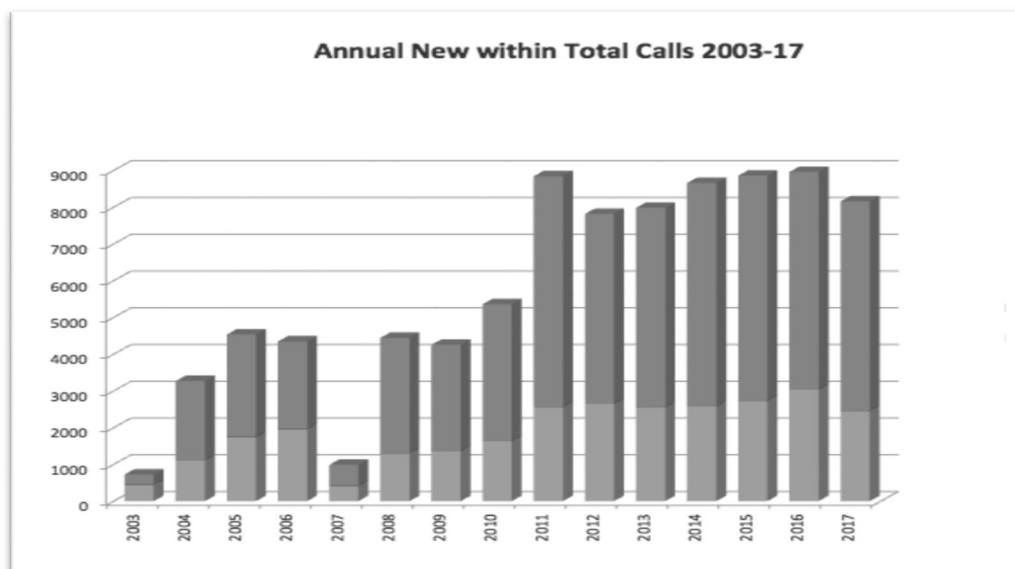
The Electronic Communications Sub Committee has three services which we deal with and I will say a brief word about all of them:

1. Email
2. Online Response Service
3. Chat Now Service

First of all the email service which I talked about last year. If you have an old email address of this type [newtown.chair@aa-email.org.uk](mailto:newtown.chair@aa-email.org.uk) it went about six months ago. At this time as we deleted all old email addresses if you had a forwarder in place for example the newtown.chair had the mail forwarded to his personal address then we left that in place but again, as I said at Conference last year, that would shortly go and they will go this week.

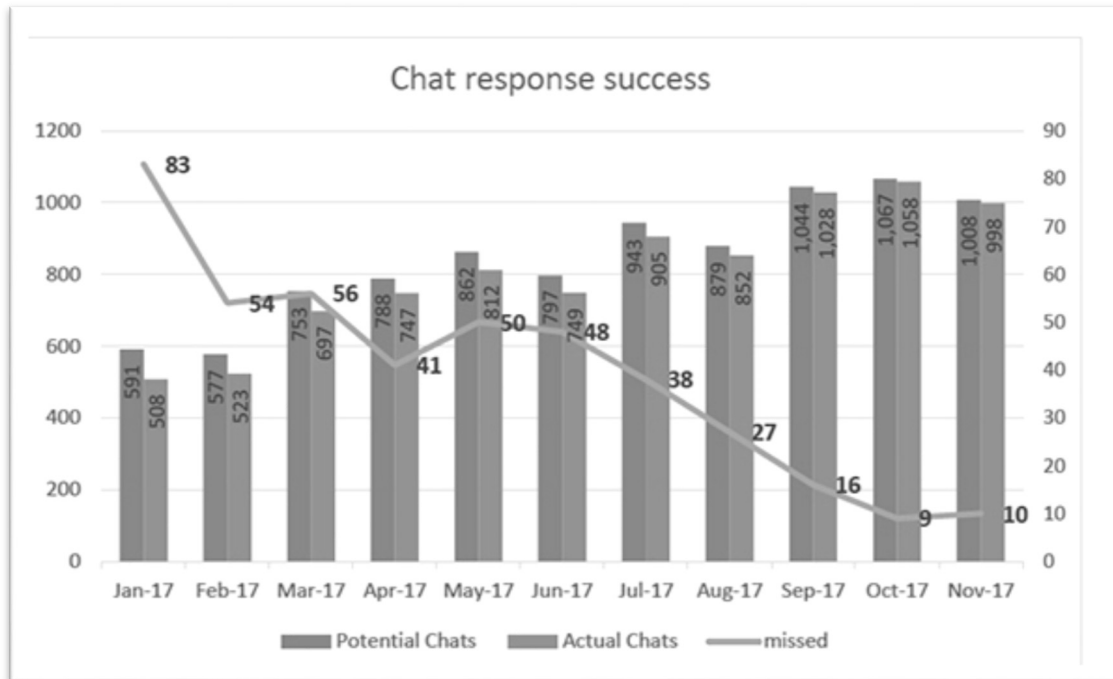
The new email addresses in the form of aamail.org are entirely administered by GSO but if you have any questions about how to operate your system or you are having trouble operating it or something has gone wrong, that will always be answered by one of the Electronic Communications Sub Committee. If you send in a technical query then we will handle that.

### The Online Response Service



The chart above shows the number of calls every year since its inception and I am looking in particular at the last few years and you can see that there was a permanent growth in the calls and then a drop in 20017 and some of you will say of course that is when Chat Now was brought in. Chat Now is affecting the number of calls to the Online Response Service. The drop is about 800 a year.

Below is a similar chart for the Chat Now Service



These are monthly calls as it has only been going for a year and you can see that we are having over a thousand calls some months and that is replacing a loss of 800 a year to the other service so overall I think we are giving a good service to the newcomer over these two complimentary services.

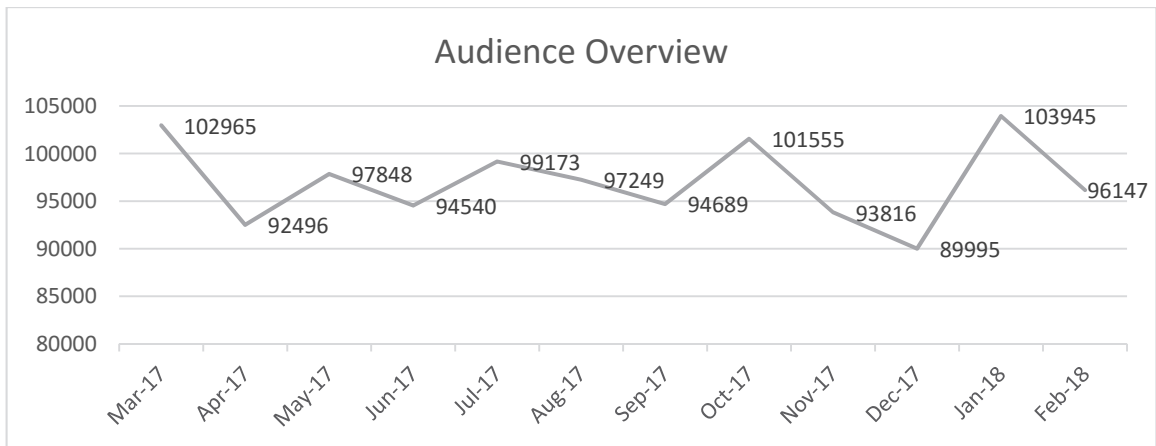
If I look in slightly more detail at the reports which each service produces on our Service Section of the website under Electronic Communications there is the Chat Now Service report and what it says is a full set of graphs may be seen here with a commentary on each – so you can download the full set of graphs with the commentary here.

Just out of interest one of the graphs you can download is a monthly breakdown from September 2017 (it could be any particular month) which the red section shows purely calls from newcomers and the purple section is continuing calls from newcomers and the yellow section is thanks from people who have used this service.

**Access to the Website**

The following graph shows the unique visitors to the website every month for a year from March 17 to February 18:

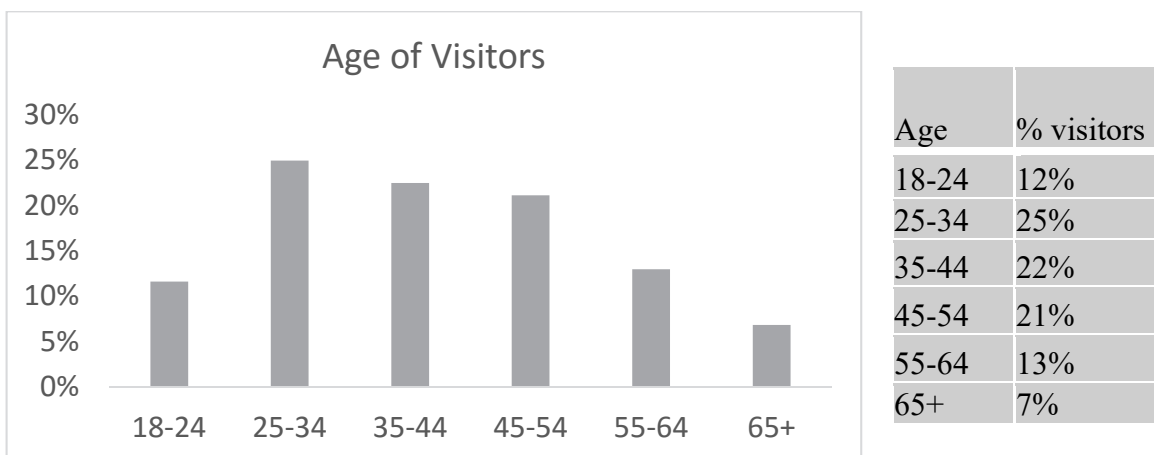




It shows a low of 90,000 visitors per month, a high of 104,000 per month and that is an average of 3,000 unique visitors per day.

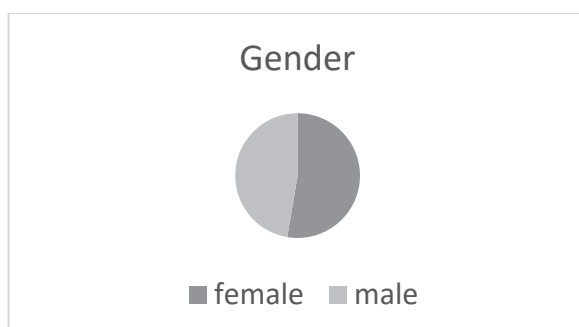
Overwhelmingly the Meeting Finder is by far the most popular page, there have been 1,429,637 visits to the Meeting Finder. The top 15 of the members' service pages total 42,000 between them so overwhelmingly our website is used for the meeting finder.

### Demographics



I am assured that Mr Google knows that I am in that 65+ category when I sit down and access our website, I don't believe that but I am assured that he does. I am assured that the above when they have been independently investigated are good representations of the demographics of our visitors.

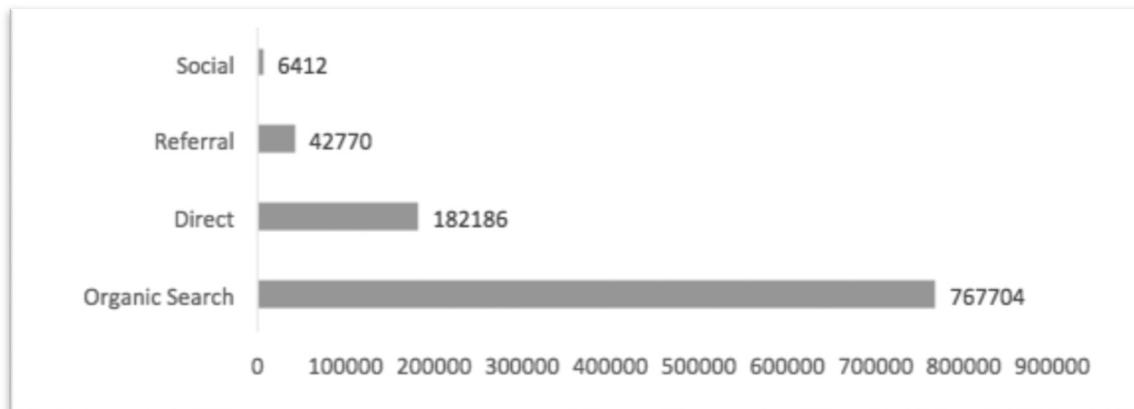
The following graph I find a little bit surprising



If you compare that breakdown with the membership as revealed through our most recent survey in 2015 it does not tally with our membership, quite what the reasons are I don't know, but we can speculate. It seems to say that it is much more closely 50-50 than our membership actually is.

## Acquisition

How do people get to the AA website?



One method dominates over all others – organic search – which means a search found in a search engine. Anyone who types in any question or any combination of words which leads somebody to click on our website is an unpaid search find. I'm in that category as I have a lot of pages on our website bookmarked and I go straight to them but if all I want to do is get onto the website and find something there which I have not previously bookmarked all I will type is AAGB and that will get me there and at that point I am in the organic search.

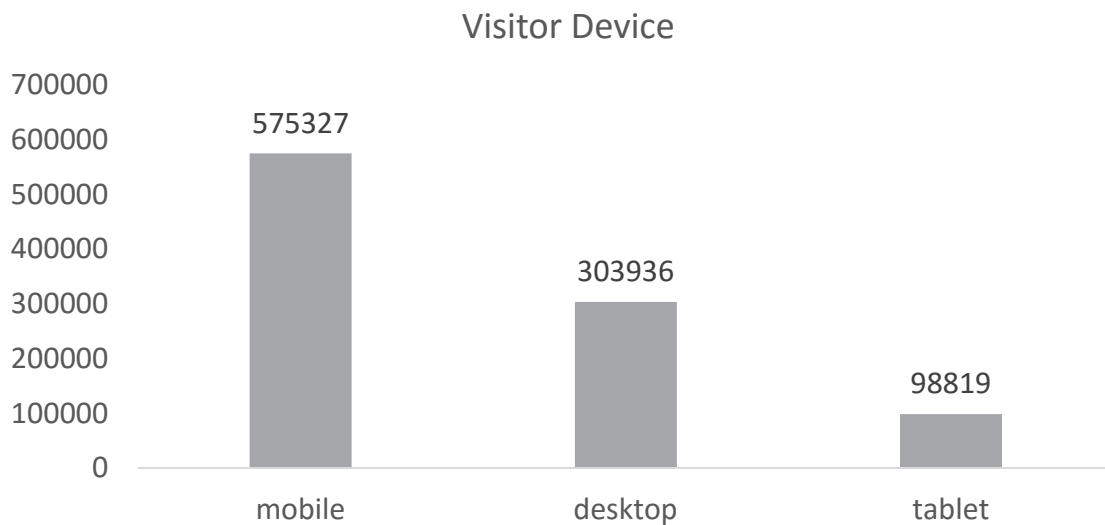
If somebody sits at their computer and types 'do I drink too much' that will throw up a variety of suggestions and one of those suggestions will be our website and if the person clicks on that from the question 'do I drink too much' then that is an unpaid search find.

Direct is what I mentioned earlier on, if I know a page is there and I look at it on a regular basis then I am going to want to bookmark it which will take me directly to that page and as you can see above quite a few people do that.

Referral is a link from another site and that can come in a number of ways for instance, some of you will belong to Intergroups who run their own website and if you have a link into our website then that will be a referral from another site but, of course, other organisations like, for instance, NHS will run pages on drink problems and will say here are some people you might want to contact and they will list us and give a link to our website.

Finally, Social, and I was surprised how small it was. Referral from a social media link, if you or somebody you know has got a Facebook page which says you would really want to go to this site if you have a drink problem and there are such sites, that is what you will be counted as. Even at 6412 referrals a year that is still 20 some referrals a day.

## Devices



Mobile devices dominate the market now and this has caused the Electronic Communications Sub Committee to have a rethink because the site was originally designed for desktops and as I spoke last year about it, we designed a special mobile site which would come up on mobile phones and then we made the original site responsive so that it could automatically detect the size of the screen and adjust itself accordingly, but in doing so I think we threw away a lot of information which is shown on the larger screen which just cannot be shown on the smaller screen.

The Electronic Communications Sub Committee has begun to think that what we should do is redesign the site, not in terms of the information which it contains but in terms of its looks and start with the smaller mobile phone screen and then expand that to these larger screens and that is going to be a project that we look at during the course of this coming year.

After I have finished presenting Literature will be presenting among other things some posters and on the posters will be a QR code. QR means Quick Recognition which is a maze like box in the corner of the poster. This QR code can be scanned by a mobile phone which will detect the information contained in the code and when you hit search it will bring up the meetings within 15 miles of the phone. I know of two or three InterGroups who already use QR codes on their local Where to Finds to point them to appropriate pages. This is not something that is totally new but it is new to our posters.

## Audio

Every month Roundabout puts up two stories from the magazine which go up in text form but also in an audio version and depending on how you have your computer set up you can actually have it in text form to read on one side of your screen and audio to be listened to on the other side of your screen.

This is my final report to Conference and it has been a great privilege to report this to you and its goodnight from me and from him.

## Literature

(Denise H)

Good Evening Conference. My name is Denise, I'm an alcoholic and the Chair of the Literature Sub-committee.

It is a great honour and privilege to serve on the General Service Board as a Trustee that has responsibility for Literature.

Before I present the report I would like to give my thanks to the members of the Literature sub-committee for all their outstanding efforts this year

On behalf of the Literature Sub-Committee, I have the pleasure in presenting to the Fellowship, several pieces of literature for consideration by Conference 2018.

Background information has been provided demonstrating how this literature came about.

Members of the Fellowship were invited to ask questions or offer suggestions about these pieces of literature before the 31st March 2018.

Feedback was received from various members, all of which were considered, in depth.

Some feedback resulted in the pamphlet 'Your AA Group', being withdrawn.

It is The Literature Sub Committees intention to resubmit it to a future Conference after addressing the feedback raised by the Fellowship.

This brings me onto the next piece of New Literature which is:

### AA in Treatment Settings

With relatively little feedback, the Literature and Health Sub Committees have made a slight change to the pamphlet, which is as follows:

#### Section 5 - **Some good sobriety.**

Amend the first sentence For exactly how long, nobody can say, but it is suggested that you should have ~~Delete been through, or be working~~ **Insert** knowledge of the Twelve Step recovery programme, ~~Delete with a sponsor~~ have a home group and be trying to incorporate the spiritual principles of AA into your life."

#### **Amend the last sentence .....**

In any event, it is suggested you discuss this ~~Delete first with your sponsor, and then~~ with your local intergroup AA health service liaison officer.

#### **This should now read**

For exactly how long, nobody can say, but it is suggested that you should have knowledge of the Twelve Step recovery programme, have a home group and be trying to incorporate the spiritual principles of AA into your life."

#### **The last sentence should read.....**

In any event, it is suggested you discuss this with your local intergroup AA health service liaison officer.

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

The next item is:

**The General Service Conference – The Conscience of AA GB.**

This pamphlet is the consolidation of 3 documents: – 1) How to Submit a Question to Conference; 2) The Annual Process Map and 3) The Role and Function of Conference.

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

The next items are the new posters:

Fellowship feedback has been accepted and incorporated, with the new versions in your Conference pack

These changes are:

Armed Services Poster [help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org) has been added

All the 5 posters have had the disclaimer 'Stock Photo' added to the bottom of each poster.

The first one is the New Armed services poster from the Armed Services Sub-Committee

***Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority with the addition of the QR Code, AA logo and revised telephone number layout.***

Next are the four new National posters:

Bottle poster

Man in the Window poster

Wine Glass poster

Woman in the Windowsill Poster

These posters include a QR code which can be read by a mobile phone providing the enquirer with details of nearby AA meetings, as demonstrated by James earlier.

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

Two proposed revisions to the AA Service Handbook have gone to Committee:

1. Chapter 3:  
AA and Electronic Communications – 'Chat Now Service'
2. Chapter 4:  
AA members employed in the alcoholism field

Finally, the 'AA Business and Group Conscience Meetings' leaflet passed by Conference 2017 is now available from GSO.

This concludes my report to Conference.

## **Non-Alcoholic Trustees**

(Mani Mehdikhani)

Good evening Conference and I just wanted to say first of all what a great honour and privilege it is to be here. This is my second year, I was confirmed at last year's Conference and my name is Mani Mehdikhani, non-alcoholic Trustee (NAT) and, as Geoff was saying, I am the only current NAT on the Board and please, please find a few others to join me for future years.

I would like to tell you a little bit about how I got here and it's quite remarkable for me to think about it, to paraphrase the words of American comedian Emo Philips, if just two years ago you had said to me that I would be standing here at the national Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous and talking to delegates from all over the country I would have just stared at you, I was taking a lot of heavy medication at the time (that's Emo's joke not mine).

However, there is some truth to that, the fact that there is such a difference in terms of where I was at the start of my career. In my professional role I am a Clinical Psychologist and I happen to work in the alcoholism field and I started my career in 2007 as a qualified Psychologist and where I was back then is 180° diametrically opposed to where I am right now in terms of my attitude towards Alcoholics Anonymous or any sort of 12<sup>th</sup> Step type programme.

I worked in an Alcohol Centre at the time where our philosophy was very different, we called it a social cognitive model, we didn't encourage but we promoted the idea of choice so in other words if people wanted to remain abstinence that's what we helped them with, if they wanted so called controlled drinking or sensible drinking and we thought some people might benefit from that approach. To be honest with you despite that the vast majority of the clients that I worked with opted for abstinence regardless of the philosophy that was on offer.

At that time we used to run support groups in the clinic and I used to run some of the support groups myself as the Chair of the group. Looking back on it, it feels so odd that I was doing that as a professional, support groups should not be run by professionals but that was the way that it was done and I was mentored into that position.

The other aspect of it was from a personal perspective as well as a professional perspective I was ill-equipped to get to grips, to understand the philosophy behind Alcoholics Anonymous.

I was born a Muslim but I am an atheist, I became an atheist at the age of 14 when I flirted with communism, then I gave that up but a few years later I stayed an atheist and some of the terminology, the God thing, that was really something I could not get my head around and I will come back to that because it is still something that I see as one of the barriers in terms of the work I am doing. On Wednesday I saw a client who has been through alcohol treatment three or four times and I looked at his history, we explored some of that and I asked him about his contact with AA and he said the first time around he had no contact with AA and the second time he had a few months contact and the last time he came close, he went for more than a few months and even went up to Step 9 and then it was the God thing

he said he could not get his head around. So it is something that I see as really important in terms of getting the message to still suffering alcoholics and how do we get past that point.

The other side is professional, as a Clinical Psychologist there is a bit of chauvinism in our makeup, anything to do with behaviour change we don't like it when other people come along as say we have this wonderful thing and we say why didn't we come up with it and at least we should have tested it. We should have tested it to death with randomised controlled trials and all sorts of things so there is always that kind of scepticism from that angle.

So for a number of years although many of the clients who came to the clinic also went to Alcoholics Anonymous I was quite sceptical and two of the key characteristics of a NAT is first someone who is not afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and the other one is a profound faith in the working of Alcoholics Anonymous. At the time I would say I was very far from having that profound faith and it was very obvious in my responses my scepticism but through a variety of circumstances including the fact that our support groups were disbanded we were put in a position where we need to find a replacement and because, in many cases, the only alternative was Alcoholics Anonymous.

I was in a position where I had to say to my clients have you tried AA and many of them again objected and didn't want to go for all sorts of reasons and in the end the thing that I found most effective was grabbing their hands and literally dragging them to their first 'open' meeting. It was at my first 'open' meeting that I started the process of opening my eyes and I wouldn't say it was instantaneous but I think even at that first meeting I came away profoundly moved. I was trying to get someone to go with me, they stood me up that night but they did go later but that particular night I just went in as a visitor to that 'open' meeting and it blew my mind. Compared to the kind of support groups we were running at the alcohol centre it was just incredible. What we were doing was basically key working in a group setting and it didn't have any of the emotional power I could feel in that AA group.

I came out of it really starting to question some of my assumptions, my assumptions included some of the things I didn't get about the 12 Steps, not just about the language around God which now I have a better understanding of, but it was things like why do you need to have 12 Steps, why 12, why not pick the Steps that you like, why do you have to do it in this order and even if you have to can't I do 7 first and then come back to 3 because as a Psychologist therapist I use the tools and whatever bits of it seem to work. The other things are things like the label, what I call the label, but now I have a different understanding as I was always puzzled as to why people always said I am an alcoholic. I was again trained as a psychologist to be very sceptical about labels. If you say someone is a schizophrenic or a diabetic or whatever label you use are you not turning that person into the problem and you are not seeing the person just the label and that is how I was trained as a psychologist.

There were other things like the slogans and I couldn't get my head around some of the slogans, some of them I thought were platitudes and now I love them. I have a list of about 300 that I store away and I use them even when I am not working with alcoholics, I use them with other patients.

The notion of putting aside critical thought, analysis is paralysis and at the time it didn't make sense to me as my whole role as a psychologist was to analyse but now it makes real good sense, you get on with it, you live through that experience.

I read more about it and I spoke to people and over the years I did take more and more of my clients to their first meetings and some have stuck with it and some regretfully did not.

In 2016 I was asked to write an article for a Psychology journal about Alcoholics Anonymous because my colleagues thought I might know something about it and I wrote a piece which now looking back I cringe at some of the things I wrote because of my ignorance about the workings of Alcoholics Anonymous as an organisation and terms of its philosophy and on the basis of that I was invited to nominate myself for the Board in the role of NAT and was confirmed last year.

That is the kind of meandering path that has led me here and I am extremely glad that it has. It has had a profound impact on my life and I don't think that I can express my gratitude enough in terms of the goodwill, the welcome and the friendship that has been shown to me by all the people I have met in the Fellowship particularly the members of the General Service Board and my special thanks to them for their guidance.

I think one of the roles of the NAT in addition to being the front face for example doing interviews on Good Morning Britain is also to ask and say stupid things and to be gently and patiently corrected by my colleagues, and it has been helpful for them as well as it brings to their minds the key Concepts, Traditions and principles which guide Alcoholics Anonymous.

So, very briefly, some of my activities over the last year since my confirmation. I have been attending the Board meetings which are about 8 times a year, I have also been part of the Health Sub-committee with Nigel and I have attended a training Governance course with Denise last year, the annual Welsh National Convention where I gave a brief talk. I have presented to the Board a seminar on mindfulness and the 12 Steps and if anyone is interested mindfulness and meditation will be pleased to know that there is a big overlap between that type of meditation and the 12 Step approaches. I was invited to give a presentation at the Friends of the Fellowship meeting in Poland by invitation from Michal F, who is here as an observer, and that was a fantastic experience and I have been contributing in various modest ways to the work of the Board including discussion around some of the literature and trying to organise demonstration meetings for young people etc.

There have been missed opportunities as well as there have been times when I have been unable to follow through with a request that was made for example I was not able to attend the filming of the video we are going to see tomorrow nor attend the meeting in Chippenham for Health professionals for alcohol awareness. So there have been a few things I have had to turn down because of my very busy schedule at the moment, I'm a working dad, I work full time for the NHS and I have three jobs essentially, I have a huge commute everyday but at the same time I see this as one of the most important aspects of my life in terms of giving me a sense of purpose. I hope that I can stay committed to it and the word commitment is right there and for me commitment is the notion that you do something even when you don't want to do it or it's difficult or hard to do. Like the AA saying 'you don't have to like it you just have to do it' words that I use to my four year old daughter every day.

Thank you very much for your kind welcome and your fellowship.

Sid closed the Friday evening session at 10.45pm 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**

Sid welcomed everyone back, hoping that they had had a productive day in their committees 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. Sid then invited Peter F (GSB) to commence the continuation of General Service Board reports.

### **Public Information**

(Peter F)

Good evening Conference, my name is Peter and I am an alcoholic. Public Information (PI) operates through AA members, Groups, Intergroup, Regions and the PI Subcommittee, which is accountable to the GSB.

We, the PISC, have a responsibility of carrying the message to every area of the wider community, to help the still suffering alcoholic find a way to sobriety. PI is often the first contact the public have with the Fellowship

Media Events. The PI Subcommittee are very conscious of all our Traditions which underpins our activity, especially when dealing with the media and external bodies. We are guided by the Public Information Section in the AA Service handbook.

The need for adherence to the Traditions continues to be carefully explained to Journalists, their Editors and the Producers of TV Programmes. We have where necessary editorial control of the filming and editing of AA content.

The PI team last year participated in the making of the new AA Great Britain video. We are very grateful to its members, particularly Nick Holroyd, our NAT and to the sterling work done by all members of the Fellowship involved in the project.

During the year we have released articles for the press; One on our Public information events at the Parliaments of Holyrood, Westminster and the Welsh Assembly in Senedd was released in December entitled 'Dying for a Drink' published on the AA website in December has been picked up by three Regional Newspapers and the content published.

A short programme on Anonymity and Social Media was broadcasted in early January on Sky News and gave good coverage to AA, its views and guidance on personal anonymity on the internet.

Our PI Service Committee Non Alcoholic Trustee (NAT) has also visited the BBC and Holyrood to support our PI events. He plays a particularly unique role of being able to speak more openly of the principles of our Fellowship. We are very grateful to Nick for all his hard work, enthusiasm and support.

Advertising Campaigns. The Merseyside Intergroup have run two successful Poster Campaigns on the Merseyside Metro and also at Liverpool Airport. London Region North ran a large Poster Campaign on the London Underground in October which I understand was a great success and they funded that from their own resources. Newcastle Intergroup likewise ran a Poster Campaign on their Public Transport System in November.

PI Sub Committee. There are six of us and we met four times during 2016. We continue to encourage Intergroup PI Initiatives by Public PI events for professionals and also working with both their local press and Regional Television.

We held a National AA Public Information Seminar in York on September 16th and this was well attended with over 70 delegates from the many of our Intergroup and Regions. This included attendees from Continental Europe.

A lot of nationwide AA PI activity took place during the Government Alcohol Awareness week in November.

Regional PI Liaison Officers. An excellent meeting was held in York on September 15<sup>th</sup> prior to the PI Seminar the next day; with all 16 Regions represented. A lot of interesting and enthusiastic information was exchanged amongst all those attending.

It is clear many more Intergroups are now setting up a PI Service group within their Intergroup; the Public Information Officer (PILO) being the facilitator. This means much more PI activity within all the areas of Great Britain as teams are established.

This is well recorded in the monthly PI Service Newsletter and we continued to emphasise at the PI Seminar the importance of Intergroups running PI as a group committee; with its own budget and annual programme of activity and events. Page 21 of the 2017 Service Handbook for Great Britain has some helpful advice on forming a PI service committee.

PI Service News. This publication is circulated throughout the Fellowship on the first week of each month. We have an excellent editor to whom we are most grateful for his tireless activity. The variety of content gives great credit to those really active Intergroups who are the engine room of PI activity.

In 2018 the PI subcommittee are enthusing more Intergroups to form PI teams as only some 60% do so at present. We are organising three Six Region PI meetings in the next 12 months. The first is in Guildford on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June for the Southern six Regional Intergroup and regional PI liaison officers.

The letters of invitation have already been sent out from GSO, please encourage all your PILO's to attend! You are at liberty to send another colleague along to represent your Intergroup if the PI officer is unable to attend.

Finally, my great thanks to the all the members of the PI Team for all their hard work with PI activity last year and continuing of course into this year with challenges ahead.

## **Prisons and Probation/Criminal Justice Social Work Services**

(Charlie R and Jeff B)

### **Good evening Conference, my name is Charlie and I am an alcoholic.**

Jeff and I (Prison and Probation Trustees) have been scheduled to give an update, firstly of our respective sub-committees progress over the past twelve months and the newly developing Criminal Justice Partnership.

The Prison Sub-Committee is now fully staffed, we met last November and then again in January this year. We now have a dedicated member to liaise with Steve Hexter the GSO staff member who handles the Prison Postal Service. This is in reply to a lady at last year's Conference and just to show that we have done a small amount of work on this. We estimate that we have 45 inmates who are currently writing one letter this year to date using this service. Other inmates will have stopped writing due to being released or simply drop out of contact. Total number of letter received at GSO in 2017 was 149 male letters and 101 female letters. Female inmates represent 22% of the correspondents and they have written 32% of the letters. Male inmates represent 78% of the correspondents and have written 68% of the letters. At the latest count we are extremely short of members willing to give their time to this essential service especially females. We are struggling for female prison written sponsors. The last edition of the AA Service News carried an advert for Prison Sponsors and an article on the Prison service.

We are about to publish a quarterly newsletter which will be sent to all Intergroup and Regional PLOs to keep the Fellowship up to date with what we are trying to achieve on the Prison Sub-committee.

Another member is dedicated to keeping our attendance within prisons currently holding meetings by means of a national map which will soon be available on the prison section of the website. At the moment we are in 105 of the 145 prison establishments in the United Kingdom.

Now just a short summary of the Criminal Justice Partnership, which Jeff will go into in more detail shortly. When I started on the Board I invited a Board member to come to the Prison Sponsors meeting in Stirling in the same place as we are holding our Scottish National Convention this year, and he was so impressed and thought that we should be holding these meetings in England. So we sat down and set up three meetings in England, one in Cambridge, one in Swindon and one in Warrington, this is bearing in mind financial responsibility. It's the same thing that PI have done by doing it in Regions so even though there are expenses to travel to these meetings there are no overnight expenses, thereby keeping the expenses to a minimum.

So we set these meetings up and I invited the last Probation Trustee along and he suggested that we should make these meetings a combined meeting and I would just like to read you a quote:

'In April 2017 the Government admitted 'chronic overuse of prisons' and announced the introduce of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) which has now replaced the National Offenders Management Service (NOMS) who AA used to work closely with as part of its 'rehabilitation revolution'. The new organisation will highlight the importance of education by providing improved training and learning opportunities for offenders and will integrate Prison and Probation Services with a view to reducing re-offending figures. In addition the Government has announced £100m annual funding, a prison state transforming programme and 2,500 extra prison officers by 2018. Emphasis has been placed on delivering a workplace where staff would be 'proud to work' and where offenders can benefit from a wide range of support activities including employment, family accommodation support, combined complimentary development of stronger officer/prisoner relationships designed to reduce re-offending. With prison capacity at close to breaking point and the ramifications of offender management reform still unclear it is fundamental that prisons, probation providers, central and local government work together to ensure that provision of a joined

up cohesive offender management system that pools and maximises resources to help the offending terms’.

This is where the Trustees come in, we are going to these meetings, laying forward the AA principles, networking with the many professionals that go to these meetings, raising the awareness of AA in the professional community and I would say that we have been very successful at it.

The CJP came in to being and we realised that much closer co-operation was required between the disciplines if we are to meet our commitment to the still suffering alcoholic.

Through the Gate has taken on a life of its own but it is important to note that it is an integral part of the Government’s transforming rehabilitation programme so they are working through the Gate and we are working in cohesion with them, although it is not working but we are trying to make it work.

As a result a closer relationship between the Trustee and Sub-committees of the Prison and Probation/Criminal Justice has becoming increasingly apparent.

**My name is Jeff and I am an alcoholic.** It’s good to be here and I am grateful to be here and it’s been great working with you Charlie.

I’m honoured to be a Board Trustee of Alcoholics Anonymous, with responsibility for Probation – in England and Wales – and Criminal Justice Social Work Services in Scotland.

This is a time of important change for carrying the message of AA to the still suffering alcoholic *and* to professionals within the Criminal Justice system.

There is the AA Criminal Justice Partnership – already mentioned – agreed at a meeting at GSO in June last year. This was a joint gathering of Prison and Probation representatives from throughout Great Britain.

It is a reflection – but not a result – of the merging of the Prison and Probation Services – HMPPS – under the Ministry of Justice.

Our partnership here in AA is just that – a partnership. It is a closer working together, NOT a merger.

Both Disciplines - Probation/Criminal Justice **and** Prisons - are two distinct Disciplines, each with their own dedicated Liaison Officers, Sub-committees and Board Trustees.

The Probation/Criminal Justice Social Work Services subcommittee has grown, with now just one current vacancy. We held our first meeting last weekend, and discussed various ways of carrying forward the message of AA throughout the Probation service, the courts and the police service.

We are updating our Terms of Reference to reflect the closer working with Prisons, and reviewing and updating the website.

I remain confident that the one, remaining vacancy will be covered by someone from Scotland, to reflect Criminal Justice Social Work Services there, so that we're effective in carrying the message throughout Great Britain.

As has also been mentioned, Trustees for both disciplines have attended various Criminal Justice and Penal Reform seminars. One was in Manchester, and three 'Inside Government' events have been held in London.

While AA has a system of rotation the Government does as well.

There have been THREE Government Secretaries of State for Justice – during the past year alone. That makes *eight* in the past ten years.

Leading professionals have spoken about a criminal justice system under pressure and in disarray. They have said and this was said at the most recent seminar that there are too many people in prison – too many women in prison – too many people in prison serving short term sentences of a year or less.

There is pressure for more people to be *released* from prison, and fewer people to be *sent* there. This gives even greater scope for AA members working with the Prison and Probation Services to carry the message.

During the past year, Prison **and** Probation-Criminal Justice Social Work Services representatives have met at four regional meetings. These meetings are also open to Prison Sponsors, and those having an interest in working in these fields.

The meetings have been held at Stirling and Cambridge in September last year, and Swindon in October.

The Warrington meeting scheduled for last month was cancelled because of bad weather. It has now been re-scheduled for Sunday 1 July.

The pilots for these gatherings were in Cambridge, Bristol and Warrington *last* year. I am indebted to my predecessor Clive D from Midlands Region, and to my colleagues Charles and Roger E for their efforts with these.

As those working within the discipline already know, the Probation Service has two tiers – the Probation Service itself dealing with higher risk offenders. Those considered to be a lower risk are supervised by privately run Community Rehabilitation Companies – or CRCs.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Probation, Dame Glenys Stacey, has spoken at two Government Seminars attended by the Prison Trustees and myself. She said there were 250,000 people on probation in England and Wales. In her words: "The staff were overworked, change weary. The CRCs were NOT delivering". She said the CRCs needed to be on a stable footing, with better funding and incentives for quality work. It is precisely here that AA – with its dependability and reliability – can remain constant to carry the message.

My first experience of the Probation Service was as an offender – charged with a serious drink-driving case. I didn't dare tell the magistrates then that I'd already been to Alcoholics Anonymous – I didn't want them to think I had a serious drink problem and send me to prison.

Moving forward.....one of the seminars we attended at the beginning of this year has resulted in an invitation for me to speak, actually next month, and also to write an article for the national publication of The Magistrates Association. This is due to appear in the April-May issue, due any time now.

I have also been invited, just within the last week, to attend the National Probation Service Health Leaders Meeting in London next month.

Before, I didn't dare tell the courts anything about my attendance at AA. Today, I can't tell them *enough* about AA - what it's done for me and for countless others.

## **New Videos**

(Nigel P and Amanda S)

**Good evening Conference, my name is Nigel and I am an alcoholic.** The Board tasked me with coming up with some new video material specifically for the website but also to be used for other purposes and it should be aimed towards professionals. My first thought was that I didn't have a clue about what I am doing but let's start somewhere and get some help and find out what is currently available.

I sought out members of the Board who felt their disciplines could benefit from this, clearly one was Health, my own discipline, others that came forward were Armed Services, Employment, Prisons and Probation and PI who are always keen to be involved whenever there is a chance to get AA in the public eye.

Trawling across the internet brought up some nice little videos aimed at professionals and whilst the topics were many and varied what they had in common was duration, they were all short and that made perfect sense. If you want to take the time up of a busy person it's best you don't take too much of it.

I got in contact with the various disciplines and started getting ideas about the sort of content that was wanted and eventually the specifics of what they wanted the video to contain. The Sub-committees are crucial whenever we are doing something like this and it's from them that we get all of the ideas.

I then needed to get some estimates and costs and just talking to the people who are making these films made me quickly realise just how out of my depth I was. Fortunately, it was about this time that Amanda joined the Board and her background gave her the experience in just this area of work. So, as Amanda did most of the work on this I will hand over to her.

**My name is Amanda and I am an alcoholic.** I was tasked with pulling together the different disciplines to make the videos. I would like to thank my fellow Trustee, Jeff B, for his help and also Tim from Armed Services, the Employment Sub-committee, Charlie from Prisons, the Health Sub-committee, PI Sub-committee and our former non-alcoholic Trustee, Nick Holroyd and all those AA members who gave of their time to share their experience, strength and hope to make these videos.

When we had a discussion about how we were going to make these videos and what the content was going to be, we had a discussion as to whether actors should be used or whether AA members should be used whilst preserving their anonymity. It was unanimously decided that if we were to use actors we would lose the actual emotion and power that we have in

our rooms so we decided to make these videos very carefully, preserving everyone's anonymity and using AA members. I was very, very grateful to all these people who were willing to be of service and to pass the message on to the still suffering alcoholic and to those people who work with alcoholics in their daily jobs.

I am going to show you the videos in the following order:

Public Information  
Prisons  
Health  
Employment  
Armed Services

After you have seen these videos we will take any questions you may have and then we will move to a vote. We are voting for the videos to be put on the AAGB website and available to be downloaded for those in the relevant services for them to be used in their primary purpose work.

**All the videos were shown and after full discussion the videos were accepted by Conference with a two-thirds plus majority.**

## **AA Service News Update**

(Jeff B)

AA Service News is the General Service Board's principle medium for the communication of Service events and developments throughout AA Great Britain.

It is distributed quarterly, and I am indebted to members for their contributions, and for the work of GSO staff in its production and distribution.

Articles within it give particular emphasis to matters affecting our primary purpose - to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Two editions concentrate on Conference Questions and their recommendations. The other two contain a variety of service topics, including Parliamentary events in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Westminster and service workshops and other events in all areas of the country.

Each edition mentions a specific Concept, a Calendar of AA events in Great Britain and overseas, In Memoriam donations and notices to fill vacancies on all the General Service Board sub-committees. A challenge is always to make AA Service News attractive and relevant to ensure the widest possible readership.

Three copies of AASN are posted to the mailing contacts for all Groups in the Great Britain Service Structure. It is also posted to all Intergroup and Regional Officers, and to the General Service Board. If you do not see AASN at your local Group, please check that your Group Registration details are up-to-date via the Pink Form at GSO. If in doubt, please phone GSO to check.

I'm also indebted to the many volunteers who give up their time on a Saturday morning to pack the envelopes to distribute AA Service News. This takes place four times a year at GSO, and each pack also contains flyers and other documents.

If you have news or experience of a service event, please tell AA Service News.

## Archives Update

(Joe H)

Re the Borthwick project, a cataloguing archivist has inspected the material and we await the appointment of an archivist to work between ourselves and the Borthwick. The Archives Sub Committee of the GSB has been working hard at organising the archives at GSO.

The Archivists Workshop in September '17 was very successful with 32 keen attendees from Intergroups and Regions were sharing experience on several archival issues. The one sad note was that John M from S E Region has decided to stand down, his work is published for all to see and leaves 'big shoes to fill'.

The highlight of the archival year was the opening on Friday 6th Oct 2017 of the display of Scottish AA Archives staged by the Scottish Archives Committee. 50 people attended including the daughter and granddaughter of Sir Phillip Dundas who brought AA to Scotland. His granddaughter (Henrietta) opened the exhibition and Andy C as assistant manager of Kelvingrove did a presentation to the press and TV accompanied by Jonathan Chick a former non- alcoholic trustee. The event was reported very positively in 11 newspapers and 2 BBC Scotland radio shows. It has been a great success. Over 400,000 people have viewed this AA archives exhibition from 6/10/17 until 18/1/18.

Two signing in books have been filled with positive comments from the public, as well as some AA members. A DVD of the opening ceremony has been produced and is now in circulation. Parts of the display and the DVD will be shown at the Scottish National Convention at Stirling in May.

There was a World Museums Conference in Manchester recently at which the Scottish AA archives display was brought up as being a "positive link with the community".

There are many implications to be talked through by the Archives Committee as a successful result of this display, but one key factor is the possible linking of PI and Archives in carrying the AA message to the general public.

Congratulations to the Scottish Archives Committee, a job well done and let's hope it's just the start of similar projects to be staged in other museums around the country.

## Armed Services Update

(Brian J)

It is a great honour and privilege to serve as the Board Trustee with responsibility for Armed Services.

I would like to give my vote of thanks to the Armed Services Sub-Committee (ASSC) for all the sterling work they carry out on behalf of the Armed Services both serving and veterans.

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 areas 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 & 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 2017 are vital before accepting the role of ASLO.

At the time of writing this update the Armed Services family at GSO is in a state of change as the incumbent Trustee will be rotating out of post and a new Trustee with responsibilities for Armed Services will be ratified at this years' Conference.

The ASSC has met twice this year where the Terms of Reference for the ASSC were updated and areas of responsibilities established.

It was agreed that an Armed Services 'News-Letter' would be produced and the 1<sup>st</sup> copy was issued in September.

An ongoing action is the effort to provide the Army Welfare Service (AWS) offices around the country with an AA connection. Areas covered so far: the north-west, the south-west, Edinburgh and Essex.

There are 34 Army HIVES' nationally who hold AA stories, pamphlet and flyers aimed at service personnel and veterans on Army HIVE blogs. This has gone live and is being rolled out on all Army HIVE blogs around the country, to which everyone in the Army has access. The materials will be permanently available on the blogs under 'health' or 'welfare' tabs. <http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/23438.aspx>

The ASSC undertook a request from the HIVES organisation to produce a poster highlighting the connection between PTSD and alcohol misuse.

This poster has been researched, edited and finalised and it will be presented to Conference 2018 for ratification before going to the HIVE organisation for use in their offices around the country

The AA website with relevance to the Armed Services was consolidated and updated with relevant current data 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 was agreed.

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
- Royal British Legion.
- Combat Stress.
- Help the Hero's etc.

To further widen the carrying of the AA 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 highlighted in Last Year's Report.

**Contacts continue to be made with**

- Local Councils (Armed Services Champion)

- Armed Services Covenant

Visits to ex service personnel residential units continue as highlighted in last years' update report GSO continues to place adverts in various service periodicals:

- Pathfinder (Resettlement Information Magazine)
- Soldier (Internal Army Magazine)
- The MoD intranet (Internal forces information website)

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.

The Armed Forces 12 step list continues to be maintained by a member of the ASSC, but more ex-service personal willing to be placed on this list to carry out this specific service would be welcomed.

New areas for expansion are being considered, a plan of action was formulated at the ASSC, RASLO's meeting which took place in York February 2018.

**Areas of interest:**

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

So, to summarise

If we hope to fulfil our commitment to Guideline 21 an increase in the Liaison Officers would be desirable. To date in the 15 Regions within the UK with 109 Intergroups and 4454 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 around the country where active coverage is unable to undertaken.

For us to fulfil this undertaking a full coverage of the UK mainland is desirable within the Armed Services discipline.

Therefore, this is an appeal for more ex-service personnel too step forward to assist in this vital area of recovery / service.

**Employment Update**

(Sandy MacV)

As an Employment discipline it is our purpose to carry AA's message to employers. To this end 2017 has been a success.

There were several personnel changes during the year. In January Peter S. was appointed as Trustee for South West Region. In June we welcomed James C., Jim L. and Nick D. to the committee. Pat M. rotated out of the committee in June having served a four year term. Pat has

since been appointed as Trustee for Glasgow Region. Maxine W. rotated out at our October meeting she too served four years on the committee.

Maxine has now been appointed as Trustee for North East Region. At the November Board meeting it was announced that Clive K. has been appointed as Trustee for Eastern Region. We wish them all well in their new posts.

The year started with the first of four planned **Employment Sub Committee** meetings in January.

Work on our website continues throughout the year.

Annual Regional **Employment Liaison Officers** meeting took place at GSO in York on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> June.

This meeting was preceded by a short Sub Committee meeting. Whilst the numbers attending the **Employment Liaison Officers** were low the content and quality of discussion was very positive. We received the reports from the Liaison Officers in attendance. Sub Committee members were impressed by the amount of work being carried out by the Liaison Officers throughout the country.

We have produced two HelloELO's newsletters during the year. The first was in July and the latest in December. The newsletters included articles from Sub Committee members and Liaison officers. At present it is intended that we continue to produce two newsletters per annum.

Our final Sub Committee meeting was held in October. We welcomed Denise H. Trustee for North West Region to the meeting. Denise will be taking over the role as Trustee for Employment when Sandy MacV rotates out as Trustee for Highland and Islands Region and present trustee for Employment at Conference 2018.

Throughout the year we have received reports from both Intergroup and Regional Employment Liaison Officers. They have been contacting a wide and varied number of employers from many different areas of business.

Liaison Officers have been in contact with:

**The Department of Works and Pensions, Legal Practices, Occupational Health, The Health Centre, Banks, Marks and Spencer's, John Lewis plus other mainline stores, Drug and Alcohol Partnerships Public Companies, Local Councils, Trade Unions and many others, passing on our message of Alcoholics Anonymous.**

Once again this has been a successful year for the Employment discipline. Thanks to the Sub Committee members and Liaison Officers for their hard work.

## **European Service Meeting Update**

(Brian J)

The 19<sup>th</sup> European Service meeting held in York 2017 was a great success with 32 Countries represented by 50 delegates.

The atmosphere around the hotel and within the meeting rooms was electric with much happiness and good-will directed to all participants. This was coupled with a willingness to complete the tasks at hand with diligence great knowledge.

Old friendships were regenerated and new friendships forged during the weekend.

A massive vote of thanks to all GSO staff and Hotel personnel who worked tirelessly during the whole weekend to make the Convention a great success.

Theme of the Conference was: **PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES**

The Conference convened at 1700 and was opened with presentations from individual countries report highlights, this consisted of a 2-3 minute précis of the already posted reports from the 32 attending countries.

The Danish delegation failed to arrive due to mechanical problems with the plane, it was hoped they would appear the following day but that did not materialise.

The delegates had been assigned to committees prior to the start of the Conference. The committee themes were:

- Committee 1      Service
- Committee 2      Recovery
- Committee 3      Unity.

The discussions continued and a detailed dialogue preliminary reports on all three subjects were produced.

The Chairs and Alternates for all 3 Committees 2019 were selected and they are as follows:

- Committee 1 Chair      Yury T (Ukraine)
- Committee 1 Alternate      Pat D (Ireland)
- Committee 2 Chair      Lotus A (France)
- Committee 2 Alternate      Amanda S (Great Britain)
- Committee 3 Chair      Anastasia R (Switzerland {French})
- Committee 3 Alternate      Ewa B (Sweden)

Again, the Conference delegates went to their pre-selected Workshops for discussions on the agenda topics of:

1.      Preparing New People for Service
2.      Sponsorship in AA.
3.      Understanding of Principles before Personalities

The Chairs and Alternates for all 3 Workshops 2019 were selected and they are as follows:

- Workshop 1 Chair      Walter Van den B (Belgium {Flemish})
- Workshop 1 Alternate      Illiana T (Bulgaria)
- Workshop 2 Chair      Porfirio (Portugal)
- Workshop 2 Alternate      Aksels T (Latvia)
- Workshop 3 Chair      Fatma Nur Ibaogiu Z (Turkey)
- Workshop 3 Alternate      Marko A (Finland)

The Topics for ESM 2019 were selected and they are as follows:

Theme for 2019 is **An Unchanged Message in a Changing World**

The Workshop Topics for 2019 are as follows:

- Workshop 1            How can we benefit from the experience of rotated Trusted Servants
- Workshop 2            Back to Basics
- Workshop 3            Understanding and the Application of the 12 Concepts

The three reports were then presented in plenary session for general discussion by all of the delegates and the reports were finalised and voted upon.

A further Question & Answer / Open discussion session commenced. One of the questions asked was:

Why does the Russians send delegates from two different organisations?

The question proved difficult to answer as at the World Service meeting the Russians from only the organisation that holds the licencing franchise are invited. The question was finally answered to the satisfaction of the questioner and it is as follows:

Roger B General Secretary (AAGB) who stated:

There are currently 2 AA entities in Russia, one only with the publishing rights for literature. Previously only one was invited to The World Service Meeting. This year the organizing committee of the ESM made the decision to invite both. This was done, as efforts are ongoing to bring the 2 entities together, to assist with unity. It was the General Secretary's hope that this process will be successful and as a consequence in the future, the situation that occurred this year will not be repeated.

Conference reconvened for an AA sharing meeting with a theme of Anonymity in Service. Two delegates had been previously selected to share and this was followed by open floor sharing. This session continued until 2200 when the conference was concluded for the day.

Conference reconvened and the three workshops reports were presented in plenary session for general discussion by all of the delegates and the reports were finalised and voted upon.

This was the final phase of the 19<sup>th</sup> European Service Meeting, where the 20<sup>th</sup>ESM Chair 2019 and World Service Meeting delegate 2018 were voted on:

The Chair for the 20 <sup>th</sup> ESM 2019	<b>Rita M (Italy)</b>
The Alternate Chair for the 20 <sup>th</sup> ESM 2019	<b>LubomirB (Slovakia)</b>
The ESM Delegate for Next Year's World Service Meeting	<b>Lotus A (France)</b>
The Alternate ESM Delegate for Next Year's World Service Meeting	<b>Pat D (Ireland)</b>

The 19<sup>th</sup> ESM conference was closed by Michal S (Chair 2017) with a rendition of the Serenity Prayer given by all delegates in their native language and finally with the Serenity prayer by all in English.

## **Health Update**

(Nigel P)

I'm pleased to say that the Health Subcommittee has recently recruited two new members. It now consists of Bob S, Gabriel S, Jan O, Phil H, Ranjan B, Robin H, and Stephen M, plus our non-alcoholic trustee Mani Mehdikhani and myself as chair.

Each member is allocated a number of Regions for which they will have an especial interest, encouraging and enabling the work of the Health Liaison Officers of that Region and the Intergroups that comprise it. Where there is no Liaison Officer the Subcommittee Member will do what they can to help enable any work to be carried out by other officers of the area to carry out that work, and if possible try to encourage recruitment of Health Liaison Officers.

This arrangement should assure that anyone who is interested in taking on the role of Health Liaison Officer, but is daunted by there being no one currently in place to provide help and guidance, can do so, confident that the Health Subcommittee will do all they can to help and support them, as I'm sure will the existing Health Liaison Officers from nearby areas.

The Subcommittee has also been busy this year working with the Literature Subcommittee to produce a new pamphlet "AA in Treatment Settings – How We Can Help" which is being presented to Conference for approval. It has also been involved in considering possible revisions to the existing Handbook to help keep it more focused on service work.

Thanks to the good work of the General Service Office in making arrangements, we have been able to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous has been well represented at a number of events aimed at professionals, sometimes these have been professionals working in general medicine, and others working in the more specialist areas of addiction and mental health. Among these events have been:

- NHS Expo
- Nursing in Practice (9 events)
- Primary Care & Public Health
- Pulse Live (2 events)
- RCGP Annual Primary Care
- RCGP Managing Drug & Alcohol Problems
- RCN Congress

In addition Continental European Region was able to ensure Alcoholics Anonymous was well represented at the European Conference on Mental Health, an English language convention that attracts professionals from across Europe, in 2017 was held in Berlin.

Within the Fellowship the work continues. In workshops, seminars and conventions those doing this service try and encourage others to get involved, and it is the ordinary members that do the work of holding meetings in hospitals and treatment centres, visiting patients in hospital, and talking locally to doctors and nurses. It is often the work of the Health Liaison Officer to coordinate these activities, and work towards ensuring that we have the right permissions and, in these ever increasing security conscious days, coordinating with the hospitals, etc. to ensure we have the relevant security checks in place to allow us to access to these facilities.

## **Telephones Update**

**(Peter S)**

The National 0800 telephone service continues to carry out its primary purpose of providing a link to a local responder to carry the 12<sup>th</sup> step message to the suffering alcoholic.

During the past year the statistics provided to the subcommittee show that there is a significant growth in the number of calls to the helpline since we made it a free to call 0800 number. Calls from mobiles continue to increase whilst landline calls are in decline.

The subcommittee underwent major personnel changes during the past 12 months. Bob S, Davie D, Jonathon P, moved on and we thank them for their service. Judy F and Jim F Trustees also moved on. They all did great work bringing in the 0800 number. New subcommittee members are Allie F, Ann M, Denis G, Dave W, Bill B and Lisella W. An experienced team of past Intergroup and Region TLOs.

Sunderland Intergroup successfully introduced a new app based 12 stepping system. This is the same system that HERI are already using. Both Intergroups are happy with the system. The app based system cuts out the need for a responder to ring around endlessly looking for a 12<sup>th</sup> stepper as the app sends multiple texts to local 12 steppers and are answered quickly. HERI report more newcomers at meetings since implementing the app system.

The 0845 calls have decreased and will continue to do so if we all remember to replace old posters with the 0845 on, with new ones bearing the correct number 08009177650.

The Regional Telephone Liaison Officers meeting in August was very well attended with only 2 regions absent. We were delighted that Majiec from the UK based Polish telephone service was able to join us for the meetings. The Polish team have a desk tucked away in a corner of the London Telephone service office and do sterling work on behalf of their countrymen and women. 478 calls were fielded and 128 12 step calls were made by the Polish team up until August 2017.

## **Young People Update**

(Amanda S)

It has been a busy year on the Young People's Sub-committee and I'd like to thank our members Gemma, Dave, Andrew and Jack for their sterling work.

I was grateful at being able to shadow former trustee of this sub-committee Wullie I before fully taking my role following last year's Conference.

What became immediately apparent was as this is such a new discipline many Intergroup and Regional Young People's Liaison Officer's had little idea of what is expected of them and where they fit in within the service structure.

With this in mind we put together a two-sided card to help the YPLO's giving them tips for starting in the role – taken from the job description in the AA Service Handbook – one side was for IG YPLO's and the other for Regional YPLO's. This has now been distributed to the IG's and Regions and we hope that this is proving useful.

We have also organised our first seminar in March entitled The Way Forward for all IG and Regional YPLO's to come along and learn from each other and to help provide guidance in the role moving forward.

It is the aim of the Sub-committee over the next two years to support IG's and Regions to get in post as many YPLO's as possible and to have them working to help the other disciplines including PI, Prisons, Employment and Health. A share from a young person in AA to a school can be very powerful as they are able to identify with that person who may be closer in age to them. Many areas also now have Young People's 12 Step lists which is proving very useful.

We have been encouraged by the work going on already across AA as the YPLO's get into their role. Glasgow North West Intergroup held their first YP Convention in September with more than 100 attendees.

We hope that this discipline continues to grow within AA in the coming year.

## **Roundabout Update**

(James K)

*Roundabout* is AA's magazine in Scotland. It is published monthly by a team of AA members who work mostly from home, but who meet three or four times a year in Glasgow. It contains articles from members concerning their experiences, strengths and hopes. In addition, there is an annual meeting to which all Intergroups and Regions are invited to send Liaison Officers.

*Roundabout* contains a pull-out section containing topical information about changes to Group Meetings in Scotland, together with announcements about certain Service Meetings. This section is for internal use only - it is removed when magazines are passed on to members of the public.

Conference 2017 made several recommendations in respect of our magazines, and these will be the subject of a separate report to Conference.

Meanwhile the *Roundabout* editorial team is looking to update the template which has been used for more than 10 years, and will take professional advice on this matter.

## **SHARE Update**

(Helen S)

It has been a very good year and the team works well together, under leadership of the Editor. One of our Readers has rotated into the Assistant Editor role and (in a few months) another will rotate off the team, after four years. This means that we are advertising for two new Readers. I would also like to thank the members of the GSO staff, particularly Julie Fox, who support SHARE.

The Sub Committee *produces* our "Meeting between Meetings" on time each and every month. This can only be done with the commitment of Regional and Intergroup Liaison Officers, whose job is one of *promotion*. They encourage and garner submissions of articles, letters, etc.; raise awareness at every level; and work to increase subscriptions. Articles are *always* needed.

SHARE stands are available to the four National conventions and to Regions and Intergroups, for their local conventions. Just call GSO to make arrangements. Why not consider hosting a SHARE workshop at your next convention? A good starting point is the AA GB website. There are two areas which you could use: in the Fellowship Magazine section, there is a full description of work of the SHARE Sub Committee; in the Documents Library, there are many tools which are useful to Liaison Officers – or anyone else interested in SHARE.

There have been several new innovations within the pages of SHARE this year: *The Promises and Me*, *Speakers' Corner*, *Reflecting back...*, *Identification Parade – Is This You?* as well as the occasional dip into the Archives. On the Title page we have added a brief Production Statement, in order to assist members who wish to submit articles. The order form has now been brought up-to-date, for members who wish to subscribe by bank transfer.

The 2018 Fellowship Calendars and Diaries have been a roaring success, with the Calendars selling out before December, 2017. This has been noted for next year. Very special thanks goes to the Production Editor who, like many AA servants, got thrown into the deep end – and swam beautifully.

We are very proud of the incredible skills of our 'member photographers' and are always looking for more and more fantastic photography for the Calendar (landscape), but also for SHARE magazine (portrait). Details for the criteria are in both SHARE sections on the website.



At the November Workshop, held at GSO, 13 Intergroup and five Regional Share Liaison Officers were present. The Chair of the GSB (Geoff H) and the Trustee for Roundabout (James K) also attended, as well as Julie Fox from GSO. Members of the SHARE team gave presentations highlighting the work of the SHARE team. We also heard about how Roundabout is carrying the message. All Liaison Officers gave reports on their progress for the past year and a very useful general discussion ensued. Many Groups are buying multiple January issues in order to give a copy to Newcomers. SHARE is regularly used as a vital Public Information tool.

My final year as SHARE Trustee has come to a close. I would like to thank members of the Sub Committee (past and present) for their inspiration and perspiration, Julie Fox, and all at GSO, for their support and companionship on this journey, my Board colleagues for their able example, Eastern Region for their trust in me and, by no means least, the supporters of and contributors to SHARE – the best AA journal in the world!

SHARE continues to carry the AA message of Experience, Strength and Hope in Recovery.

**SHARE is our Story – share yours.**

## **National Conventions Update**

### **Northern**

(Denise H)

The Forty-Third Northern National Convention took place on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool with a total of 921 people attending. There was a full programme over the entire weekend, which included an early birds meeting on Thursday evening which was very well attended, and marathon meetings until 1.00 am on the Friday and Saturday and meetings for Al-Anon and Alateen. The service seminar was well attended and very popular, as was the 'Unity, Service, Recovery' Open Meeting. Entertainment started on the Thursday evening with singalong sessions throughout the weekend and on Friday and Saturday evenings there was a DJ and dancing, providing our much loved programme of entertainment. A good choice of AA-related films were shown continuously during Friday and Saturday, with a quiet room, being available for those needing 'time out'. With a 'catch ball come and go' meeting and a young people's and old timers' meetings, this full Convention programme ensured a good time for all with something for everyone.

The opening of the Convention began on a Friday evening with a large 'Opening Convention Gathering' which was designated as an open public one, shared with Al-Anon and was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Blackpool. Nick Holroyd, our Non-Alcoholic Trustee, was invited to share his own experience of what it was like serving in the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous and how he was able to raise the awareness of our fellowship to other professionals. Charlie C, North West Region and Northern National Convention Archivist once again staged a most impressive archives display, which included a recreation of the first AA meeting at the Dorchester Hotel in 1947 which was themed in accordance with the convention timeline. The Road to Recovery wall had over 7000 years of sobriety from members who had put their sobriety dates on, which was an average of 10.9 years average sobriety.

Following the closed AA meeting on a Sunday morning the Final Gathering (spiritual meeting) had AA and Al-Anon speakers and the usual sobriety countdown took place, with the longest-sober member presenting a copy of the Big Book to the newest person in recovery. The decibel-rating of the audience singing 'One Day at a Time' was thunderous and the meeting ended with the entire audience holding hands in a circle around the hall whilst saying the Serenity Prayer. An overwhelming and emotional spiritual experience felt by all was a testimony to the wonderfully

uplifting Convention that, once again had many of us feeling ever so grateful to be part of such a wonderful fellowship.

Raffle ticket sales were £1,975 and Literature sales were £1,202. The income over expenditure revealed a surplus of £2867, and the Tradition 7 'Pot' was £1,526.35, (which is accounted for separately) and was sent directly to GSO.

A fantastic addition to the National Northern Convention is the Survey, which is overseen, designed and administered by Michaela the NNC Secretary. A summary of the results is tabled below.

Table A4 Survey Results for 2017

QUESTION	%	%	%
	YES	NO	N/A
1. Is this your first visit to the Northern National Convention?	36	64	0
2. Would you come again?	97	3	4
3. Did you enjoy the entertainment (if not, please comment below).	66	7	27
4. If a separate room playing only dance music was provided on Saturday night, would you make use of this?	37	41	22
5. Did you enjoy the archive display?	70	0	30
6. Did you enjoy the Service Seminar?	44	1	55
7. Did you enjoy any of the films? If you have any suggestions for suitable films in future conventions, please add below.	40	5	55
8. Did you enjoy the marathon meeting? If you have any suggestions for suitable themes, please add below.	75	3	22
9. Did you enjoy the Quiet Room?	36	1	63
10. Please add your comments / suggestions here:	70		

Once again, these results show overwhelmingly that 97% of respondents, almost everyone who completed the questionnaire would attend the convention again. This is true fellowship in action – and as we say each time we leave a meeting – ‘keep coming back’ and this is testament to show that this happens time and time again.

## **Southern** (Peter F)

The Southern National Convention took place over the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2017 at Mill Rythe on Hayling Island.

There was an excellent programme over the three days which included Open meetings, separate meetings for AA and AI Anon and AI- Ateen There was a disco dance on the Saturday evening. On Sunday morning we started with a Spiritual Meeting, complete with a home grown choir, followed by Old Timers and the finale was the Sobriety countdown. The attendance was 777 registered

attendees both from AA and AI anon members; this is again an increase on the previous year. All the Resort's rooms were taken and we continue to get many members coming locally for the day or all the days!

The Event was self-supporting and a contribution of £2000 sent to GSO.

At the AGM in January this year each of the six supporting Regional Chairs attended with Treasurers. The accounts were accepted for 2016/2017 and the incoming Executive Committee for 2017 convention was ratified. The full complement of Executive members is in place for 2017.

Each of the six Regions nominate two representatives for the organising committee and there remains at present four members to fill from three of the Regions. We trust that shortly we will have a full complement as it is a very rewarding service opportunity.

The Convention for this year is from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of September with the theme "Progress not Perfection" Mill Rythe, Hayling Island. With the new booking system in place, Mill Rythe can be contacted directly quoting the AA Southern National Convention for a room reservation. There are also nearby hotels, B&B's etc. Do come along on September 1<sup>st</sup> for a Great Weekend.

## **Scottish**

(Charles R)

The Scottish National Convention will take place in Stirling on 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> May 2018 in Stirling, with the theme of "A New Beginning". It has been a new beginning for the Convention Committee after the trials and tribulations of 2017 which were reported last year.

The new Committee have worked together in the true spirit of the Fellowship and have some great ideas for the Convention. There will be some new meetings held over the Convention weekend, marathon meetings, service meetings and a section of the Kelvingrove Museum Exhibition will be on display. Some great stuff to look forward to.

I have had the privilege of being involved with seven of these Conventions, three as a delegate and four as the Board Trustee, and as I rotate off the Board at this Conference I take this opportunity to thank every delegate I worked with over the years.

On behalf of the Scottish National Convention Committee we look forward to extending you a hearty Scottish welcome to a New Beginning in Stirling.

## **Welsh**

(Brian J)

The convention took place in the Metropole Hotel Llandrindod Wells on the weekend of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2017.

A full and varied programme was enjoyed by the approximately 180 attendees who attended either for the full weekend or just on a daily basis. The number of attendees has been improving for the last three years and this year was no exception with numbers well up on last year's total.

There had been some difficulties experienced by the organising committee with a number of late resignations from the committee. However, this did not distract from the convention with the remaining committee members standing up to the plate ably assisted by a few last-minute volunteers who manned the various presentation tables. As a result of these actions the convention passed off without a hitch and was a glorious success.

A special mention must be given to the Regional Archivist (Charlie) from the North-West Region who on behalf of the Wales & Borders Regional Archivist who was ill over the weekend not only manned the Share stand but also produced an archive display for the convention complete with a sobriety tree and most impressively a replica of a door into the Dorchester room. Including a fireplace, complete with a facsimile of the picture and mantle clock etc.

Sharers were gathered from all parts of the UK with members from Scotland Ireland England and Wales participating.

The atmosphere at the convention was very happy, relaxed and peaceful, with AA members and their families enjoying themselves.

**So, a huge vote of thanks to all the Convention Committee Members who remained in post and volunteers who stepped in and completed the task to a very high standard.**

The date for next year's Convention is the weekend of the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018 to be held at the Metropole Hotel Llandrindod Wells and I thoroughly recommend this convention to all members of the Fellowship.

The Conventions final committee meeting was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June and a new convenor (Diana) was elected together with the fundamentals of a new committee with a couple of positions still to be filled.

I offer this report for your consideration.

## **Parliamentary Events Update**

### **Houses of Parliament Presentation**

(Peter F)

The 13<sup>th</sup> Event this year took place on October 16<sup>th</sup>; we postponed it from our usual May Meeting due to the General Election in June. This year's event was another successful occasion and I would like to thank the members of the committee for all their hard work over the year. Members come from the Regions of London North, London South, South East Region and South Midlands. Monthly committee meetings were held from September 2016 through to the final wash-up meeting in November 2017.

The aim of the Event is to explain the effectiveness and work of Alcoholics Anonymous to Parliamentarians of all political parties and to members of professional groups which included Drug and Alcohol Agencies, Health Services, Police, Churches, Social Services, Housing Associations and the Criminal Justice Service.

This 2017 PI presentation was held in the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House, and Westminster and was sponsored by Fiona Bruce, M.P. Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Harm. Fiona Bruce opened by speaking eloquently, not only of the problems of Alcoholism but of her own high regard for AA. She stayed for our whole event and answered some questions herself at the end! Twelve MPs registered with four attending. As well as 40 other guests. Alan T chaired the event and there was an excellent Q&A session at the end.

Tony Mercer, Health and Well-Being Manager from Public Health England offered a strong endorsement of AA and quoted from recent research which confirms the effectiveness of AA in facilitating long term sobriety.

Our AA speakers Sue D and Trevor H who both have lengthy sobriety, gave moving stories of how AA had transformed their lives from the desperate situation they had found themselves in.

Preparations are well under way for the next presentation to be held in October 2018.

## **Scottish Parliament Presentation**

(Sandy MacV)

The Scottish Parliament awareness event was held at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October. There was a total of 25 persons in attendance. The numbers may have been low but the event itself was a great success.

The event was opened by the parliamentary host Maree Todd MSP. Maree took us on a very personal AA journey. This set the tone for a very positive meeting.

Following Maree's introductory comments the meeting was passed over to Sandy MacV Trustee for the Scottish Parliament event.

Sandy gave a PI PowerPoint presentation explaining what AA was and was not.

This was followed by a presentation from Nick Holroyd. Nick is a Non Alcoholic Trustee on the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous GB. Nick took us on his very personal journey in Alcoholics Anonymous. This was a very moving and heartfelt presentation.

Following Nick's presentation, Dr Ask Khan who until recently was also a Non Alcoholic Trustee on the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous G B. took to the podium. The topic for Ash's presentation was "WHY DOES AA WORK?" This was very informative and well received.

Wullie I. past Vice Chair on the Board of Trustees AA GB was due to be our guest AA speaker. Wullie unfortunately encountered technical difficulties on his way to the event and as a result he was unable to attend.

We were very fortunate that Anne-Marie S. from the Northern Service Office willingly stood in. Anne-Marie shared her "Experience, Strength and Hope". This too was a very well received presentation. A question and answer session then followed.

It was now time to conclude the event. Our event host Maree Todd MSP summed up with some very positive and encouraging comments. Sandy MacV then thanked all those who made the event possible. The list included:

Maree Todd MSP, Nick Holroyd, Ash Khan and Anne-Marie, Helen at NSO, the Parliament and the events team for making the journey a smooth one, Michael T, Jaqui McK., Alex H and Anne-Marie for meeting, greeting and distribution of literature. Sandy also thanked his fellow Trustees for their attendance and support. Finally he thanked the guests for the attendance.

Overall this was a very positive and much enjoyed event. The event was closed with Serenity Prayer.

## **Welsh Assembly Presentation**

(BrianJ)

The presentation at the Pierhead took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017, with most of the people who had pre-registered attending.

Attendance of Assembly Members at the event was disrupted, due to the sad events which had occurred at the Senedd in the previous weeks. This required the members of the Welsh Assembly to attend a meeting of reflection in the Assembly Hall.

The Assembly Member, Rhun ap Iorwerth, who hosted the event welcomed all the attendees gave his opening address then leaving to attend the Assembly meeting.

There were 23 professional attendees together with the GSO staff and 7 members of the Fellowship. All presentations were well delivered and well received by the professionals in the audience.

The question and answer session after the presentations was quiet but the one to one sessions after the event was more encouraging with many queries being responded to by the presenter and the members of the Fellowship.

A major success from the presentation must be recorded and that was the interaction between the AA member who shared their experience strength and hope and a member of the Welsh Prison service. The discussions that followed the presentation may lead to ease of access for AA into the Welsh prison system.

## **Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting Update**

(Geoff H and Denise H)

Just imagine if you lived in a country where, as an AA member, there were only four meetings you could attend in the whole of the country in order for you maintain your recovery. Just imagine if you lived in some remote village and you were desperate to have help for your drinking problem, and that help was not available because you lived so far away from those four meetings, which you probably had no awareness of anyway. Such is the situation in at least one of the African countries that we heard reports from at the Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting (SSASM) in Johannesburg on 9, 10, 11 June 2017.

The SSASM began in 1998. Representatives from AA USA/Canada and AA GB had attended a meeting of the South African Board of AA. The purpose of their visit was to encourage the South African Board to form a service network embracing Sub-Saharan countries. The countries that do participate are those where English is widely spoken, although it is hoped that in the future other countries will join too e.g. Mozambique, which is French-speaking. The structure and format of the SSASM is very similar to the European Service Meeting, and consists of country presentations, thematic workshops and plenary discussion.

The theme of the meeting was 'Working with others' and was attended by two delegates each from a total of 12 countries. In addition to ourselves, also in attendance were Greg T, General Manager and Mary C of the International Desk, both based at GSO USA and Canada. The admin support was provided by Lizelle B and Angus McK from South Africa AA, and the meeting was chaired by Warren B, also from South Africa AA, who had been elected at the previous meeting.

We gave presentations, along with Warren, Greg and Mary, on the evening of the first day of the meeting, but the heart of the meeting was undoubtedly the reporting by the country delegates, which occupied the Saturday morning programme. The sheer enthusiasm of the delegates was both humbling and inspirational. Not only do some of the countries have very few meetings, attendance at meetings can be as low as just 2 or 3, but still they enthuse about reaching out to the professional community. The prevalence of HIV is a major associated issue in most of the countries that were represented. Structures vary from none, through embryonic intergroups, right up to South Africa's very well developed structure, not too dissimilar to our own. South

Africa gives very good support to the other countries, especially in supplying their literature. Zimbabwe and Namibia, whilst independent countries, have become a formal part of the service structure of South Africa AA.

Two poignant memories linger from the country presentations: members from Kenya AA are selling t-shirts to help to fund their first convention; Zimbabwe has had its AA office, along with all of its literature, confiscated by the government.

Also of note, is the use of social media for both public awareness and membership communication in several of the countries.

There were two workshops which constituted the Saturday afternoon programme: Working with others; developing AA structures at grassroots.

Saturday also coincided with Founder's Day (June 10), and we celebrated AA's 82<sup>nd</sup> anniversary with a Founders' Day meal and AA meeting, which was also attended by AA members from the Soweto Group.

Sunday morning was taken up with business, during which the Chair for the 2019 meeting was elected, and this was Gitau from Kenya. The theme for the meeting will be "Our 12 Traditions – AA's future in the modern world", the dates being 7, 8, 9 June 2019. The meeting concluded by all delegates and observers in turn making their farewell comments.

Because of the times of our return flights, we stayed an extra night, giving us a free day on Monday. The icing on the cake for us was twofold. Mani, the proprietor of the conference centre that we were staying at, on the Saturday evening drove us around Johannesburg, where we saw, in particular, Soweto and the Nelson Mandela Bridge, beautifully illuminated. On the Monday, Helga, a trustee on the South African AA Board who is responsible for public information, spend the day with us, during which she took us to the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, which proved to be another powerful experience.

We wish to thank the General Service Board for allowing us the privilege of being able to attend the SSASM. AA GB along with AA USA/Canada sponsor the meeting both financially and in person; hence our reasons for being there. There were more countries represented this time than last time, but the meeting is a long way away from being self-supporting. Our support, therefore, needs to continue.

## **Polish Conference 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017**

(Brian J)

We arrived at the venue for the Conference which was a catholic retreat in a forest in the middle of nowhere about 50Km from Warsaw. The atmosphere and ambience of the venue was peaceful and relaxing if a little basic in the accommodation areas. The welcome we received was second to none with all participant's that were already there speaking to us and shaking our hands. We may not have understood the words but the feelings and actions were unmistakable those of friendship and fellowship.

The atmosphere around the retreat and within the meeting rooms was electric with much happiness and good-will directed to all participants. This was coupled with a willingness to complete the tasks at hand with diligence great knowledge.

There were 19 foreign delegates from 12 countries making the Conference a truly international gathering.

All foreign delegates gathered and were introduced to one another and we gave a short introduction of ourselves to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Foundation. We were then split into English and Russian speaking groups. These groups were then further split into two and allocated to one of the four committees in which we would participate. The English speakers were allocated to the Literature and Agenda committees and the Russian speakers were allocated Finance and Public Information committees.

The set-up of the Conference was very similar to the UK Conference. With questions coming from both the Polish Fellowship, coupled with a slight difference being that the Board could also raise questions. All of the questions raised are then scrutinised by a Conference Steering Committee and a manageable number were allocated to the 4 committees. With each committee answering either 3 or 4 questions. These were discussed and conclusions arrived at over the next two days, with the resulting answers discussed in a plenary session on the Sunday morning and either accepted or rejected. We were told the rejected questions would be re-submitted in 2018.

There were major problems with the translation equipment but this did not detract from the process as more translators were found and we had a translator shared between two international delegates

The Polish Board is split into two separate but interconnected entities.

- The Board of Trustees (BoT)
- The Board of Foundation (BoF)

To the best of my understanding following discussions I had with various English-speaking members is that the BoT is basically the same as the AA GB BoT. The BoF being the Polish version of the AA charity. Members can be elected to either one of the boards or to both boards. Both are autonomous but interconnected. Each having authority to pass motions regarding the Polish Fellowship. I was informed that by Polish law if a member elected to the BoT they have to undergo a CRB check. If this check is failed they are then barred from being a member of the BoT but this condition does not apply to the BoF. This has and does lead to conflict between the two boards.

The Polish Fellowship are undergoing an exercise in re-translating the text of their 'Big Book.' As the English translator for my group was the chair of the sub-committee carrying out this exercise. My committee were privileged to hear the first reading of the new amended text. A special moment for the committee and the international delegates present.

The last action of the Conference all the international delegates were invited to share with the Conference. This was a humbling and special moment for all who participated.

## **Working Groups 20171119 Response to Conference (2017) - Committee 5 Question 1 - Share & Roundabout**

2017 Conference Question 1, Committee 5  
Report to the General Service Board, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017  
Amended version to GSB 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**The working Party recommends that the following statement be printed in the Board Reports to Conference 2018.**

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*The General Service Board notes that this question, together with the responses from Conference 2017, speaks to a **minority** of the Fellowship. Fewer than 20% of groups (Roundabout survey) subscribe to the magazines. The figures are similar for Share. AASN frequently lies on group tables, unread – and just as frequently, perhaps, never makes it to the table.*

*The question does, however, raise important points which are addressed in the detailed responses below.*

**Would the Fellowship ask the General Service Board to conduct a strategic review of the future of its magazine publications, and make recommendations?**

This Committee recommends that a Strategic Review of the future of our Magazine publications is undertaken.

- *The Trustees of AASN, SHARE, Roundabout and the General Secretary met on 13 July, 2017.*
- *A draft report was submitted to GSB on 22 September. This was amended and resubmitted on 17 November,*

This Committee makes the following recommendations that the Review should:

- a. Examine the strengths, weaknesses and values of the three publications (Roundabout, Share and AA Service News)**
  1. *AASN is a distinct entity, serving different purposes from those of SHARE and Roundabout, thus ought to be a stand-alone publication. It is an important tool for (the 10% of) those members who get involved in service and it has just undergone significant changes.*
  2. *Roundabout, the senior journal, is respected as a particularly Scottish publication, with its own distinctive quality and ‘audience’.*
  3. *Share is equally valued in England and Wales.*
  4. *Both Roundabout and Share are appreciated and read ‘across the border’, in CER, as well as outside AA GB.*
  5. *After the regular readership, the greatest value of these individual journals is as a Public Information (PI) tool. They are used in prisons, doctors/dentists waiting rooms, hospitals, treatment centres, rehabs, homeless hostels, libraries, etc. They are also used by loners, members in remote locations, blind / partially sighted members (using the CDs). This list is endless.*
  6. *Perhaps other GSB disciplines might be encouraged to invite a member of SHARE/Roundabout Editorial teams to attend their Sub Committee or LO meetings to explain how the magazines can assist with PI work.*
  7. *Circulation may continue to fall, bearing in mind the availability of recorded speakers and online meetings. Consideration should not be predicated either upon circulation figures or the tradition of being ‘self-supporting’.*
  8. *While we should always be prudent with Fellowship funds, these publications form a part of our primary purpose – carrying the message to people within the Fellowship and to those yet to come. Because they are a vital PI tool, there is a strong case to consider them as ‘loss leaders’.*

9. *Each magazine has an annual Liaison Officers meeting. In recent years, the Trustees for Roundabout and Share have attended each other's meetings to encourage cooperation and exchange of ideas.*
- b. Investigate a reported undertaking regarding the retention of Roundabout following the disbandment of the Scottish Service Committee.**
1. *The Scottish Service Committee disbanded in 1998, and the minutes of the Closing Down Committee (16 Nov, 1998) do not show a commitment to retain Roundabout in perpetuity. However, from the point of view of (peace, harmony and) UNITY within the Fellowship this working group felt it would be an error of judgement to consider disbandment of this journal.*
  2. *Many people (even if they do not subscribe) have an emotional attachment to Roundabout or Share, coming from the part either journal has played in their recovery. When it comes to discussion of doing away with one or the other, there would be a negative outcry from supporters and subscribers of each.*
- c. Consider making them more appealing to the readership**
1. *Any decline in readership raises the challenge of making our journals more appealing. The committee agreed that Roundabout and SHARE do not suffer from a lack of appeal, but from a lack of awareness.*
  2. *The job of the (Regional/Intergroup/Group) Roundabout / Share Liaison Officer is to increase awareness of the journals, by: encouraging and garnering submission of articles, letters and other relevant material for inclusion; raising awareness of the journals; and increasing subscriptions to the journals. The Editorial teams produce the journals. The quality and quantity of articles received is entirely dependent upon members of the Fellowship.*
  3. *Over the years (since 1951 and 1972, respectively), both journals have successfully reinvented themselves by: 1) looking back to what was done before and up-dating useful ideas; 2) encouraging team members to come up with new initiatives; and 3) taking on board suggestions made at annual Liaison Officers meeting.*
  4. *Within the last three years there have been several new initiatives taken in order to make the journals more appealing, but the committee agreed **awareness** is the real issue.*
- d. Consider the feasibility of using professional assistance in the design and editing process.**
1. *SHARE uses professional assistance every month; the layout is put together by a designer.*
  2. *Roundabout's Editorial team lays out the magazine each month, using a template produced by a past member of the team who was a professional print designer.*
  3. *There is a good "brand image" for both journals.*
  4. *It may be appropriate to appeal to the Fellowship to find such a professional who might advise the respective Editorial teams on aspects of the design which could be improved.*
- e. Investigate online and audio version through subscription.**
1. *Before we go down this line, we should take steps to increase Fellowship awareness of what is already online: 1) editorials and, at least, two articles per month; 2) previous twelve months' editorials / selected articles; and 3) spoken versions.*
  2. *It is premature to put any of the publications completely online. There will be an appetite for the printed word for many years to come. We should be ever mindful that not*

*everyone has an electronic device. There are readers in prisons, hospitals, ships, and even on the battlefield who rely upon printed publications.*

Recognising that this may take some time, the Committee also recommends that there should be a reporting process from the Board to Conference. The Committee also recognises that the recommendations are not an exhaustive list.

### **Conclusion**

***That GSB and Conference keep a watching brief on this issue, with the intention of carrying out a further review within five years.***

## **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 Sid thanking everyone for their hard work and 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 15 APRIL**

Sid 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.

Sid 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 58 - 59
Committee No. 2	Pages 60 - 61
Committee No. 3	Pages 62 - 63
Committee No. 4	Pages 64 - 66
Committee No. 5	Pages 67 - 68
Committee No. 6	Pages 69 - 70

## **ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR CONFERENCE 2019**

The nominations received on Friday evening were presented and, after a vote, Matt S (Continental European Region) was duly elected.

## **CONFIRMATION OF BOARD MEMBERS**

(Geoff H, Chair GSB)

Good afternoon Conference, my name is Geoff and I am an alcoholic. Almost the final bit of the proceedings and first of all my congratulations to Matt on becoming Conference Chair for next year.

Conference as usual completely amazes me and when I was thinking about this the name of that film, The Greatest Show on Earth, came into my mind and I reckon that it is really, perhaps the public might not think so, but I certainly do. When you consider the process and what happens right from the very beginning, delegates come here having received feedback from their Intergroups and Regions and they sit down with their peers from other Regions and they share that experience. Then somewhere between 4 and 5 o'clock on the Saturday they actually produce a set of recommendations and I think that is absolutely amazing.

I was talking to Yury, one of our observers from the Ukraine, earlier on and both of us agreed that although, obviously, the outcome of the Committees is very important it's really the process that is the most important of all and that is what I have always loved about Conference. This is my 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive Conference and it is as though for me, each one gets better and that's only because I am meeting different people and I absorb myself more and more in the process. Recovery is like that really, our individual recoveries are a process and it gives me a great deal of delight.

The other delight that I get out of it is service, encouraging people into service and one of our Committees made some recommendations around this. One of the buzzes that I get out of

Conference is that absolutely everybody who is here this weekend is here because they are doing service and this is what makes it different to Conventions.

I stated in my introduction to the Board reports on Friday evening, which seems a long time ago now, that the Board was running with a few vacancies during the previous year which meant that Trustees were having to work harder than they usually do, and I can assure you that they always do work hard. We have had a lot of new Trustees who I am going to introduce to you shortly and even though there are 6 of us leaving we will almost be up to full strength and there will be just one vacancy which hopefully will be filled during the course of the year.

So it is now time for confirmation of new Board members which means introducing them to you and let you know the disciplines they have been allocated:

- Clive K: From Eastern Region; Clive will be responsible for Archives and the Membership Survey.
- Erik A: From Continental European Region; Erik will be responsible for Literature and will serve on the Nominations Committee.
- Jonathan P: From Wales and Borders Region; Jonathan will be responsible for Telephones, Welsh National Convention and Welsh Assembly event.
- Maxine W: From North East Region; Maxine will be responsible for Share magazine, Finance Committee and Conference Steering Committee.
- Mike P: From London Region North; Mike will be responsible for Armed Services and Finance Committee.
- Norman T: From East of Scotland Region; Norman's allocation is Electronic Communications.
- Pat McG: From Glasgow Region; Pat has been allocated Prisons and Scottish National Convention.
- Sandi A: From South Midlands Region; Sandi will serve on the Nominations and Conference Steering Committee.
- Stevie S: From Scotia Region; Stevie will be responsible for Roundabout and Scottish Parliament event.
- Terri S: From Highlands & Islands; Terri will be responsible for Health and serve on the Nominations Committee.

Now for the sad part, six of us are rotating out and I will introduce you to each of those:

- Charlie R: Charlie has been responsible for Prisons and Scottish National Convention, and attended Romanian and Ukraine Conferences. I wish you well Charlie.

Helen S: Helen is from Eastern Region and she has been involved in the Share magazine, Nominations Committee, Survey Committee and Conference Steering Committee, and attended German and Flemish-speaking Conferences. Thank you for all that work.

James K: James is from East of Scotland Region and has been responsible for Electronic Communications and Roundabout magazine, and attended Romanian and Bulgarian Conferences.

Sandy MacV: Sandy is from Highlands & Islands Region and was responsible for Employment, Scottish Parliament event and Finance Committee, and attended Polish and Bulgarian Conferences.

Joe H: Honorary Treasurer. Joe was originally from North East Region and we came on to the Board together and before Joe became Treasurer, which he has been for the last four years, he was in Public Information for a couple of years, looked after AA Service News and more recently Archives. He was first term delegate for the World Service Meeting and will go again as second term delegate later this year and also attended Irish and Danish Conferences.

I'd like to introduce Brian J who will be succeeding Joe as your next Honorary Treasurer.

I also want to acknowledge Nick Holroyd, Non-Alcoholic Trustee, and we saw reference to Nick on some of the videos we looked at last night. Nick was with us for a couple of years and packed a lot in during that time and did a lot of work for us both within the Fellowship and especially out of the Fellowship. Nick regrettably had to resign for personal reasons during the year and so hasn't been with us this weekend.

I now need to announce my own departure. It's been an amazing journey and I have enjoyed it immensely well most of the time anyway! I believe passionately in rotation and I strongly believe that it is rotation that keeps our Fellowship going and keeps it fresh. I also believe that our Fellowship is the ultimate democracy – everybody has a chance, they really do which means that old codgers like me have to move out the way.

I now want to introduce you to the new Chair of the General Service Board who is Nigel P. Nigel has been shadowing me for the last year in fact we have been working closely together for the last three years and I absolutely know that the Board will be safe in Nigel's hands.

I'd like to say a few "thank yous" now. I'd like to thank Sid for being a very, very efficient Chair of Conference keeping us all moving and I would like to thank the Committee Chairs as well. It's the discussion of the questions and the production of a set of recommendations which is the heart of Conference and all of the Chairs have very ably chaired their Committees so thank you all.

Thank you to all of our staff who have helped over the weekend, they have been an amazing support, they really have.

I want to thank Keith sitting in the corner looking after our AV equipment

And lastly, all of you, for representing the conscience of the Fellowship and bringing it here.

I wish you all well. Thank you.

## **Close of Conference**

(Sid D)

It is my job now to close Conference unfortunately! I chose Fellowship, Love, Commitment as the theme for Conference this year, as they are things close to my heart and this weekend I think we have achieved all three.

I lost my sponsor this year, who always instilled into me the importance of service, alongside recovery and how the two go hand in hand. He gave 27 years' service to this Fellowship and was still Intergroup Chair when he passed away. This type of commitment, creates love in my heart, which makes me want to continue to serve the Fellowship and I am sure this weekend he has been watching over me. The day he died was the day before I came up to York for the Conference Steering Committee so I was in the right place at the right time when he passed and everything happens for a reason.

Thank you all for being part of something special this weekend. I'd like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for being here and the staff from the General Service Office, who as ever have been amazing.

To last year's Steering Committee, who showed great commitment and more importantly great love, it been a wonderful experience and it's easier being Chair of Conference than chairing one of the Committees.

To next year's Steering Committee, I would like to thank you all in advance, it's a lot of fun and a lot of hard work so don't under-estimate what hard work it is, but it is very enjoyable and you will learn a lot from it about the Fellowship and how it works. I wish you well, I have faith in you all.

Of course I must thank you, Conference, the journey of recovery never stops and just keeps getting better.

I have found that service has helped me no end and I don't ever want to stop. We do service but not everyone in the Fellowship wants to do service and people can be quite snide about us and they can knock your confidence but don't let them do it or wear you down. We are serving our Fellowship and doing the right thing and the work we do does work.

Thank you all for voting me in last year and thank you for allowing me to serve and it does not give me pleasure but I have to close Conference so will you join me for the last time in saying the Serenity Prayer.

## **DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT CONFERENCE**

The Fifty-Fourth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain will be held at the Park Inn, North Street, York on 12-14 April 2019.

## FIFTY-THIRD GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2018

# COMMITTEE No. 1

CHAIR                    ANNE W                    SOUTH EAST REGION

SECRETARY            GEMMA B                    LONDON REGION SOUTH

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

- 1. Would Conference discuss: a) whether the Fellowship's use of the terminology "closed" and "open" to describe AA meeting attendance restrictions confuses newcomers and thereby detracts from our primary purpose, and b) if required, recommend a better solution?**

The Committee shared experience of the Fellowship's use of the terminology "open" and "closed" and concluded that these terms are confusing to some newcomers when used without definitions.

However, we found that these terms do not necessarily detract from our primary purpose.

The Committee recommends that Groups, Intergroups and the General Service Board minimise the identified confusion to newcomers when publishing AA meeting listings by:

(a) Moving the definitions of "open" and "closed" to the most prominent position in local and national Where to Find directories.

(b) Placing "open" and "closed" definitions in the most prominent position for someone browsing for meeting information on the Alcoholics Anonymous GB and local websites.

(c) Accompanying the terms "open" and "closed" with the definitions as stated on page 74 of the The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017, anywhere they are used.

As part of the process 12 members of the Committee voted to retain the terms "open" and "closed" and 6 members of the Committee voted to remove the term "closed". Having accepted the majority view the above response to Question 1 was unanimous.

The minority view is that the word "closed", in reference to meetings, should be removed entirely from all AA literature.

*Conference passed this recommendation with a simple majority.*

- 2. Review Chapter 4 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017 "For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field".**

With reference to our Traditions, especially Tradition 10, this Committee reviewed Chapter 4 of The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017 and recommends the removal of Chapter 4 in its entirety.

The Committee further recommends that there is no need for a pamphlet at this time.



17 For  
1 Against

*This recommendation was not accepted by Conference.*

**3. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Mike E of Midlands Region as Chair of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2019.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Charon B of London Region North as Secretary of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2019.

## FIFTY-THIRD GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2018

# COMMITTEE No. 2

CHAIR            RON D            CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION

SECRETARY    BOB S            SOUTH EAST REGION

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

**1. Would Conference please discuss and share its experience about Tradition 7 monies being collected electronically?**

This Committee recognizes that each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole (Tradition 4).

The small number of groups that collect Tradition 7 contributions electronically report the following experience:

- a) Evidence of increased contributions outweighs any expense associated with transaction fees. These fees are accounted for as group running expenses
- b) Anonymity has not been compromised
- c) User friendly / ease of use
- d) Cash collection via the pot still available

The majority of groups have no experience of this method of collecting Tradition 7 contributions; however, they express the following reservations:

1. Potential breach of anonymity
2. Personal transaction data may be used for external marketing purposes
3. May be off-putting for the newcomer, other members and the group treasurer
4. Cash needs always to be available to meet day to day group expenses
5. Concerns about abuse, potential fraud, human error and chargebacks (ie payment reversal)

Further research on this is needed. Groups are encouraged to share their experience via the service structure.

If this method of collection becomes more widespread, the Fellowship may need to consider potential changes to existing AA literature.

The vote was unanimous

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

This Committee recognizes that audio versions of Share and Roundabout submissions are already available on the AA GB website.

Having considered all the responses received, this Committee recommends that audio clips of AA members sharing their experience, strength and hope be added to the website to help carry the message to the newcomer, thus fulfilling our Primary Purpose.

This Committee recommends that Conference directs the General Service Board to assume responsibility for this project and, if possible, to implement this proposal by Conference 2019.

We further recommend that the audio clips be:

- a) short
- b) clearly signposted
- c) reflect the diversity of the Fellowship
- d) and preserve anonymity

The vote was unanimous

**3. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Bob S of South East Region as Chair of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2019.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Johnny J of South Midlands Region as Secretary of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2019.

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

## FIFTY-THIRD GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2018

# COMMITTEE No. 3

CHAIR                    STEFAN S            LONDON REGION NORTH

SECRETARY            GRETCHEN S        LONDON REGION SOUTH

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

**1.     Would Conference discuss the idea of adding a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) AA Helpline service to the AA GB website?**

This Committee welcomes the idea of adding a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) AA Helpline service to the AA GB website as an additional way for the still suffering alcoholic to contact the Fellowship. However, based on feedback from the Fellowship, we have concerns with:

- a.    Possible breach of caller's anonymity.
- b.    Possible burden on responders.

We understand that some calls to the 0800 number are already being made using VoIP.

This Committee recommends that the General Service Board undertake a review of the value, cost and feasibility of the idea and present recommendations to Conference 2019.

Carried unanimously

**2.     Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on how we are able to introduce telephone and internet banking at all levels of service, being ever mindful of our current practice of requiring two signatories on each cheque issued.**

Having discussed this question and shared our experience, this Committee notes:

- a.    A general trend towards telephone and internet banking;
- b.    That guidance has been sought from all levels of service;
- c.    The importance of the recommended current practice of requiring two out of three signatories to authorise transactions (pages 79, 82, 90 & 95 of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017).

This Committee recommends General Service Board to liaise with Regional Treasurers regarding this issue, with a view to updating the relevant sections of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017 and other literature. If possible reporting its progress to Conference 2019.

Carried unanimously

**3. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Gretchen S of London Region South as Chair of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2019.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Allan M of East of Scotland Region as Secretary of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2019.

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

## FIFTY-THIRD GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2018

# COMMITTEE No. 4

CHAIR            MATT S    CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION

SECRETARY    JUSTIN T    SOUTH WEST REGION

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

### 1.    **Inventory Questions**

a) **Is AA still carrying the message of recovery effectively, i.e. sharing experience, strength and hope, offering sponsorship, talking about the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions?**

b) **Would Conference share its experience on how AA can do this more effectively?**

Feedback from our Fellowship indicates that AA is still carrying the message of recovery effectively i.e. sharing experience, strength and hope, offering sponsorship and talking about the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. However, many suggestions were shared on how we can do this even more effectively.

The books *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, together with the Service and Structure Handbooks and our other AA literature, offer guidance and experience on ways to increase our effectiveness.

Furthermore, Committee 4 received many suggestions from our Fellowship including, but not limited to, the following listed in no particular order of importance:

#### **Public Information**

- i.    Ensuring that AA is known by and accessible to all who need it
- ii.   Continuing to support and develop the AA GB Website
- iii.   Displaying posters in surgeries, libraries and courts etc. where possible
- iv.   Advertising in accordance with Tradition 11
- v.    Holding open Public Awareness meetings
- vi.   Remembering that PI is the responsibility of Groups, as well as Intergroups, Region and the General Service Board

#### **Newcomers**

- i.    Actively greeting and engaging with newcomers e.g. in the "meeting before the meeting"
- ii.   Ensuring that newcomers feel welcome in the group
- iii.   Providing the opportunity for one alcoholic to identify with another
- iv.   Carrying the message of recovery

## **Sponsorship**

- i. Using the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, as a guide to sponsorship
- ii. Making members aware of those who are willing to sponsor, or temporarily sponsor, others
- iii. Sponsoring into service, referring to our leaflets and handbooks

## **Home Group**

- i. Cultivating fellowship e.g. the “meeting after the meeting”
- ii. Holding Steps and Traditions-focused meetings
- iii. Considering whether there is a variety of meeting formats within an area
- iv. Understanding the vital role of the GSR in linking the group to AA as a whole
- v. Holding regular Group Conscience meetings as well as, and distinct from, Business Meetings
- vi. Discussing Questions for Conference, as a part of ‘the Conscience of AA GB’

## **Service**

- i. Filling vacant service positions, particularly external liaison functions such as PI
- ii. Respecting the “spirit of rotation”
- iii. Encouraging members into service through sponsorship, job-shadowing etc.
- iv. Bringing new members along as observers to all our service and Twelfth Step activities
- v. Increasing the understanding of the Twelve Traditions and Concepts, in support of our Primary Purpose

## **Personal Responsibility**

"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."

- i. Leading by example
- ii. Putting AA principles into action
- iii. Being active in the Service Structure

## **Love and Service**

In his farewell talk, Dr. Bob said: “Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words “love” and “service”.”

Vote was unanimous.

## **2. Review new addition “Chat Now Service” to be added to Chapter 3 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017.**

The Committee recommends that the new addition draft “Chat Now Service” be added to Chapter 3 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, with the following amendments:

- i. Spelling: Change “enquires” to “enquiries”. Line 10.
- ii. Consistency: Capitalise “Online Responder(s)” on Lines 10 & 11.
- iii. Consistency: Change “AAGB” to “AA GB”. Line 2.
- iv. Spelling: Change “program” to “programme”. Line 14.
- v. Change: “and each may also appoint an assistant” to “and may also appoint assistants”. Line 23.

Vote was unanimous.

**3. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Justin T of South West Region as Chair of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2019.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Tim M of London Region North as Secretary of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2019.

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



## COMMITTEE No. 5

CHAIR                    DEE Y                    NORTH EAST REGION

SECRETARY            OSWIN T                LONDON REGION SOUTH

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

**1. Inventory Questions**

**a) Would Conference share experience and knowledge of the problems surrounding attracting members into Service at their Group and how to encourage Service at Intergroup, especially in rural areas.**

(a) The Committee shared its experience with regards to this problem in rural areas and found that it was common throughout the Fellowship. The major problems identified were:

- i. The costs of getting to meetings.
- ii. Not enough sponsorship into service.
- iii. Lack of knowledge of service positions.
- iv. Groups that choose not to participate in their local Intergroup.
- v. Negative perception about Intergroup.
- vi. Lack of rotation of service positions.

The Committee stresses the importance of attracting people to serve at group and Intergroup level and these are the suggestions that may help enhance this. The Committee found that there is no one solution to this problem. The solutions identified were:

- i. Sponsorship and encouragement into service positions. Sponsors and members to talk about the service they do and how it enhances their recovery.
- ii. Regular and informed business and/or group conscience meetings.
- iii. An active GSR is an invaluable asset to the group.

**b) Would Conference review the resources available to Intergroups and make recommendations on how best they are used to attract representation at Intergroup by Groups in their area.**

b) The Committee suggests that the recommendations for part (a) are relevant to answer this question in addition to the following list:

- i. Use the AA Structure, Service Handbooks and AA literature which provide guidance for all service positions.
- ii. Intergroup can offer support to groups in keeping their records up to date using the pink forms to ensure that groups can be contacted.
- iii. Car sharing encourages fellowship and may enable more members to attend.
- iv. Intergroup can pay expenses according to the guidance in the AA Service Handbook.

- v. Group members can be encouraged/ invited to attend Intergroup as observers.
- vi. Long serving members can pass on their experience to the newer members.
- vii. Intergroup may consider moving meeting locations around to make them closer to people in rural areas.
- viii. Members of an Intergroup to reach out to outlying and non-attending groups.
- ix. Intergroups may produce a welcome pack to be distributed to GSRs.
- x. It is possible to use online conferencing to enable groups to participate who otherwise might have difficulty.
- xi. Intergroup can send out action points to GSRs or known group contact.

The vote was unanimous

**2. Would Conference consider how the Fellowship's social media presence can be improved to enhance AA's ability to carry the message?**

Following discussion, the Committee concluded that social media has considerable and far reaching benefits, but it comes with considerable risks. Some of the concerns identified but not limited to the following are:

1. The need to safeguard and preserve our Traditions.
2. Risks to anonymity and privacy.
3. Concerns about private and public bodies extracting data.
4. Failure to adhere to AA's *Hints and Suggestions on Internet Safety*.
5. May discourage some people from seeking person to person support.
6. Lack of clarity and transparency of service providers.

Benefits include but are not limited to the following:

1. Carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic.
2. Enabling increased awareness for the general public and professionals.
3. A medium more accessible to people who may not use other means of communication.
4. 24 hour availability.

The Committee concluded that it was unable to provide a recommendation on how to move forward and therefore requests that the GSB GB look further into this and report back to Conference in 2019 with recommendations.

The vote was unanimous.

**3. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Mark F of South East Region as Chair of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2019.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Zelma K of Wales & Borders as Secretary of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2019.

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

## COMMITTEE No. 6

CHAIR            TERRI S    HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS REGION

SECRETARY    BEN D     LONDON REGION SOUTH

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

1.     **Would Conference share their experiences and make recommendations on:**
  - a. **What can be done when a Group has no named Officers and/or the contact no longer attends?**
  - b. **Is there any way in which the local Intergroup can assist, given that we do not govern but are trusted servants?**
  - c. **Could GSO be asked to carry out an annual review/renewal process for Pink Form details for each Group to remain on the internet listings, Where to Find etc., and also inform the appropriate Intergroup of any significant changes?**

The Committee shared experience and came to these conclusions:

- a)    Where some groups have not updated information because they are unaware of the pink form process, we believe that the Fellowship should raise awareness of how groups' details are updated.
- b)    We cannot tell groups what to do, but an Intergroup may offer support and can raise awareness through literature and shared experience.
- c)    The responsibility for review of the pink form remains with the groups who ought to be encouraged to update their details annually.

*Recommendation:* Consider amending the Structure Handbook on page 76 *Where to Find AA*, first paragraph as italicised below:

In order to ensure that it remains accurate, *all groups ought to update their pink forms annually. Group Secretaries, or those responsible* are requested to keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in the address of the meeting place, the starting time of the meeting or the telephone contact numbers for the meeting.

In addition to considering updating the AA Structure Handbook, we recommend that any changes be communicated to the Fellowship including, but not limited to the following:

1.     Added to the revised pamphlet 'The AA Group'.
2.     Included on the pink form.
3.     Include an article about the change in the Autumn edition of AA Service News.

4. Include a pink form in the envelope with copies of the Autumn edition of AA Service News
5. This updated guidance also to be included on the website.

Meeting information listed in the AAGB online meeting finder (and microsite meeting listings) could include the date group information was last submitted, as is currently the case with the national *Where to Find*.

The Committee's decision was unanimous.

**2. Would the Fellowship share experience of money in AA bank accounts being inaccessible due to signatories having left the group and make recommendations as to how the Fellowship may make access to our funds possible.**

Our shared experience is:

There are numerous situations where this has occurred whereby;

1. some group members have been successful in liaising with the bank and releasing the funds
2. groups contacted the bank to establish the requirements necessary to operate the account

Recommendations

Where groups are unable to resolve the issue with the bank, seek further support from their Intergroup, Region or GSO.

For the future, as a preventative measure, the Committee recommends that groups follow the guidelines in the AA Structure Handbook page 79 *Treasurer*, page 82 *Group Money* and page 90 *Intergroup Money*.

The Committee's decision was unanimous.

**3. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Marc D of South West Scotland Region as Chair of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2019.

**4. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2019.**

The Committee elected Sue C of Midlands Region as Secretary of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2019.

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

## Glossary of Abbreviations Used

<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 &amp; 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.

