

The General Service Conference

CER Delegates to Conference

Contact us: delegates@alcoholics-anonymous.eu

Agenda

The General Service Conference

a. AA's Service Structure

- In Europe: AA Groups, Intergroups, Regions, GSB, GSO

b. Conference

- Composition, proceedings, organisation, GSB / GSO accountability, Delegates Role

c. AA's Group Conscience

- i. Annual Process Map
- ii. Questions for Conference
- iii. Conference Questions
- iv. Conference Recommendations

Disclaimer

- This presentation is just a brief overview
- For more information please refer to:
 - CER GSC Annual Process Map v2.0.PDF
 - The Role And Function Of Conference.PDF
 - How To Submit A Topic Or Question For Conference.PDF
 - The 'AA Group' Pamphlet
 - The Structure of AA in Great Britain Handbook
 - AA Service News (AASN) from GSO Great Britain
 - www.alcoholics-anonymous.eu
 - www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

AA Service

“Our Twelfth Step – carrying the message – is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence”

Bill W. in AA's Legacy of Service

The General Service Conference

The General Service Conference

The General Service Conference (GSC) of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Great Britain (GB)...

- Is the successor to AA's founders, and guardian of our Three Legacies; Recovery, Unity, and Service
- Describes both the:
 - » Service Structure of AA GB
 - » Annual general meeting of Conference delegates
- Is the practical means by which the 'Group Conscience' in Great Britain can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole

The General Service Conference

- Is guided by our Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts
 - » **Tradition 5:** Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
 - » **Tradition 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.
 - » **Tradition 9:** A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
 - » **Concept I:** The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for British AA services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship in Great Britain.

AA's Service Structure

AA's Service Structure

- Our service structure is formed as a result of Twelfth Step work
- It all begins, and ends, with the AA Group
- Unique situation in Europe:
 - » Each European country has its own separate AA Service Structure (Host Nation)
 - » There is also an Region of AA GB that covers English-speaking AA groups in Continental Europe (CER)
 - » Plus, there are also other-language AA groups scattered throughout Europe; Polish, Spanish, Russian etc.

AA Groups

- Any two or more alcoholics gathered together may call themselves an AA Group (Tradition 3 – long form)
- Decides which structure to belong to (Tradition 4)
- Does all the jobs that keep AA going
 - » Carrying the message
 - » Provide a meeting place (often the newcomer's first contact with AA)
 - » Make available AA literature
 - » Collect Seventh Tradition
- Lots of service opportunities - the 'Home Group' is the heartbeat of AA
- Represented by the "Group Service Representative" (GSR)

Intergroups

- Made up of GSRs and Intergroup (IG) Service Officers
- Aim to serve all AA groups in a small geographical area
- Services may include:
 - » Co-ordinating public information, facilitating best practice between groups, organising workshops, linking groups to Region, providing opportunities for AA service, co-operation with Host Nation AA, sponsoring annual round-ups
- Meets ideally at least six times a year
- Represented by the “Region Reps”

Regions

- Assembly is made up of Region Reps/GSRs & Region Service Officers
- Aim to serve all AA Intergroups (and groups without an Intergroup) in a larger geographical area
- Services may include:
 - » Representing AA at professional community conferences, linking Intergroups to Conference, managing their own websites with meeting lists, manning 24 hour helplines, publishing newsletters
- Meets at least four times a year
- Represented by “Delegates to Conference”

General Service Board

- The General Service Board (GSB) executes the decisions of Conference and other operational tasks
- The GSB consists of Board Trustees from each of the Regions, as well as non-alcoholic Trustees, all of whom go through a nomination and ratification process
- The Trustees chair the various service Sub-committees, that include the following disciplines:
 - » AA Service News, Archives, Armed Services, Electronic Communications, Employment, Health, Literature, Prisons, Probation / Criminal Justice Services, Public Information, SHARE, Roundabout and Telephone Service.

General Service Office

- The General Service Office (GSO) of AA GB provides administrative support to the General Service Board and the General Service Conference.
- GSO also provides central support for the Fellowship as a whole with such services as literature distribution and the answering of day-to-day enquiries from the fellowship, health professionals, media, and the public.
- The GSO is located York, United Kingdom.
- There are also two satellite offices; the Northern Service Office in Glasgow and the Southern Service Office in London.



Conference

Composition of Conference

- Conference meets annually, and is composed of:
 - » The Chairperson of Conference
 - » Six delegates from each of the 16 Regions
 - » Board Trustees of the General Service Board
 - » One delegate each from the committees of SHARE and Roundabout
 - » Non-voting foreign observers may be invited
 - » The General Secretary and other staff attend and help to run Conference but do not vote
- Conference expenses are charged to the General Service Board other than hotel and travelling expenses of delegates which Regions pay.

Conference Proceedings

- Delegates listen to reports given by the Board Trustees, including a financial report from the Honorary Treasurer.
- Delegates vote to accept or reject proposals put forward by Board Trustees.
- Much of the delegates' work is done in committee. There are six committees with one delegate from each Region plus Board Trustees and possibly observers.
- Committees discuss and formulate a response to “Questions” from the Fellowship.
- Committees present their response to the whole Conference.
- Conference accepts or rejects the response.

Conference Proceedings

- A simple majority vote by Conference constitutes a “Recommendation” to the Board to take any necessary action.
- A proposal which is carried by a two-thirds majority of those voting at Conference is binding on the Board, provided that in each case the Board is legally competent to act.
- There is a plenary session where any delegate may make a comment or ask a question.
- The Chairperson for the next Conference is elected by the whole of Conference, and the next committee Chairpersons and Secretaries are elected by their committees.

Conference Organisation

- The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) organises Conference each year.
- The CSC comprises:
 - » The annually elected Conference Chairperson acting as Chair
 - » All the annually elected committee Chairpersons (6)
 - » Two Board Trustees for guidance, support and continuity
 - » General Secretary (non-voting)
 - » Conference Co-ordinator (non-voting)

Conference Organisation

- The CSC meets four times in the year preceding Conference.
- Its remit includes:
 - » Review the Terms of Reference by which they work.
 - » Review the timetable and running of Conference.
 - » Decide which topics/questions submitted by Fellowship members will be discussed in committee.
 - » Consider any further resolutions from individuals, Groups, Intergroups or Regions which must be submitted at least two months before the Conference for possible inclusion in the final agenda.

Terms of Reference

- The “Terms of Reference” are reviewed annually by the CSC, being mindful always to observe our Traditions, Concepts and Warranties.
- They are distributed to the Fellowship with AA Service News and published on the AA GB website.

Terms of Reference 2016



Microsoft Word
7 - 2003 Document



Role of a Delegate

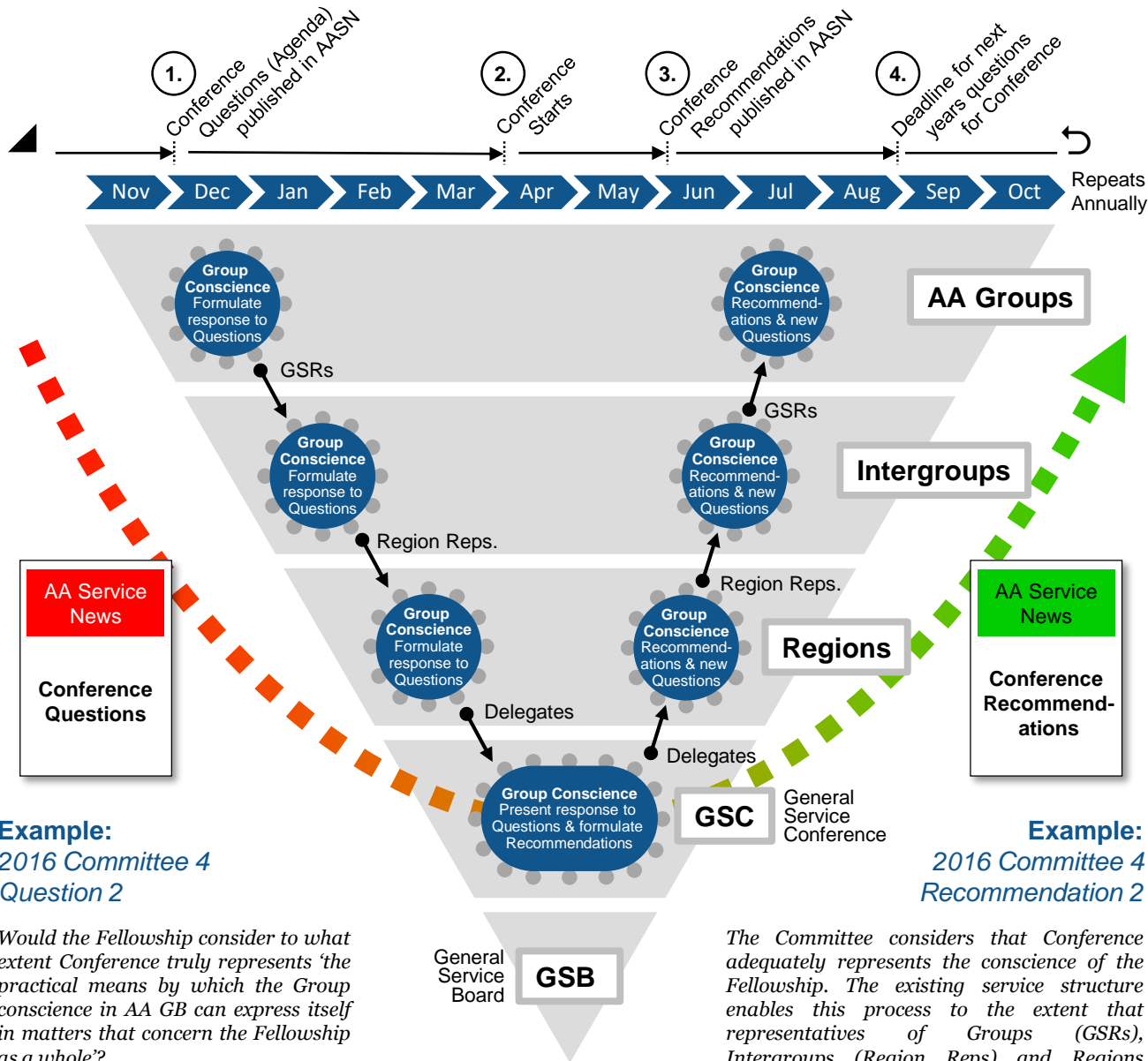
- Each Region of AA GB has six Delegates
- The Delegates attend Conference every year
- At Conference, Delegates are expected to:
 - » Come informed with their Regions' 'Group Conscience' on the "Conference Questions"
 - » Keep their minds and hearts open
 - » Study the information in the Board & Annual Reports
 - » Vote according to their conscience
- Delegates also report back to the Region, and share the Conference Recommendations
- Delegates serve for a maximum of three years

GSB / GSO Accountability

- The General Service Board (GSB) and the General Service Office (GSO) will report back to the fellowship at Conference
- Annual and Board Reports are sent out to all registered groups and service officers in advance
- AA groups ought to ensure their needs and requirements are being met
- If you are not receiving the information, make sure your group is registered at GSO
- Any issues can be brought up in the plenary (open floor) session



AA's Group Conscience



The General Service Conference Annual Process Map

AA's Group Conscience

The General Service Conference (GSC) of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Great Britain (GB) means both the service structure of AA as well as the annual general meeting of Conference delegates. The GSC is the practical means by which the group conscience in Great Britain can express itself through the service structure in matters that concern AA as a whole.

The annual process begins with the group conscience. It also leads back to the group, since the group has final responsibility not just for initiating, but for implementing the decisions agreed upon by Conference.

This process map simply displays the annual timeline and the various stages of AA's collective group conscience being expressed through our service structure, and has been designed for:

- Groups, Intergroups, and Regions; to help plan, prepare, discuss, and communicate GSC proceedings
- Service representatives (GSRs, Region Reps, and Delegates); to support their role as a conduit for the group conscience

More Information on Conference

- The Role And Function Of Conference.PDF
- How To Submit A Topic Or Question For Conference.PDF
- The Structure of AA in Great Britain Handbook
- AA Service News (AASN) from the General Service Office (GSO) Great Britain
- www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Example:
2016 Committee 4 Question 2

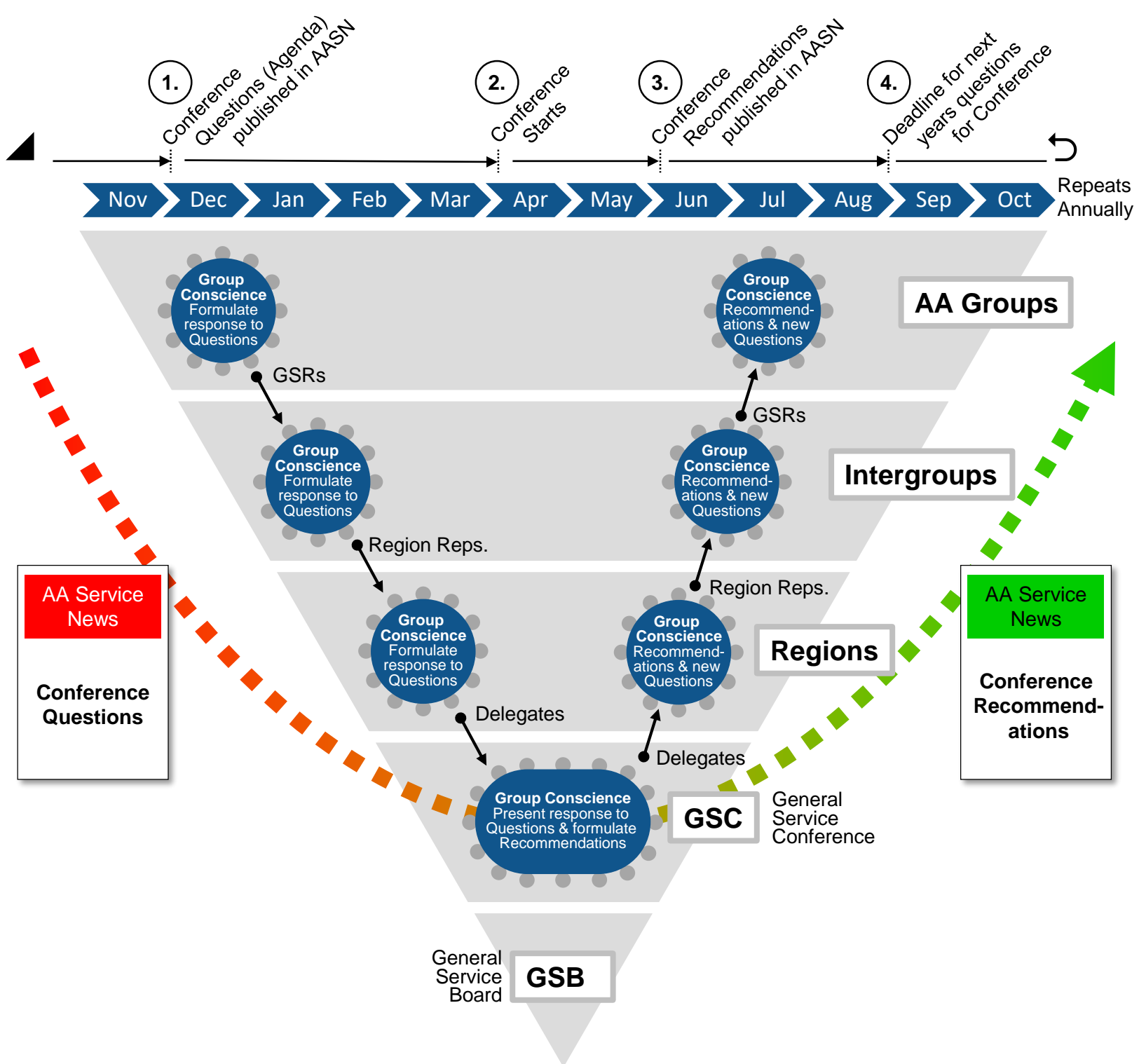
Would the Fellowship consider to what extent Conference truly represents 'the practical means by which the Group conscience in AA GB can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole'?

Notes

- This process map is a general guide only; there may be variations each year as necessary
- All dates are approximate only
- Please refer to our website for additional information: www.alcoholics-anonymous.eu

Example:
2016 Committee 4 Recommendation 2

The Committee considers that Conference adequately represents the conscience of the Fellowship. The existing service structure enables this process to the extent that representatives of Groups (GSRs), Intergroups (Region Reps) and Regions (Delegates) act as a conduit for the group conscience. The ultimate responsibility for this process starts and ends with the group. Where there is full engagement, it is hard to conceive of a more effective alternative.



Example: Chat Now Function

2014 Question	Would Conference discuss the idea of adding a "chat now" messenger service to the AA GB website?
2015 Recommendation	This Committee welcomes the idea of a 'chat now' facility on the AA website as an additional way for the still suffering alcoholic to contact the Fellowship. However, we have serious concerns about its practicality, in particular with regard to the recruitment, training and supervision of responders. We therefore recommend that the Board undertakes a feasibility study and report back to Conference 2016. The Committee's decision was unanimous.
2016 GSB Action	Telephone and online responders team looked at Chat Now and said that we can do that, it's an extension of what we already do. Pilot initiated with Pure Chat technology and demonstrated at Conference. Conference approved the adoption of this service. Pure Chat is a new and clever way of responding to those needing help.

Example: Online Groups

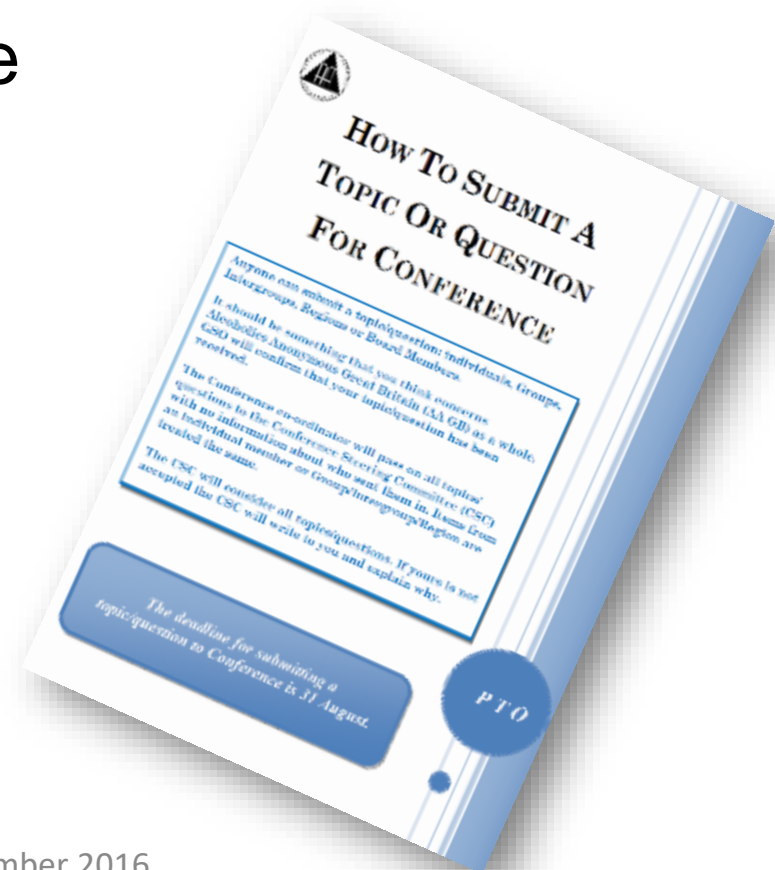
2014 Question	Would the Fellowship share experience and then make recommendations whether to recognise online groups?
2015 Recommendation	This Committee shared experience and recommends the recognition of online groups. We request that the General Service Board GB investigate the implications and practicalities of this recommendation. They should also consider how such groups can be incorporated within the structure of AA GB. The Board to report back to General Service Conference 2016.
2016 GSB Action	“Our initial findings are that it is feasible to include an on-line group on the AAGB Meetings database and thereby recognise that group from a search on the website. This may require some minor changes to the meeting finder function of the website. It is envisaged that the group would register with GSO in the normal way using a pink form or online, ideally it would attach itself to an existing intergroup as is custom for all new groups although this is not mandated by the Fellowship. It is then up to the group/intergroup to facilitate the meetings, appointment officers and arrange pot collections etc. as is done by any group in becoming self-supporting.”



Questions for Conference

Questions for Conference

- Anyone can submit a question (topic or agenda item): individual members, Groups, Intergroups, Region or Board Members
- It ought to be something that concerns AA GB as a whole
- Creating Questions involves the following steps:
 - a. Generating
 - b. Developing
 - c. Finalising
 - d. Submitting



Generating Questions

- Potential questions may arise during a “group inventory”, for example:
 - » What does your group need from AA? E.g. new literature, experiences from other groups, etc.
 - » Where do you think AA can improve?
 - » What is not working well in AA?
 - » How can AA respond to the technological changes in society?
- Refer to previous years questions for examples
- Once a few new ideas have been generated, they can be put into an development table (see next slide)

Developing Questions

Ideas/improvements/issues	1	2	3	4	5	Brief evaluation (with actions)	6	7
Cost of pamphlets from GSO is too high								
CER was not included in AA 2015 Survey								
Need a Europe 24-hour helpline								
Not enough members active in service								
CER Process Map								
Online strategy for ever declining stream from printed materials as we proceed in the digital age								
Name Change AA GB to AA English Speaking Europe								
Survey questions created around program of action 12 steps and benefits to length of sobriety								
Non-qualified 'medical advice' from AA Members								
CER Online feedback form								

Developing Questions

First ask:

1. Is the question in the spirit of AA and “a major subject of topical importance affecting the Fellowship in the widest possible way”?

Then ask: has the question been...

2. Previously discussed at Conference?
3. Previously rejected at Conference?
4. Better suited for Group, Intergroup or Region level?
5. Adequately dealt with already?

If suitable to proceed, then include:

6. Supporting information
7. Question intention

*From: How To Submit A
Topic Or Question For
Conference.PDF*

Developing Questions

Ideas/improvements/issues	1	2	3	4	5	Brief evaluation (with actions)	6	7
Cost of pamphlets from GSO is too high					x	Online PDFs (GSC 2016) will help with the costs of pamphlets, if they are deemed too expensive.		
CER was not included in AA 2015 Survey					x	CER trustee is aware of this issue. Suggest CER members volunteer for the survey committee. See action below.		
Need a Europe 24-hour helpline					x	Suggest utilising the new “chat now” function from AAGB as it is free and available anywhere in Europe. Ron to send GSO an email and request update and enquire whether we can implement on our CER site.		
Not enough members active in service				x		Usual challenge of AA, could be an inventory question at group/IG/region level		
CER Process Map						Potential as a question 1.	✓	✓
Online strategy for ever declining stream from printed materials as we proceed in the digital age					x	Literature subcommittee as guided by the GSB and trustees ought to have a strategy already. If any member wants to know more, then it is advisable to contact GSO direct		
Name Change AA GB to AA English Speaking Europe	x					Suggestion was discussed and it was decided that it would not be practically feasible, nor better help our primary purpose		
Survey questions created around program of action 12 steps and benefits to length of sobriety					x	Delegates felt that this was adequately addressed at Conference at the time with this feedback already given and received by the fellowship. Matt to send email to GSO about 12 steps, 107% respondents, etc.		
Non-qualified ‘medical advice’ from AA Members					x	This is adequately covered in our literature – “The AA Member – Medication and other Drugs” pamphlet		
CER Online feedback form						Potential as a question 2.	✓	✓

Finalising Questions

Question: Would Conference consider adopting Continental European Region's new 'The General Service Conference Annual Process Map'?

Supporting Information: The General Service Conference (GSC) structure and process can be difficult to comprehend at first, especially for members new to service. Therefore, there is a need to communicate both structure and process in a simple, consolidated, and easy to understand way. This need is not adequately addressed by existing AA literature as, although there is plentiful GSC information available, it is complex and spread out across many different documents.

The Continental European Region (CER) has created a GSC Annual Process Map that visually displays in a simple and clear way the annual timeline and various stages of AA's collective group conscience being expressed through our service structure. It has already been used successfully amongst CER's members to support the GSC process and is available in the following formats: 1. A printed Z-fold pamphlet (also available as a PDF), 2. An animated GIF (for online use), 3. An animated PowerPoint (for presentations). The documents are available on the CER website, and at the following addresses: www.bit.ly/GSC_APM

Intention: If Conference were to adopt the GSC Annual Process Map and make it available to all members in AA Great Britain, along with existing AA literature, it may help Groups, Intergroups, and Regions (and their respective service officers; GSRs, Region Reps, and Delegates) more effectively prepare, communicate, and act on annual GSC proceedings.

References: How To Submit A Topic Or Question For Conference.PDF, The Role And Function Of Conference.PDF, The Structure of AA in Great Britain Handbook

Submitting Questions

- Submit questions to:

The Conference Co-ordinator

GSO of AA GB

PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green

York, YO1 7NJ

United Kingdom

Email: aainformation@gsogb.org.uk

- Deadline: **August 31** of each year

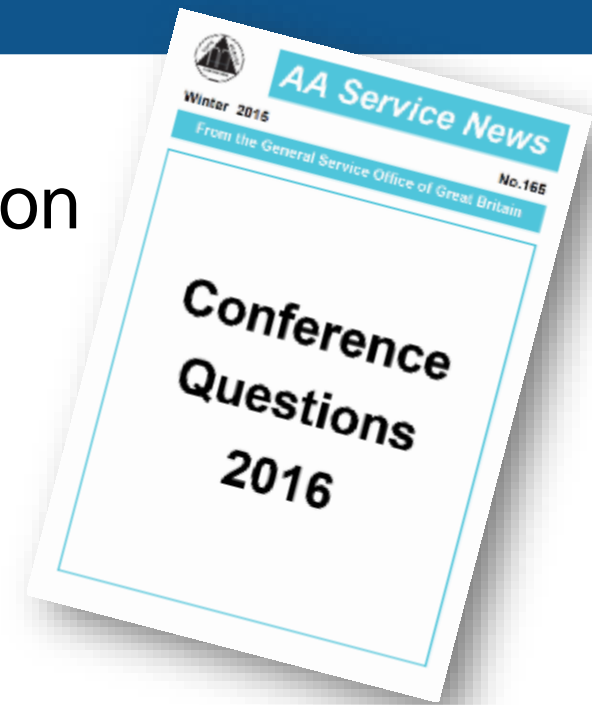
Questions for Conference

- GSO will confirm that your question has been received, and then pass on to the CSC
- All items are considered with no information about who sent them in, thus all items are treated the same
- Accepted items along with supporting information are then included on the Conference agenda as “Conference Questions”
- Rejected items will be provided with an explanation as to why

Conference Questions

Conference Questions

- Published in AA Service News Winter Edition and the AA GB website in early December
- This starts the process of individuals, Groups, IGs, and Regions discussing the questions, the outcome of which is taken to Conference by the Delegates
- It is suggested that Groups and Intergroups share the questions amongst members in preparation for their 'Group Conscience' where responses are formulated
- The usual way of passing responses to the Delegates is via Region Reps / GSRs at our March CER Assembly



Group Conscience

- Always mindful of the autonomy of the group
- ‘Group Conscience’ takes many forms, both in structure and regularity
- Some groups incorporate both the business element with the group inventory and some keep them separate
- Some meet frequently and some less regularly
- The group conscience is a vital tool in the maintenance of a healthy and well run meeting, enabling it to fulfil its primary purpose of carrying its message

Conference Recommendation 2016 (Committee 6)

Group Conscience

- Prepare an agenda, including reference to the Questions
- Inform group members well in advance
- Document the discussion in the minutes

- Tradition 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.*

Online Feedback Form

The screenshot shows the Alcoholics Anonymous Continental European Region website. The main heading is "CQ2016 ONLINE FEEDBACK FORM". The page is divided into several sections:

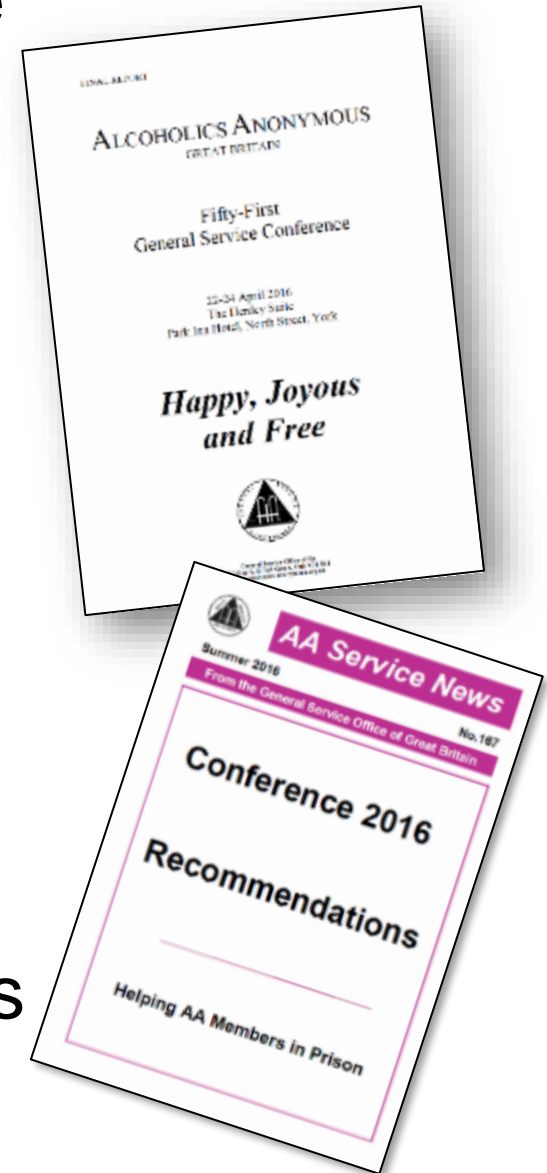
- Navigation:** "About AA", "Need Help?", "Meetings", "AA Members", "For Professionals", "Get In Touch".
- Form Navigation:** "IMPORTANT NOTES", "YOUR DETAILS", "COMMITTEE 1", "COMMITTEE 2", "COMMITTEE 3", "COMMITTEE 4", "COMMITTEE 5", "COMMITTEE 6", "SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSES".
- COMMITTEE 1 Section:**
 - 1.1 (Abbreviated) Would Conference review the matter [AA members with hearing impairments] and make recommendations in ways that meetings, including Intergroups and Regions, can address this matter at every meeting.
 - 1.2 Would Conference consider ways of raising awareness of the "Twelve Concepts Checklist Great Britain"?
- STAY INFORMED – SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER:** Includes an "Email" input field and a "Subscribe" button.
- IMPORTANT REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:** Includes links for "SHORT FORM QUESTIONS", "C-1 Q2 TWELVE CONCEPTS CHECKLIST", "C-2 Q3 YP/O", and "C-5 Q3 VIOLENCE AND PERSONAL CONDUCT HANDBOOK".

- Available on the CER website from mid-December
- Alternatively, members may also email responses directly to delegates@alcoholics-anonymous.eu

Conference Recommendations

Conference Recommendations

- The Recommendations are published in the AA Service News Summer Edition in June, as well as the Final Conference Report
- Recommendations may provide advice and/or suggest actions that can be implemented at any of our service structure levels
- They may also lead to additional questions being asked for next year's Conference
- Thus the return of the 'Group Conscience' back to the groups through the Region Reps and GSRs is vitally important



Implementation of Recommendations

- The General Service Board shall be responsible for taking any action that may be required arising from the resolutions adopted by the Conference
- A report on such action shall be presented to the General Service Conference the following year
- The Fellowship shall be informed of action that may have been taken by means of publication in AA Service News
- The CSC should monitor progress of Conference Recommendations in accordance with its Terms of Reference



Ongoing Support

Ongoing Support

- The Delegates periodically send out communications to the CER Assembly via our website and the ArenA blog in support of the process – subscribe online [here!](#)
- If at anytime Members, Groups, or Intergroups have queries or need help, please do not hesitate to contact the Delegates directly
- Also, the Delegates are available both face-to-face and online to support Groups and Intergroups in discussing the GSC process
- The Delegates are here to aid the development of and response to Conference Questions, either at group consciences, business meetings, AA conventions, and/or dedicated Conference Questions workshops

Thank you!