

Questions for Conference 2024

Committee No. 1

1. Conference is asked to consider, and make recommendations, for a comprehensive overhaul of the service structure.

Members' availability for service is challenged by unprecedented demands in the workplace - greater job insecurities and pressures on time.

A streamlining of disciplines could reduce persistent vacancies and make carrying the message more effective in changing times.

There are 12 service disciplines at Intergroups and Regions, in addition to the positions of Chair and Secretary. Many vacancies exist also within Board subcommittees.

Could Employment, Health and Public Information be unified within Public Affairs? Could Electronic Communications and Telephones become Responding? Is Young People's Liaison essential as a separate discipline?

Carrying the message with greater effectiveness ought to take priority over the protection of existing individual disciplines.

There are enormous changes in society - AA is part of society, not removed from it.

Background

Service and Structure Handbooks
Vacancies in AA Service News
Vacancies in the Confidential Directory
12 traditions
12 concepts

Any comprehensive review of the service structure should be based on the Fellowship's experiences.

2. **Would Conference investigate the viability in terms of security, cost and anonymity, of opening Conference to online observers?**

Background

Currently, the fellowship allows observers to participate in different tiers of the service structure. Any member of the fellowship has the opportunity to attend a groups business meeting, irrespective of their membership in that particular group. Additionally, members are afforded the chance to attend and observe Intergroup and Region meetings. This provides invaluable opportunities for many members to learn more about the service structure and can be an important step for individuals growing in service in AA. However, the option to observe the Conference is presently unavailable. This lack of accessibility gives Conference an air of exclusivity, leaving many members of Alcoholics Anonymous unaware of its existence and not exerting their right to participation.

Since 2020, Conference delegates have had the option to attend online. Utilising existing technology, could Conference not be made more inclusive by extending this online access to the entire Fellowship? Such a move would allow members to observe proceedings, granting them the same behind-the-scenes view that is presently available at Intergroup and Region meetings, providing greater transparency. This opportunity to see conference and their trusted servants in action may also help members to become better informed and could encourage some to consider becoming Conference Delegates themselves in the future.

As Conference is already being conducted in a hybrid format, the platform's settings could be adjusted to ensure that observers cannot participate in proceedings, for example by ensuring that they cannot activate their cameras, remain muted throughout, and display only their names rather than any profile pictures.

Committee No. 2

1. Could the conference please give more clarification and detail on situations in which making direct amends is against the spirit of the steps if it is likely to cause harm?

Context: locally there are various traditions of sponsorship in which sponsees have been told to make these amends e.g. victims of sexual assault have been told to get in touch with their assailants to make amends for harbouring resentment against them (this has included a situation where the sexual assault in question was incestuous); people who have been subject to restraining orders or threatened with restraining orders have been told to make direct contact with those requesting restraining orders to apologise for causing them fear and distress.

The concern is that commands to make these kinds of "amends" bring the Fellowship as a whole and our 12 Step programme into disrepute (particularly in the eyes of other organisations such as Rape Crisis) and has constituted a perceived barrier to being accepted as a member of our Fellowship.

Would Conference consider if the suggestion in step 9 "unless to do so would injure them or others," applies to the sponsee as well?

Background

See Context above

See Three Fold Pamphlet Questions and Answers on Sponsorship

2. Would Conference share experience on how AA members may communicate with each other on matters affecting AA as a whole, as well as their specific roles?

Good communication between members should be encouraged without promoting specific platforms.

Background

Ways Intergroup & Region members can communicate to exchange ideas or updates on service:

- PI Service news, compiled by the PI Sub Committee, and mailed from GSO to any AA member who signed up. This has been discontinued. Last issue Sept 2021.
- AA Service news – quarterly, sent to GSR's and service holders, plus a mailing list if requested from Sharon at GSO, and generally includes a few pages on Service reports, (8 / 52 pages in Summer 2023 edition, 5/26 Spring 2023).
- E mail to AAs in service, with contact via the Confidential Directory. The Directory is only accessible to those with aamail.org e-mail addresses with a password issued by GSO. The GSB set strict rules about what can be shared and regulate who may have access.
- Intergroup and Region reports – can be shared via their respective meetings & officers. This is potentially patchy due to the inconsistency of roles being filled and the vacancies throughout the structure. In practice, GSR's share back the minimum of information to groups, so many members will be unaware of what is going on.

There is a wealth of experience and enthusiasm around GB, yet much of this does not get shared.

3. Review amended Introduction in the Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

Background

Amended Introduction

Committee No. 3

- 1. Would Conference consider how online meetings are best represented and sharing information with each other? Would it be prudent to have an Online Intergroup for each region or nationally where online meetings talk to each regarding online matters and carrying the message online.**

Background

Our intergroup has a couple of groups that are based online only, they have no physical meeting. Over time, their homegroup members have changed from local participants to people all over the UK and in fact the world. One of our meetings, the GSR is based 300 miles away and cannot attend our intergroup, and that group also had questions that would be better for other online based groups to discuss. There are specific topics of discussion that physical meetings might not have.

- 2. Would Conference share its experience on the importance of rotation at all levels of service within the AA structure? (The impact of having vacant positions and why members should not repeatedly occupy the same service position).**

Background

Tradition 9
Concepts

- 3. Review Service Handbook page 90, Section 9.4 The General Service Board's Probation/CJSWS Sub Committee, first paragraph. Please replace 'up to four other members' with 'up to seven other members' as approved by the General Service Board.**

Background

Revised section 9.4 The General Service Board's Probation/CJSWS Sub Committee, first paragraph.

Committee No. 4

- 1. Would the Fellowship consider the following questions concerning Chapter 4 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, "For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field" and make recommendations to Conference.**

a. Is the chapter about AA service?

If not, then

b. Should it be removed from the handbook?

If so, then

c. Should the material be presented in a different format, such as a pamphlet?

Background

Reading: the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain Service chapters 1 and 4.

2. **Will Conference review “LGBT Voices’ pamphlet with reference to Tradition 1. Our common welfare should come first: Personal recovery depends on AA unity.**

(a) Consider a complete and more permanent title change for a constantly evolving community.

(b) Consider an Update to the Stories to include a wider and more up to date range of experience (LGBTQIA+)

(c) Consider removal or change the paragraph in the Title heading which reads “As a gay man in a very heterosexual AA it’s a bit like being an alcoholic in a sober world” this is not inclusive to all in the fellowship only Gay men.

Background

LGBT acronym has not been updated since the 1990s.

The pamphlet was approved by Conference in 2016 and it has been in production without any amendments since then.

Committee No. 5

1. **Could Conference discuss how the Fellowship’s understanding of the principles of anonymity may guide those Groups requiring AA members and visitors to put their names in a signing-in book/attendance book at meetings.**

Background

Tradition 12 - Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions p187-191
Pamphlet ‘Understanding Anonymity’

2. **Would Conference discuss and consider the viability of creating an additional version of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) incorporating stories from AAGB (including CER).**

- AA USA/Canada have said they will not be inviting stories from members other than in the USA/Canada. Therefore, it seems, for identification purposes, appropriate to have stories from GB members. There would be no changes to the first 164 pages in this version.
- Conference 2019 (Committee 5, Q.1) declined to pursue a proposal to create a special edition with British stories.
- This proposal would not seek to replace the 4th or 5th editions, rather to create a ‘local’ version that would be available alongside them.
- A parallel version of the Big Book exists in Australia, now in its second edition, retaining 8 stories from the US/Canada 4th Edition, but with 35 added stories from Australians, including those from the indigenous community. *(Please note: Should this question be chosen, AA Australia have indicated that they would be able to share extracts from that edition so members can assess the added relevance of such shares).*
- “The story section of the Big Book is far more important than most of us think. It is our principal means of identifying with the reader outside of AA: it is the written equivalent of hearing speakers at an AA meeting; it is our show window of results.” Bill W, letter 1953
- Consider the impact on Arena, Roundabout and Share magazines.

Committee No. 6

- 1. Would Conference share experience on how an AAGB App would help carry the message in addition to the AAGB website and existing apps?**

Background

AAGB Website.

- 2. Would Conference discuss the merits of creating a user friendly information pack about how to be involved in the service structure, with each discipline running an online workshop, at the 3 yearly seminar, on how to get involved?**

Background

Pamphlets "Sponsorship into Service" and "Growing into Service".
The Home Group – Heartbeat of AA.
AAGB Website – Members / Service Disciplines.

- 3. Review new chapter on AA Publications for the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.**

Background

New Chapter on AA Publications