

Questions for Conference 2025

Introduction

Every year, AA Service News presents Questions for Conference. These questions have been raised by the Fellowship and selected by the Fellowship for discussion and resolution by the Fellowship at the annual AA Great Britain (AAGB) Conference. Conference is due to be held in York on April 11-13th 2025. This is your opportunity to read the questions and voice your opinions to your conference delegates, group, intergroup and region over how AA works.

Please consider the contribution each question has in carrying the message together with any financial and practical implications.

Conference questions and background information is available from the AA Great Britain website 'Document Library'. <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Document-Library>

Committee No. 1

- 1. On behalf of our Online AA meeting, we are writing to request a definition of 'Cross Sharing' to be read out at meetings. The reason for this is that it has become a popular phrase in meetings in our region, yet there is not clear understanding of what this means. This has led to some people thinking that they cannot relate to a concept or theme that another person has shared in the meeting. When we have discussed this as a group, members offer up many different interpretations. We do not want a misinterpretation to inhibit member's connections and shares in meetings. Yet we are sensitive to people in meetings telling others what to do or commenting on the quality of that other person's recovery.**

As such, we contacted the AA head office (AAInformation@gsogb.org.uk) to request any literature that may exist on cross-sharing. This was the response to our question:

"Cross Sharing"

The phrase 'cross sharing' seems to be coming into common parlance in AA however, it is not contained in any AA literature nor does GSO have any interpretation of its meaning or any knowledge of the origin of the phrase. I believe it would be useful if the Fellowship could come to some conclusion on this and similar issues which of course could only happen at AA's Conference. I would like to suggest that your Intergroup draft a question for Conference on this issue to be received at GSO before the end of August 2024, unfortunately, it is too late for the 2024 Conference. It is up to the conscience of each group how it handles matters such as these.

We believe that groups, as a whole, would benefit from having this definition at hand so that the quality of sharing is in the spirit of recovery and fellowship.

2. What guidance can Conference provide to ensure the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous are truly open to all those who have a desire to stop drinking - regardless of problems other than alcohol?

Many people come to the Fellowship with other problems especially addictions.

Some groups are concerned that we may be creating barriers to recovery for multi-addicted sufferers. They feel we may not be sufficiently welcoming to them as a solution to their problems, if we have an overly restrictive interpretation of the Third Tradition.

Other groups find that when some members identify only as an addict it is very concerning and confusing for a new member coming in with only a drink problem, particularly at closed meetings.

Some Fellowship experience suggests that newcomers with multiple issues are being put off our Fellowship as they are not hearing that the desire to stop drinking regardless of your other issues and afflictions is what unites members. They are hearing 'you are not welcome here unless your problem is solely with alcohol.'

Background

The Third Tradition states: 'Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend on money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, they have no other affiliations'

"In my experience this is being interpreted, in many instances, that all discussions within the Fellowship should be so restricted to our problems with alcohol such that no other matters should be discussed or considered. Whilst this rightly preserves our Primary Purpose, it doesn't reflect the wider norms in society where many (primarily younger) people are using alcohol and other substances on an interchangeable and a combined basis. This is most evident when carrying the message into hospitals and rehabs."

"We had a heated group conscience at my home group and the old timers voted that we introduce ourselves as Alcoholics or Alcoholic / Addict if they needed to. Other members voted to only say Addict and drop the Alcoholic. This is a very serious issue now, we are not NA or CA but AA trying to stay within the traditions of the AA programme."

"Someone who suffers with alcoholism and who identifies as an alcoholic, especially the first time, is sending out a plea for help which is an important aspect to staying sober."

Tradition 3 "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking."

Background - Information/Materials

Problems Other Than Alcohol Pamphlet (item 3180 - Literature Downloads/ Document Library/ Members Section/AA GB Website)

The AA Member - Medications & Other Drugs Pamphlet (item 3140 - as above)

Twelve Steps and 12 Traditions - Traditions Three and Five

Twelve Steps and 12 Traditions - Twelve Traditions (Long Form) Traditions 3 & 5

Primary Purpose Card (meeting opening statements) – aka The Blue Card

NB This question, or forms of this question, have been submitted by several members independently and the Conference Steering Committee felt that this was an important question for the fellowship to answer. Therefore, a composite of those submitted questions has been drafted into this question by the Conference Steering Committee.

3. Review new Service Positions Executive Summary for the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.

Background

Service Positions Executive Summary

[Link : https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/)

4. Review revised Chapter 10 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain – Telephone Services.

Background

Revised Chapter 10

[Link : https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/)

Committee No. 2

1. Can the Fellowship consider inclusivity and add clarity as it relates to special interest groups within the AA structure, so we remain within our traditions?

Background

In the past (before large scale online groups and with meeting lists generally printed) many groups such as a Women's group, a Men's group, an LGBTQIA+ group etc. often had the wording "non-restrictive".

Since the 2020 lockdown hundreds of online groups appeared, with a greater tendency towards more special interest groups.

Managing these listings and creating awareness amongst the younger-sober fellowship in particular has proved a challenge to some of the guiding principles of unity and inclusivity in AA.

A male RECLO was ejected from the waiting room of a women's group even though his entire AA service title was on the screen, contrary to the principles of AA. Cases of foreign visitors asking if they would be welcome at a certain type of meeting because the meeting's name suggested a demographic they didn't fit. This suggests that it is more to do with the wording in the meeting listing rather than the intent of the group.

Some of these groups are currently still listed on AA platforms.

Other special interest groups have always existed, including doctors or lawyers meetings, but

they are not listed on any AA platform because they are exclusive. In the modern age there are many social media outlets that may accommodate such groups without affecting AAGB listings, so long as they are not part of the AA structure and do not take Tradition 7 contributions on behalf of the fellowship.

References:

Starting a Group:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members/aa-meetings/starting-a-new-group/>

Tradition 1

Tradition 3

Tradition 4

Tradition 10

2. Would the fellowship and conference please advise if they believe that the terms Open and Closed should be changed?

If yes, what should they be changed to?

Would the fellowship consider if meeting finders should be updated with notes defining what Open and Closed or the new terms mean?

Background

It has been suggested by newcomers/the still suffering alcoholic and visitors, that these terms can create confusion when searching for a meeting.

As members, we can often assume that some terms and the way AA functions at group level is clear and obvious. Perhaps through our Primary Purpose we have a responsibility to make attending meetings slightly less confusing e.g. meetings are held weekly but visitors can attend once a month on the 3rd Thursday, rather than meetings are Open once a month.

A suggested alternative to Open and Closed could be Private and Public and we are sure there are many other alternatives which would work well that the Fellowship can share?

Traditions 1,2, 3 and 3 long form, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10,11,12.

Concepts 2 & 4

The AA Group AAGB product code 3270

Primary Purpose Card (blue card) product code 4014

AA GB Website – Members section: About AA Meetings

Open meetings are open to non-alcoholics too, such as family and friends supporting a loved one.

Closed Meetings are limited to alcoholics and those who think or know they have a problem with drinking.

AA GB Structure Handbook – page 100 Group Meetings

The Closed Meeting is intended for alcoholics and for those with an alcohol problem who have a desire to stop drinking.

The Open Meeting is intended for alcoholics and non alcoholics e.g. family, friends and

anyone interested in AA.

NB This question, or forms of this question, have been submitted by several members independently and the Conference Steering Committee felt that this was an important question for the fellowship to answer. Therefore, a composite of those submitted questions has been drafted into this question by the Conference Steering Committee.

3. Review revised Introduction, Point 3 – What professionals have said about Alcoholics Anonymous, AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.

Background

Revised What professionals have said about Alcoholics Anonymous
[Link : https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/)

4. Review AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter 6 (Health), Point 6.13 - Alcoholics Anonymous/12-Step Facilitation (AA/TSF) NICE Recommendation and Cochrane Evidence Review

Background

Alcoholics Anonymous/12-Step Facilitation (AA/TSF) NICE Recommendation and Cochrane Evidence Review
[Link : https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/)

Committee No. 3

1. Would Conference recommend creating a new leaflet explaining the use of the language in the Big Book and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and the historical period it was written.

Background

Examples in the BB include the use of the word God.
Use of language in the chapters "To Wives" and "The Family Afterwards".
Examples in the 12 and 12
Use of "men" and "boys".
Tradition 3

2. Would Conference consider recommending changing the terms of service for positions within intergroup and region, to attract more members into service by increasing or decreasing the term.

Background

Currently the recommendations are for lesser periods. In the case of intergroup it is minimum 2 years and maximum 3 years, and for region a maximum of 3 years.

It has become more difficult to fill service positions at these levels and although rotation is a very good practice which should be maintained, the period of years in post at present leaves many positions vacant.

The intention of this question is to make best use of the experience and commitment of members currently involved in service, whilst encouraging more members to be inspired by their example and come forward to take up service positions.

Traditions 1, 4, 7 & 9 Long form.

3. **Review AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Introduction, New Point 5 – for the new Appendix – the former Chapter 4.**

Background

New Point 5 – for the new Appendix – the former Chapter 4

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

4. **Review AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter 13, Publications new section 13.6 Literature.**

Background

New Section 13.6 Literature

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

Committee No. 4

1. **Would the Fellowship discuss how to improve our common welfare at all levels of AAGB and encourage groups to seek their own conscience in regard of the safeguarding guidance when an issue arises, e.g.**
 - a. outside the law
 - b. within the law
 - c. if someone feels they have been falsely accused

Background

Traditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Safeguarding Policy (GSB)

Safeguarding Policy (GSB) - Alcoholics Anonymous ([alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk))

Safeguarding and Personal Conduct Version 2

Safeguarding and Personal Conduct Version 2 - Alcoholics Anonymous ([alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk))

NB This question, or forms of this question, have been submitted by several members

independently and the Conference Steering Committee felt that this was an important question for the fellowship to answer. Therefore, a composite of those submitted questions has been drafted into this question by the Conference Steering Committee.

2. a. Can Conference review the use of the phrase “men for men and women for women” in the ‘Sponsorship: Your questions answered’ pamphlet, and make recommendations?

Would Conference recommend changing the wording in the pamphlet to the wording used in The Structure Handbook “A man for a man, and a woman for a woman has often been suggested as working best. Today, however, we recognise that sexual and/or romantic attraction, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, can be problematic and may create safeguarding issues.”

b. Would Conference recommend producing a card, for groups to read out when a newcomer is attending, giving guidance around seeking help/sponsorship from members within the Fellowship?

Background

a. The Structure Handbook, The New Member 7.1 Sponsorship P118 says “A man for a man, and a woman for a woman has often been suggested as working best. Today, however, we recognise that sexual and/or romantic attraction, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, can be problematic and may create safeguarding issues.”

b. Our home group and other meetings in our town have had some really bad experiences with certain older members hitting on, harassing, unsettling, and generally behaving inappropriately towards newcomers - often people who are vulnerable and attending their first or second meeting. This applies to both sexes but primarily towards young females.

We have become much more aware of this since the fellowship has addressed safeguarding. Members have said that the Safeguarding Statement, which talks about “within” or “outside the law”, is unclear and confusing, and worries some newcomers. A new card could give complete newcomers some valuable advice in the first few days - possibly before they’ve even spoken to anyone - while they begin to navigate the rooms.

Literature already available to groups in card form:

Safeguarding in AA Table Topper

Safeguarding in AA card contained within the newcomers pack as a table topper

The pamphlet to align with changes.

Safeguarding in AA

This group wants all members, whether new or long-standing,
to be kept safe while participating in meetings and other AA activities.

We seek to follow the recommendations in our AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain
(The Group, Section 5)

**None of us is above the law.
If an issue is within the law, our Traditions apply;
if outside the law, then contact outside agencies**

Safeguarding in AA

Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain has a policy on safeguarding, which individual groups are recommended to follow. This is to ensure that new and long-standing members alike do not suffer harm from actions by members or non-members while participating in AA activity.

If something feels wrong, it is suggested to discuss the matter with another member, a Group officer, or consult our AA Structure Handbook for GB, (The Group, Section 5) for guidance.

If the issue is within the law, our Traditions apply; if outside the law, then contact outside agencies.

Safeguarding section in Structure Handbook

Group – P115 - 122

Annex C P196

Website – Document Library

Safeguarding Policy

3. Review revised AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter 3 – AA and Electronic Communications

Background

Revised Chapter 3 – AA and Electronic Communications

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

4. Review AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain, The General Service Board page 162, add new paragraph between the part paragraph at the top of page before the first full paragraph.

Background

New paragraph to be inserted on page 162

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

Committee No. 5

1. Would the fellowship consider the creation of a video which is aimed at encouraging Men into AA. This would complement the suite of videos already available for Women, Armed Forces, People of Colour, Bluelight Services and LGBTQIA+.

Background

A video explaining AA to men will be invaluable in helping to encourage them to seek support

offered by the fellowship. As in the other videos we can show that AA is welcoming to all who wish to stop drinking.

The AA Survey (2020) shows that just over 50% of our membership are men.

Stats describing the disproportionality of alcohol abuse for men.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/drugusealcoholandsmoking/datasets/adultdrinkinghabits>

Directly addressing alcoholism with a focus on a male perspective will help men to identify with AA and encourage them to attend an AA meeting.

The cost should be in line with the other videos already produced.

The hope is we can offer those men who are still suffering a way to easily identify and understand AA in a way that will encourage them to come to a meeting.

Tradition 5.

2. Would the Fellowship discuss and offer experience of the use of the 'Pink Form' and suggest ways for groups to more regularly update their group information.

Background

The Pink Form was and is most likely still the primary tool by which meeting information is kept up to date on the website's meeting finder section.

While some 'older' members are likely to be aware that the original paper 'Pink Form' was actually a pink form, and the term is still used as such, perhaps now that we are operating in the more digital world, the term has become somewhat 'lost in translation'. A more modern reference is now required. Perhaps something as simple as the 'Add or Update Meeting Information' facility.

Extract from the AA Structure Handbook/The Group/Where to find AA (p103 - new edition):

"In order to ensure that it remains accurate, all groups ought to update their pink forms annually. Keeping the WTF up to date is not simply an administrative exercise. Keeping the WTF up to date is an integral part of carrying the message within the fellowship. There has to be a deep understanding that making it "easy to find" is an essential tool of recovery".

3. Review AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Old Chapter 4 now Appendix (TBA): For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field.

Background

Appendix (TBA): For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field.

[Link : https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/)

Committee No. 6

1. Would the Fellowship share its experience on how our message of recovery can be carried to online platforms such as:

YouTube
Instagram
TikTok
Facebook
Snapchat
Twitch
Vimeo

Whilst remaining faithful to our Traditions.

Background

Tradition 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12

2. Review AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter 1 – Public Information.

Background

Revised Chapter 1 – Public Information

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

Please consider the contribution each question has in carrying the message together with any financial and practical implications

Literature Items to be presented in plenary session:

Draft 'Mental Health' Pamphlet

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

Draft 'AA in Prisons' Pamphlet

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

Professional Leaflet Series 'Employment'.

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>

'A brief guide to AA' (item code 3540)

Link : <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/conference2025/>