



The National 12 Steppers' Safeguarding Guidelines (November 2024)

Welcome

Hello and Welcome fellow AA friends.

12 stepping really is the frontline for 12 Step work which is at the core of AA's traditions and along with telephone responding is the most valuable and rewarding service that many of us have ever done. If you are sober and an active AA member, you have what it takes to pass on the message of recovery, to gain the trust of a still-suffering alcoholic sufficient to enable them to try AA. Your own experience is your best asset.

The main function of the 12 steppers service is to connect a newcomer with AA in the first instance a phone call, then if agreed meeting up in person or at a specified AA meeting. You are the second point of contact for the caller though very often the first AA they will meet in person.

It is vitally important that we continue to provide this service for the suffering alcoholic and the continuation of AA.

So – enjoy, and we hope that you give and receive much from your experience with 12 step calls.

Requirements for 12 Steppers

1. 12 steppers must have a minimum of one year continuous sobriety.
2. 12 Steppers have a requirement to fill in the application form and give the following information: Full name, home address, mail address and telephone number, home group. This information will be held by the Telephone Liaison Officer or the 12 Step Liaison Officer in accordance with GDPR requirements.
3. 12 steppers must be current members of AA as a self-regulated group and recommended by their Home Group Secretary, GSR or Treasurer
4. Have read through the guidelines thoroughly.
5. The National Telephone Sub Committee has taken legal advice on safeguarding and has been advised that 12 steppers may, **though not required by law**, as a matter of best practice, undertake a basic DBS check (England & Wales) PVG (Scotland) as a prudent safeguarding measure. Anyone on the Disclosure & Barring Service list is not eligible for 12 step service.

General Data Protection Regulation

In line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Principles.

Personal data will:

- Be obtained fairly and lawfully and in a transparent way
- Collected only for valid purposes that are clearly explained and not used in any way that is incompatible with those purposes
- Relevant to the purposes collected for and limited only to those purposes
- Be accurate and kept up to date
- Kept only as long as necessary for the purposes it was collected for
- Kept securely

The definition of 'Processing' is obtaining, using, holding, amending, disclosing, destroying and

deleting personal data. This includes paper based personal data as well as that kept on computer.

Type of information kept and stored.

Personal data on application form

- Name
- Email Address
- Home Address
- Telephone number
- Home Group
- Signature
- Home group officer signature & telephone number

Before personal information is collected, we must ensure that we only request the minimum information to fulfil the task required. Personal sensitive information will not be used apart from the exact purpose for which permission was given.

Personal information that can identify the individual must be handled in a way that ensures appropriate security, including protection against unlawful or unauthorised processing, access, loss, destruction, or damage. Personal information can be kept for example on a secure USB stick or a secure cloud drive. The information will be deleted or shredded. after the end of service

Making the initial 12 step call

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. AA has no opinion on outside issues, and we **never** give medical advice – we are not qualified to do so. We are **not** a counselling service. Sometimes sharing our own medical experiences can be mistaken for the giving of advice so be wary of sharing your own medical details and history. Remember that we are representing AA as a whole and not our personal beliefs and opinions.

When making the initial call

- Have any information to hand regarding the still suffering alcoholic.
- Call as soon as possible to talk or arrange meeting up. It is advisable to withhold your number when calling for the first time.
- When making contact, we practise anonymity and if there is no answer, avoid leaving indiscreet messages on their answerphone.
- Ensure you are talking to the person who called the helpline (use their first name)

- Always have a smile on your face ,this will reflect in your voice. .
- Share your experience especially around your feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and confusion before AA for identification.
- When we speak to the still-suffering alcoholic, we ‘continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness.
- Determine the willingness of the person to do something about their drinking.
- Suggest taking action today either by meeting up in a discreet public place or at an AA meeting.
- If meeting up in a public place explain there will be two of you.
- If they just want to talk and not meet up or go to a meeting, share your experience, strength, and hope, and let them know the “hand of AA “ is always there.
- If the suffering alcoholic is unable to meet at a neutral venue or get to a meeting, due to additional issues, you as the 12 stepper can give information regarding online meetings, what they are ,how to access them and taking the caller through the process.
- Remember we are **not** counsellors **or qualified** to give medical advice. If asked whether they should just stop drinking tell them to talk to their GP(it can be dangerous to suddenly stop for most people)
- Fill in the call log as to the time and content of the call.
- Experience shows that some people do not want to meet or go to meetings. Contact with them may be maintained for a short period. If no response detach and let go.
- Please don't make promises you cannot keep.

Face to Face initial 12 step meet

- In accordance with safeguarding guidance do not to meet the still-suffering alcoholic in their home.
- We cannot know what we might find so always go in pairs, one female one male, where possible or men for men, women for women when meeting the still-suffering alcoholic and in a discreet public place or at an AA meeting. This both safeguards the 12 steppers and the still-suffering alcoholic and the need to consider safeguarding at all times.
- It is a good opportunity to share this 12 step work with a newer member who can help with identification as well as giving them valuable experience of making a 12 step call.
- Remember to take a starter pack with you.
- Always tell another AA where you are going and approximately how long for.
- Tell the still-suffering alcoholic its great they want to do something about their drinking!
- Explain the three-fold aspect of the illness, (mental, physical, spiritual,) That alcoholism is an illness which is progressive and often fatal.
- Focus on your personal experience, strength and hope and what you are like now making it clear that that they do not have to agree with your concept of a higher power!

- Talking about going to meetings and a little of what to expect, asking would they like to go to a meeting.
- They may want to go themselves and meet you there.
- When ready to leave ask if you may call them the following day.
- Safeguarding should be considered at all times.
- Remember we are not counsellors or qualified to give medical advice.

There is no such thing as unsuccessful 12th Step call. You have planted a seed and helped your own recovery.

Complaints

Thankfully, these are rare, if a complaint is received about a 12 stepper, then the 12 stepper will be appraised of the situation and an action plan put in place to resolve the issue. In rare cases, the issue may be of such a serious nature that requires immediate protection of individuals or AA as a whole and the 12 stepper may be temporarily removed from the 12 Step service until a review of the situation has been made. A report, and if needed an action plan, will then be made available to those concerned.

DOs and DON'T's

DO

STICK TO WHAT AA OFFERS WE ARE NOT COUNSELLORS OR DOCTORS

GO ON FACE TO FACE 12 STEP CALLS IN PAIRS 1 FEMALE 1 MALE OR MEN FOR MEN AND WOMEN FOR WOMEN WHEN NOT POSSIBLE

LET ANOTHER AA KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING

DON'T

ARGUE.....WE DON'T PUT PEOPLE RIGHT

ADVISE....WE NEVER OFFER ANY MEDICAL ADVICE

MAKE PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP

DON'T GO ON A 12 STEP CALL ALONE

DON'T MEET THE STILL SUFFERING ALCOHOLIC IN THEIR HOME