

Conference 2025

DRAFT text for leaflet internal facing

AA Service in Prisons

Welcome to the very rewarding world of doing service in prisons. This leaflet contains useful information to help with the setting up and the smooth running of meetings in prisons.

Please remember that we are trusted servants of AA and are entering the prison by invitation of the Governor of that prison. Each prison is autonomous and although there are similarities there are also differences in the way they are run. Therefore, the guidelines below are general in nature.

Please read the chapter, 'AA in Prisons', in the Service Handbook. AA guidance for participation within prisons is set out below.

Team members need three years continuous sobriety, speakers not less than a year.

Starting a prison meeting:

- the Prison Liaison Officer (PLO) should first make contact with the Governor to seek approval to start an AA meeting. They will guide you to the relevant person within the prison who will arrange the meetings
- the PLO should then complete the security clearance which will allow you to enter the prison through your contact within the prison
- gather together a group of volunteers willing to carry the message into the prison. They will also need to complete the security clearance

Safety/safeguarding

Wherever possible you should not go into a prison alone and you need to be taking active steps to recruit a support team. At least one of you should be the same gender as the prison population.

When going into prisons:

- please be aware of your surroundings. Remember you are in a prison. You should be given a safety talk by the prison before being allowed in for the first time
- never do any favours for the prisoners such as taking a message or letter from them
- never divulge any personal information. The only thing you should take into and out of the prison is yourself

- take no electronic devices, including mobile phones. Smart watches should be not worn/taken, and smoking materials are not allowed. These items will need to be left behind at the gate lodge

Getting to know other prison staff

Ask for an invitation to the Drug Strategy meeting. This is where a group of staff and outside agencies get together and discuss substance misuse. This helps you to get to know other staff and to form valuable contacts. You may also be able to contribute to the meeting. It is also a place where the staff and Governor are on hand if you have any queries.

Use of literature

Below is a list of literature which you can access from www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk These items will help to ensure the smooth running of meetings. Any purchases made for literature should be met by the sponsoring intergroup or region. Only AA approved literature should be used:

- The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous
- Living Sober
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Daily Reflections and any other AA Conference approved books
- Inside Stories
- Prison and alcohol
- 12th Step Starter Pack complete in wallet. (It is suggested that we give each new member a set of these)
- Serenity Prayer
- Yellow Card
- A monthly subscription to Share and Roundabout magazines, funded by your local intergroup or region. Ask your intergroup or region for any old copies they could donate to the prison. January editions are especially useful.

Free leaflets that can be acquired by phoning the literature department at the General Service Office (GSO). Some examples are:

- Carrying the message inside the walls
- How did I get here?
- Where do I go from here?
- When drink stops working
- Contact AA Prison poster

If you wish to take literature into the prison this **must** be checked by security. Check with your prison contact for the best person to ask.

The prison will provide a room for your meetings and should be able to arrange storage for your literature.

Other forms of communication

- There is a quarterly newsletter, 'Beyond the Bars', which is sent to PLOs but can also be accessed in the members area document library
- Stories are always needed from both Fellowship members involved in prison service and prisoners. Please send these into GSO by post or email and ask that they are passed onto the editor of Beyond the Bars

General comments

Prison meetings are run in the same way as any other meeting. Prisoners should be encouraged to fully participate in the meeting.

Encourage prisoners to participate in the Prison Postal Service by contacting GSO.

Becoming involved in prison service is very rewarding, and always remember you are not alone. If you have any worries or concerns regarding this service, please don't hesitate to speak to your regional PLO or intergroup PLO who will be able to answer your questions. In the absence of a PLO, please contact the Prison Sub Committee who are always willing and happy to share their experience with you.

If you do not have access to the Confidential Directory, please contact GSO.

Yours in Fellowship
The Prison Sub Committee
August 2024

General Service Office (GSO)
Alcoholics Anonymous
PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ
Tel. 01904 644026
Email: aainformation@gsogb.org.uk