



# General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain

## VIRTUAL FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 16 – 18 APRIL 2021

*Theme: The Missing Link*

**Final Report 2021**

General Service Office of AA  
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# FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2021

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# DIGEST OF AGENDA

## Friday 16 April 2021

Opening Session

Committee Meetings Commence

Nominations - Conference Chair 2022

Presentation of  
General Service Board Reports:  
Finance Presentation  
Literature Presentation  
Archives Presentation  
Membership Survey 2020 Presentation  
Safeguarding Presentation

Committee Meetings Continue

## Saturday 17 April 2021

Committee Meetings Continue

Open Forum with the presentation of  
the Safeguarding Document Presentation

## Sunday 18 April 2021

Presentation of Committee Reports

Election of Chair for the Fifty-Sixth General Service  
Conference 2022

Confirmation of  
Board Members Elect

Closing Address

# FRIDAY 16 APRIL

The Fifty-Fifth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain convened virtually on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 9 a.m. Originally scheduled for 17-19 April 2020 the annual Conference was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic opening the door to a historic first: the bringing together of all Conference attendees virtually to do the business of AA Great Britain.

Getting to this historic point did not happen overnight with the Conference Steering Committee making the difficult decision, after long and thoughtful consideration, not to hold a face-to-face Conference even with no alternative visible due to the pandemic.

Following that decision work began in earnest to organise a virtual Conference. Many training sessions were set up for Committees and two mock Plenary sessions were held with technical support offered for those who may require it. Each Committee was allocated a staff member to assist and give technical support if needed.

The Conference comprised 89 delegates from sixteen Regions; 22 members of the General Service Board, Marc D - Conference Chair (South West Scotland Region), Ranjan B the General Secretary and 10 members of staff from the General Service Office attended. Also in attendance were 7 Observers from the following countries:

Bulgaria	1
Ireland	2
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Romania	2

Total in attendance 131.

## **Opening of Conference by Marc D (Conference Chair 2021)**

Good afternoon Conference, my name's Marc and I'm an alcoholic.

It is an absolute privilege to be standing here as your Chair for Conference this year and wish to thank the Fellowship for the vote and the support from last year. I will officially open us up in the usual manner which I have heard at every meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

If you would like to, you may join me as I read the Preamble.

The AA Preamble:

*"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses*

*nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.”*

Before we proceed can we please observe a minute’s silence to focus why we are here today, reflect on this marvellous Fellowship and to spare a thought not only for those yet to find the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous but to all including ourselves for the trying year it has been.

Would all who wish please join me in saying the Declaration of Unity:

*“This we owe to A.A’s future: To place our common welfare first; To keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.”*

Thank you.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome each and every one of you here to the **55<sup>th</sup> Annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous 2021**. On the lead up to Conference I was having a debate within myself on what I should wear over the weekend. Anyone who knows me knows I’m not your formal type, and when asked if I would be wearing a suit I balked and said, “casual but smart, you won’t catch me in a suit”. This was still the case right up to a month prior to April last year, but then I realised it’s not about me in a suit, even if I do wear it well. It’s about my gratitude and respect for this beautiful Fellowship and why I’m able to stand here today and yes, able to wear it well! (This joke was never going to be that funny, that was until I spent money on suits only to find myself behind the screen of my laptop sitting in my house!) Special thanks to God for that one.

It really has been a different and at times difficult year for Alcoholics Anonymous and its members, but through it all, the Unity of this Fellowship has stayed intact and if anything, stronger than ever. No matter what life has thrown our way we have shown Faith and put in the action required. There is always a more positive future when we open our hearts and free our minds. This has not always been easy but with hope to share and love to give, we just keep going one day at a time.

I wish to extend my welcome further to our first-time delegates, our “red dotters”. It can become overwhelming coming to Conference for your first time more so this year as we are holding a virtual Conference, I found it really took my breathe away. If you can make sure your name says red dot in the participates list. This is so other members are aware it is your first time and can help you make the experience uplifting, enjoyable and to make sure you leave at the end and spread the word of just how much Conference has been beneficial and shows the rest of the “upside down triangle” in action. If there is anything I can help you with over the weekend, please do not hesitate to ask.

To all our returning delegates who keep coming back, thank you! Allegedly restored to sanity yet voted a Scot from the West as your chair this year, genuinely thank you!

A special welcome to our overseas guests and observers, thank you for your attendance, I’m sure the travel expenses this year were much better.

Thank you to our GSB members and GSO staff, welcome back and thank you for all your service year in, year out.

Lastly but by no means least I would like to thank the Conference Steering Committee for all their work and service they have put in over the past two years: Geoff, Johnny, Allan, Ranald, Zelma, Adelle and our board members Sandi and Brian. As well as Ranjan our General Secretary and Sharon our Conference Co-Ordinator, it has been very unfamiliar and extraordinary circumstances over the past year or so and you have all done extremely well to prepare and propose the 55<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference Agenda.

**I would now like to welcome our General Secretary Ranjan to read the Twelve Traditions, thank you Ranjan.**

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE MISSING LINK**

My name is young Marc, and I'm an alcoholic.

I say young because when I announce I'm an alcoholic it reminds me of the illness I will always have, so when I say young Marc, hopefully I will always be young! My home group is Troon Sunday night on the West coast of Scotland all welcome, weather permitted of course and nowadays as well as your local government guidelines!

The theme for this year's Conference is "The Missing Link" and boy I had a few. For any of you who were left puzzled to the origins of this it is the experience of a young alcoholic whose message is one of the many at the back of the Big Book 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. When I arrived into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous I was 21. A big part of me seeing a night through was in the early months of my recovery, reading the stories at the back of the book. The Missing Link was the first one that I opened my eyes and thought wow, wait a minute. It was identification at its best. It opened my narrow-minded thinking that I was different from the people I saw in meetings.

For a long time I saw myself as unique, you could say mal adjusted to life. I found it very difficult and hard work fitting in with my peers. I suffered with extreme highs and even worse lows. I wore my emotions on my sleeve to such an extent life would normally end in tears. My head was full of big ideas, yet it also told me I was incapable. But then I was introduced to alcohol, I had arrived. My entire view, feelings and thoughts changed. I no longer felt inadequate, my confidence grew, and I was able to live and take control of my life. I had found my missing link in life. I took this first drink of many at 11 years old and in no more than a decade I lost almost everything.

By 18 the only high I got was from a bottle of whiskey and the rest was no more and no less of an existence which I tried to finish with an overdose. I still had 3 more years of this life I thought I had control over. I would do anything for one more drink. Lie, cheat, steal, sell everything I had and was, it was killing me. The alcoholism's missing link which was alcohol was the most beautiful lie I had believed in. I hear people saying the obsession which centres in the mind makes you forget the horrible encounters with alcohol and tells us it will be different. This is very true but the root of that thought starts way before then, as I have experienced. The illness certainly is cunning, baffling and powerful. It normally kicks off with meetings being dropped, more time at work, family, friends, sitting idle, relationships. Then it starts. I feel my boss is being tough on me, I'm arguing with the wife, she's cheating on me, I'm not good enough, I'm incapable of working, I'm going to be replaced. I'm worthless, there's no point. Until the mind gets to the point of no return, as it drives the pain straight to my core and my spirit flickers and dims. It goes one of 2 ways by now, either the lie becomes so attractive I convince myself the ease and comfort is worth it or I press the self-destruct button and I'm like a tornado ripping through my life.

By April 2009 I stepped into my first meeting, Forgetting I had just tried to commit suicide previously I looked down on everyone. They were all older, much older. I joke about it now, but it was one of the reasons I went back out and drank. I couldn't stop comparing the fact that I was 21 and they were 41 at best. I survived by the grace of God and have been sober since the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2011. I had to cast aside any doubt of what A.A was and offered. I did and continue to do the suggestions which get spoke at most meetings. I attended as many as humanly possible, it becomes a little less due to 3 kids, a wife and a respectable job but meetings are still a must and I always remind myself that I wouldn't have what I have today if it wasn't for the grass roots of meetings.

The missing link that used to be alcohol has been replaced by service. I got my first taste of service at my first group I joined. I was asked to get people to share at the meeting, the group was low on members and it felt like I did this job for months and months. I grew tired and angry at doing the job but when looking back I am grateful for it. It forced me to go to more meetings in Ayrshire and beyond. I soon realised there was other young people in the fellowship who stayed and continue to go and enjoy meetings. It was the first time I truly felt if they can do it so can I! After I gathered some days under my belt a friend and I opened a group in our hometown which I remain a member of today. In the group I have done every position I could have and at present I am the treasurer. I had to practice tolerance and letting go a lot in my group, it is an amazing feeling when people join the group, but it felt terrible when they take over. I have had to learn to let "my baby" go, it belongs to the Fellowship not me.

As I said I had done every job possible in my group and that includes GSR. For me it is amazing for people to join a group and the simplest of jobs make the biggest difference, this could be a smile and the hand of hope being put out for the newcomer coming in the doors, to the members who set up early. But moving forward from that to the wider Fellowship truly is that missing link that some people shy away from. Meetings, sponsorship and having a home group I believe is a necessity for sobriety. Moving on to Intergroup and further enhances my sobriety ten-fold.

It certainly didn't happen overnight; I was unsure what exactly I could be of service for. After my first Intergroup meeting I was told about the YP project and how the Y.P.L.O was being introduced to the structure of A.A. My first thought was hope, hope that I could help others who were in the same position I was at 21 coming into the fellowship. I felt alone when I arrived, but I knew I could play some part on raising awareness that finding recovery through A.A doesn't have to wait till you do 20, 30 years of damage. It's here now. I mean if I could do any job it would be being young. But Intergroup is a funny thing. In my part of GB all that's required is a pulse and there's jobs going. My first was secretary, and I wanted to be the best secretary A.A has ever had. This was soon deflated when I realised only 50% of the room were reading my 5-star minutes. A learning experience Intergroup is. I took on the Y.P.L.O role and my service experience took on new and wonderful ground. Looking into ways of passing this message on and encouraging other young people to do service has really helped me become the person I am today. I have reached out in many ways from putting posters up in football grounds to school talks. Equally as important I have met some amazing friends in the Fellowship I would have probably never crossed paths with. Including the founding members of the Young People's Sub Committee, Jack, Dave, Gemma, Andrew and their first Trustee and good friend and former Board member Wullie. The impact they have had on my service is more than they will ever know, and I wish to thank them today as it's due to them as well as Helen, Amanda, Sandi and my sponsor Colin that I am standing here today.

I moved from Intergroup to Region and from there I became R.Y.P.L.O and a Conference Delegate. It was in this time I attended my first Y.P.L.O seminar, joined the online chat now service where an immense amount of 12 step work is being done. Chairing the Scottish Parliament Event in 2019 with the focus being on young people in A.A was such a privilege. Seeing a bunch of young members sharing and expressing how AA has worked for them and that alcoholism is just as pertinent to the younger person as it is to everyone else, it holds no age restrictions. There is such a passion boxed up inside the younger members of our growing Fellowship and all they need is the care and guidance I have received to now.

I joined the YP Sub Committee almost 3 years ago now and that passion shows through the work that has been carried out by the pioneers of it till now. There is so much work being done to carry the message to young people in Great Britain and I am so proud of all the work the members have done. Some of our work was passed by the Conference Steering Committee a couple of months ago and our new video and posters are available for P.I work now. I personally love the video it is a great piece of material to pass the message on.

And that brings me to Conference.

I remember walking into the main hall in York 5 years ago in complete awe of this wonderful Fellowship, I have been able to see the structure in its full works from the groups to Conference and back to the groups. It is then and truly then that you see that missing link that connects it all together. Playing my part for my Region and hoping to do them proud has its benefits for all.

Something that I see happen at Conference that, let's face it, shouldn't work! But it does! I believe through the 3 Ps, the people, the program and the Power it works. A room full of alcoholics here for one primary purpose to stay sober and help the still suffering alcoholic. We raise questions, we listen and at times tolerate, but at the end we all reach mature decisions. Before A.A the only mature decision I ever made was attending A.A and even then it was my mum's. If anyone in the fellowship asks what else they can do, there is always that question, have you tried Intergroup? Let's say there are over 100 recovering alcoholics here today, after Conference if that 100 go back to their groups and encourage one person into service and ten of them stay in service, that's a big difference.

I am going to finish my keynote address with a quote from The Missing Link, to remind us of how far we have come as individuals and as a Fellowship, and where we are still going:

*"Following this spiritual path made a major difference in my life. It seemed to fill that lonely hole that I used to fill with alcohol. My self-esteem improved dramatically, and I knew happiness and serenity as I had never known it before. I started to see the beauty and usefulness in my own existence, and tried to express my gratitude through helping others in whatever ways I could. A confidence and faith entered my life and unraveled a plan for me that was bigger and better than I could have ever imagined"*

#### **The Missing Link, Part II (1), Page 287**

Gratitude is best expressed. I have spent many days just going to meetings without fully immersing myself in all that AA teaches. The gratitude I have today is because my friends expressed it to me first. A friend answered the phone when no one else would. A friend put his hand out when I was hopeless, friends got around me when I felt alone, and friends showed me love when I had none. Whither we are making a half cup of coffee for a friend or guiding someone through the 12 steps

of recovery we express a little gratitude for what was so freely shown to us. Being here today, carrying the conscience of our Regions and making decisions to help shape AA for future members is one of the greatest ways to express our gratitude to the Fellowship and to our groups.

I wish to thank each and everyone here today as you hold that link between the A.A structure and the groups. Your service and commitment for something which was given freely shows by being here today. My hope by the end of this year's conference is that you do go back to your home group and share this link with those yet to walk the path of service.

Thank you.

## **INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Each committee has a chair and the chairs for this year's Conference have been absolutely amazing. Over the past 2 years my job at the Steering Committee meetings has been pretty straight forward and this has been because of the Committee Chairs, they have all done an amazing job building the agenda for this year's Conference.

I am now going to ask each Chair to introduce themselves:

Committee One:	Geoff C	Eastern Region
Committee Two:	Johnny J	South Midlands Region
Committee Three:	Allan M	East of Scotland Region
Committee Four:	Ranald Mac	Highlands & Islands Region
Committee Five:	Zelma K	Wales & Borders Region
Committee Six:	Adelle S	Scotia Region

I am now going to invite Zelma, our Alternate Chair, to give over the Conference Steering Committee Report.

## **CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Good morning, my name is Zelma K from Wales and Borders Region. I am the Alternate chair of Conference and my recovery date 27<sup>th</sup> March 2000.

In 2019 when I was elected as Chairperson for Committee 5 and became a member of the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) I thought that I would be serving on this committee for a year. Now two years later we are approaching Conference in quite a different way to the ones we have attended in the past. Due to Covid 19 our lives have changed so much and the small things we took for granted, a hug, sharing a coffee or meal, going to a meeting and just being with the ones we love have been restricted. We have adapted, changed the way we do things, embraced an online way of life. I have been to meetings in different countries and parts of the UK I have never visited. We have carried on with our Committee and Subcommittee meetings, chat now, telephone helpline and of course our home meetings so that the hand of AA is there whenever somebody reaches out for our help.

The Conference Steering Committee had our first meeting 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019. This was the first time we all got to meet as a Committee and get to know one another. This consisted of the Conference Chair Marc, six committee chairs, two Board members, the General Secretary and Sharon GSO.

I was elected as alternate Chair and Adele S as Secretary. We were reminded of a brief history of Conference, the 12 Concepts and the Conference charter, reviewed the Terms of Reference (TOR) and Mark put forward his theme for Conference 2020. We reviewed the Conference 2019 Matrix looking at activity already underway. At the September and October meetings we considered the Questions and background information of 55 questions that were submitted checking with our TOR as to which could be accepted. The identity of the senders always remained anonymous. Some of these were referred to the sender for further background information or to be slightly amended. The questions we were unable to accept were split between the six chairs who formulated responses as to the reasons for them not being accepted. The remaining 16 were then allocated to committees and we had our Questions ready for Conference 2020.

Then Covid 19 arrived and changed everything.

The staff at GSO looked into holding an online Conference contacting AA World Service for information on how the Canada/USA online Conference had proceeded. Once we realised that it would be possible the Delegates were then asked to vote on holding an online Conference in October 2020. The vote was as follows:

- 53 Delay Conference until April 2021, (58%) – votes cast.
- 26 in favour of the virtual Conference. (29%) – 33% of votes cast.

We had 12 abstentions. (13%)

This is a clear decision by two thirds majority of the votes cast.

We sent a letter confirming that all Delegates would continue e.g. if you were a first year at Conference you would remain that until you had served that term, 2<sup>nd</sup> year would remain as 2<sup>nd</sup> years etc. This would then allow anyone wishing to become a Board member in the future would have the correct term served if they wished to apply.

In the past year we, the Conference Steering Committee, have been working alongside our two Trustees and staff from GSO to enable us to incorporate the two Conferences into one.

We have reviewed the questions sent in for Conference 2021 and formulated responses to the senders of the questions not accepted. We have added extra questions to committees 1, 5 and 6. We met via Zoom in April, June, July, twice in September and October, Feb 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and March also keeping in touch with each other via email and phone.

We have also reviewed the short film and posters for Young People which were ready shortly after Conference 2019. The YP Subcommittee asked we release them as soon as possible and put to use. After some deliberation and checking the Traditions we agreed that these would be released for use. This will enable them to be put to use at a time when they are greatly needed.

As time went on it appeared that Covid 19 was not going away anytime soon and it would be difficult to postpone Conference any longer.

I know I feel much more confident about online Zoom meetings now thanks to the many training sessions provided by the staff at GSO and the patience they have shown me. Please remember to

be patient with people not everybody has the same level of online experience. Also, don't forget to look after the Red Dotters.

This extra time spent on the Conference Steering Committee has given me more time to get to know the others Marc D Chair of Conference, Committee Chairs: Adele S, (secretary), Johnny J, Allan Mac L, Ranald Mac C, Geoff C. and I wish to thank them for the time and work they have put in these last two years. Also, our Trustees Brian J and Sandi A. Sharon S and Ranjan B from GSO. It is a real pleasure working with you all.

The hope is that we can go ahead with physical Conference in April 2022 and if it is not possible to all meet in York then we will keep you updated. I thank you all for the service you do, especially in these difficult times.

I thought that if I gave up the drink my life would be boring and sad, how wrong I was. Today I share my life with a loving family, I have friends who I trust, and a home to live in.

For me Sobriety is an exciting journey.

## **ORIENTATION**

I would like to invite Ranjan B, our General Secretary, to share the Orientation. Thank you, Ranjan.

In the orientation Ranjan covered polls, breakout rooms, some technical information and how to get assistance if needed, renaming protocols and etiquette in online meetings.

## **EXPLANATION OF VOTING PROCEDURE**

As demonstrated during the training sessions on the lead up to Conference the voting procedure has changed this year, there will be no tellers or waving coloured cards in the air wondering who left for the toilet or who voted twice. The voting will be put on your screen and all you need to do is click the choice pertinent to yourself and the conscience of your Region. It should be that easy but of course mistakes can happen, in fact it may not just be voting twice or people going to the toilet that is the issue. Many things could happen when voting from the comfort of your own home. The hurdles are endless but do not fear, GSO have staff on standby if anyone has any concerns or problems.

## **CLOSING OF FIRST SESSION**

I would like to wish all our Conference delegates an enjoyable and fulfilling weekend. Being part of our Annual Conference is helping to shape our Fellowship for generations to come.

Like all business meetings I have attended I am always made aware and bring to the forefront of all the discussions our Traditions of unity especially Tradition 2.

*“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority- a loving God as He might express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”*

Also bearing in mind our 12 steps of recover and our 12 concepts of service.

Thank you all and I hope each and every one of you have a good weekend.

If you can and wish would you like to join me as we close session one with the Serenity Prayer.

***Serenity Prayer:*** *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.*

**Concepts Video** – a link was made available to the new Concepts video so delegates could view this over the weekend and a vote to approve this will take place on Sunday morning.

**Session One ended and, following a break, Committee proceedings commenced.**

## Friday 11.30am Second Full Session

Marc welcomed everyone back and opened the second full session of Conference at 11.30 am with a moment's silence and the Preamble, asked for nominations for Conference Chair 2022 before handing over to Nigel P, Chair of the Board, to introduce the General Service Board Report.

### **NOMINATIONS FOR CONFERENCE CHAIR 2022**

The under mentioned was proposed and seconded for the Chair of the Fifty-Sixth General Service Conference 2022:

Adelle S - Scotia Region

Adelle signified her willingness to serve and gave a brief summary of her AA service background. The formal election, by way of a modified Third Legacy procedure as recommended by Conference 1998, to take place at the final session of Conference.

### **General Service Board Report**

(Nigel P – Chair GSB)

Hello Conference, my name is Nigel, and I am, as always, an alcoholic and for a little while longer, the Chair of the General Service Board.

It is traditional at this point for me to give a short talk and speak of the amazing work done in the background by the General Service Board and the General Service Office that has led to this point. This by way of introduction to the Board members presenting their reports.

This year, in the interest of maximising the time available for the reports and Conference itself I will mostly forgo that pleasure.

There is just one thing I would like to talk about, and that is the Service Structure. It really is an inverted Triangle, with the Board, and me sitting at the bottom.

Thus, it was in March 2020 when the pandemic was starting to take hold, it wasn't the rest of the Board I contacted, but sitting in a hotel in Newcastle where we were attending a training day with solicitors, the Vice Chair Stevie and myself, contacted Marc the Chair of Conference and asked him what Conference wanted to do about it. We discussed a number of ways forward, but it was left to Marc and his Conference Steering Committee to decide on a way forward and we assured him of every assistance to enable their decision to come to become action.

That has eventually brought us to this point.

This has I know resulted in some difficult conversations and decisions for the Conference Steering Committee to make, and I know that they have done it all, with the best interest of you, Conference, and the Fellowship as a whole at their heart.

It will be interesting for all of us to see just how this works, but I'm sure if we too keep in mind the Statement of Unity, it will work. For that reason, I would ask you all, sitting in front of your screens to join me in saying that Statement

**A DECLARATION OF UNITY**  
**This we owe to A.A.'s future:**  
**To place our common welfare first;**  
**To keep our Fellowship united.**  
**For on A.A. unity depend our lives,**  
**And the lives of those to come.**

I hope you all get a great deal out of the next few days, and enjoy the work we do here.

## **Finance**

(Brian J – Honorary Treasurer GSB)

Good afternoon Conference, my name is Brian, I am an alcoholic and have the immense pleasure to be the Honorary Treasurer of the Fellowship. You should have received about two weeks ago a copy of the Finance Presentation that I would have given if we were in York with a request for questions on the report to be sent to GSO. The main points of the presentation are below:

### **Objectives**

1. To provide an overview of the 2019 – 2020 financial year compared to 2018 – 2019
2. Examine various financial trends in certain aspects of the Charity's finances

### **WOW What a Year**

As we are all aware of the disruption to the Fellowships financial framework due to Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with the restrictions placed upon the Fellowship due to the ever changing circumstances and Government guidelines.

Once again the members of the Fellowship have shown their true colours by adapting and innovating different ways to respond to this challenge, none more so than keeping the finances well within a workable criteria during the year coupled with a final boost in the last month which took us over last years total.

We as the Trustees of the Charity would like to give you a big **THANK YOU**.

### **GSB holds 3 accounts for the Charity**

1. Development Fund Account (Closed Account)
2. European Service Meeting Account (Closed Account)
3. General Open Account

Development Fund Account is serviced by the royalty's derived from the sale of the Hard Copy versions of the Big Book and The Twelve & Twelve books. This money is used to promote Primary Purpose activities and aid the AA infrastructure around the globe, mainly in Eastern Europe & Sub-Sahara Africa.

European Service Meeting Account is serviced by the European Fellowships to fund their bi-annual meetings which are held in York.

General Open Account is serviced by the contributions from the Fellowship, sale of AA literature and Investment revenue. It is used to carry out Primary purpose work within the UK as directed by the Fellowship by the deliberations of the Conference Committees.

- a. The GSB meets all the HMRC & Charity Commission legal and recommended stipulations relating to investments.
- b. In line with all other UK charities AA's investments are exempt from UK tax laws
- c. No Charity investments are held/managed in districts that fall under the 'tax avoidance' or 'politically unstable' umbrellas.

## **Investment Information**

### **Investment Company**

**Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA)** act on the Charity's behalf investing the money in their **Ethical Fund**

This fund is within the top five performing funds in this sector.

The Charity now takes an income from the investments, as opposed to accumulation of units.

### **Explanation of Charity's cash and investment holdings**

When the initial decision to invest AA's reserves, the rational developed & agreed was 25% in Cash, 25% in Savings & 50% Investment.

During 2020 it became apparent that the agreed base ratios were distorted, with only 13% being held as cash (Current Account), 62% as investments, and the saving element (Deposit Account) stable at 25%.

The board made the decision to sell some units to bring the ratios back into the agreed limits.

To this end the Charity sold 137,000 units reducing our holding from 537,653 units to 400,653 units. This action reduced our percentage investment holding to approximately 50%.

In way of explanation, when the units were sold this did not increase the Charity's total reserves by £351,542.

All that occurred was a readjustment of the percentages of the whole amount back to the desired percentages.

The Charity now hold 400,653 units in the Fund. Which at 30th Sept 2020 had a Market value of 2.658p per unit. Giving the Charity's investment a value at Sept 2020 of **£1,064,935**

Due to fluctuations within the Stock Market and continued volatility due to Covid-19 & Brexit this value will vary from week-to-week.

Notwithstanding the sale of the units this investment should still provide the Charity with an estimated regular income of approx. **£30,000 to £35,000 per annum.**

### **Sale of Investment Units**

Total Units Held (prior to sale)	537,653
Total Units Held (after sale)	400,653
Number of Units sold	137,000
Cash Value / Unit (at sale)	2.566p
Amount Realised	£351,542

### **Initial Purchase of Units**

Cost of 137,000 Units at 2.191 p/unit	£300,167
Surplus from sale of Units	£ 51,375

### **Income to the Charity**

Voluntary Contributions – Group & I/G;  
 Conventions; Legacies; Gratitude Week;  
 Personal (which can be gift aided);  
 Publications  
 Reserves as shares  
 Financial Accounts Interest

***The charity (GSB) has no control over any aspect of its income***

### **Unrestricted Fund I & E**

<b>Totals</b>	<b>Financial Year to 30 / Sept / 2020 £'s</b>	<b>Financial Year to 30 / Sept / 2019 £'s</b>
INCOME	1,392,220 A decrease of 34,198 on last year	1,426,418
EXPENDITURE	1,285,159 A decrease of 373,413 on last year	1,658,572
SUR / DEF	107,061 Movement before investments	<b>232,154</b> Before Move in investments

### **Income from Publications**

As shown in the accounts includes:-

Income from Share & Roundabout plus diaries and calendars and all other 'listed' literature sold

Income from publications was:- £438,208

### **Cost of Publications**

Represents all external printing of items on the Literature Stock list plus Share & Roundabout

Purchasing of Literature costs:- £191,797

Income from publications = £ 438,208 LESS Cost of Publications =£ 191,797  
 Surplus = £ 246,411

***Our literature stock is only of value to AA***

The literature surplus covers:

- Storage of literature
- Importing books from America & Cost of damaged literature
- Stationary, Internal Printing(ink) & Photocopying
- Postage & Packaging
- Staff and associated premises overheads
- P.I. Leaflets, Free Literature, Confidential Directory
- Group Treasurers Cashbook, Illustrated Literature Catalogue
- Conference Reports (Preliminary & Final)

Is this Surplus a Profit?

According to Bill W it is not.

“This net income to the groups and to AA’s General Services is actually the sum of a great many contributions which the book buyers make to the general welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. The certain and continued solvency of our world services rests squarely upon these contributions.”

**Concept Twelve; Warranty Two**  
**The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017 page 65**

**Expenditure Examples**

	2020 £	2019 £
Rent & Rates for GSO	136,995	151,583
Public Information & Free Literature	17,921	22,980
Roundabout, AASN & Share	19,442	59,862
Web Site	8,799	25,010
Professional Charges	30,881	25,096
Irrecoverable VAT	52,122	66,844
Telephones	26,701	30,129

These are just a selection of the total of GSO ‘s Expenses.

**Reserves Policy**

Concept 12 - Warranty Two: Sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve should be its prudent financial principle.

Ample Reserve held by the charity should exceed 1 year's expenditure.

Sufficient Operating funds are considered to be one quarter's expenditure.

Giving a total Free (Prudent) Reserve of over 1.25 year's expenditure.

AA & CC recommended practice.

**Prudent Reserve Calculation for 2019-2020**

Total Expenditure 2019 to 2020	£ 1,285,159
One Quarter’s Operating Fund	£ 321,290
Charity’s Required Total Reserve	£ 1,606,449

**Taken From 2019 / 2020 Audited A/c**

Net Assets	£2,516,642
(Which includes Restricted Funds of £102,545)	

LESS	
Warranty 2 level (W2)	£1,606,449
Capital over & above W2 (EXCLUDING RESTRICTED FUNDS)	<b>£ 807,648</b>
Capital over & above W2 2019	£ 176,868
Capital over & above W2 2020	£ 807,648
Increase on 2019 to 2020	<b>£ 630,780</b>

*This is the working capital that enables the GSB to fulfil its own primary purpose to the public, professionals and services to Alcoholics Anonymous without dipping into our prudent reserves and operating costs.*

This figure of £807,648 is distorted due to the Covid-19 pandemic which has led to a hiatus in the normal Primary Purpose work of the Fellowship, leading to an increased money flow from the Fellowship to GSO.

The large increase from last year's total is due mainly impart to the reduction in Travel and Accommodation costs normally incurred by the GSB, Sub-Committees and the Professional Presentations being carried out to fulfil the primary purpose. Coupled with the cost saving / actions taken by GSO staff.

**Capital over & above W2 2020** **£ 807,648**

Charity Funds already allocated to Fellowship Projects

75 <sup>th</sup> Convention + Borthwick Project (£(129,000+45,000))	£ 174,000
Literature Stock	£ 114,258
GSO normal spend on Primary Purpose	<u>£ 125,000</u>
Total Allocated Money	<u>£ 413,258</u>

Approximate Surplus in funds £ 394,390

This does not take into account any projects allocated at Conference 2021

## **The Way Forward**

Firstly, please allow me to look back over the previous 12 months with all its financial problems which has caused so much turmoil with the cash-flow within the Charity. Coupled with a loss of continuity within the Fellowship, some good has come from this experience namely the use of on-line (zoom) meetings.

This has allowed the GSB / Charity to become more confident in the use of more modern ways of communication, allowing for the GSB & Sub-Committees to meet more frequently, without the costs of travel & accommodation.

Following discussions it has been decided by the Board that Face to Face meetings will be reinstated when safe to do so. However, we will look to reduce their overall number and with our collective experience of online meetings move towards greater utilisation of this format allowing all areas of the GSB / Charity to meet more frequently.

The full Board meeting will continue to be Face to Face, to allow for full and frank discussions building cross discipline co-operation and team building to produce a stronger and more co-ordinated General Service Board.

The Executive committee meetings will be enhanced via Zoom meeting on a fortnightly basis. This will allow for any business which occurs between Board meetings to be discussed more quickly.

Coupled to these meeting there will be a monthly open session for Board Members who have questions / queries to have full access to the Executive Committee to try and offer avenues to explore and advice.

As stated already in the presentation. Last year has thrown up a distorted set of figures leading to the Charity a having a total of £807,648 above the Warranty 2 level. Due in-part to little or no Primary Purpose work being carried out during the pandemic by Regions, Intergroups & Groups.

Once government restrictions are lifted and the Fellowship re-start their Primary Purpose endeavours the amount of money forwarded through the service structure to the Charity will reduce.

Hopefully this reduction will be partially off-set by an increase in sales of AA literature.

As long as the GSB decides that the financial reserves remain at an acceptable level the charity will commit to the following four strategies:

1. Absorb all price rises and not pass them on to the Fellowship
2. Fund all projects without prioritisation
3. Support the development of AA overseas
4. Fulfil all services the Fellowship has requested

Any price rises relating to Groups when this approach is deemed non-viable will be implemented on an INCREMENTAL basis.

Cost-Saving actions being undertaken by GSB & GSO:

- GSO staff to continue working from home, attending the office as required. This reduces the amount of office space required, allowing for:
- Negotiations with our Landlord at GSO regarding rent & leases
- Reducing Sub-Committee face to face meeting, but increasing the online meeting to 6 per year, if required, with only two face to face meetings taking place reducing travel and accommodation costs.
- By holding Executive meetings online and opening an open session for Board members.

### **Price rises in literature & services**

The fall in value of the £ and Brexit considerations is already causing some literature prices to rise, as some suppliers source paper materials from abroad.

All literature subsidies will be maintained as far as possible e.g. free of charge literature including the Blue Structure and Service Handbooks

## **Funding of projects**

- The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention
- The Archives Digital Database  
This will require significant outlay of money.
- Continuing upgrading of the Website

All projects will be funded in spite of price rises.

Innovations in approaches to the GSB's primary purpose work will be welcomed from the GSB sub committees.

Seminars & Forums will not be cut back.

## **Support development of AA overseas**

Again, bearing in mind the drop in value of the pound. The GSB will maintain its level of contributions in real terms, to the:

- World Service Literature fund
- Sponsorship of the Sub Saharan Service Conference.
- The Charity will endeavour to fund the development of AA structures within developing Europe countries to enable their fledgling Fellowships to become self-sufficient.

## **Services to the Fellowship**

All services currently in place plus any subsequent services will be delivered without incurring further costs to Groups.

The suggested message to Individual members, Groups, Intergroups and Regions is the same as last year (in order of priority):

1. Increase personal contributions to the Pot (as affordable)
2. Meet your prudent reserve
3. Finance your local primary purpose work
4. When the priorities above are met make voluntary donations of any surplus monies via the Service Structure
5. If personal finances allow think about sending money directly to GSO via gift aid so GSO can claim your tax back from the Government.

We received no comments or questions so if anyone wishes to ask a question please do so now.

As there are no questions I recommend this report to you and I am glad you all accepted it.

I would just like to thank the Fellowship for giving me the privilege to have done this service and it has been the absolute highlight of my service career so far.

Thank you very much indeed.

## Literature

(Erik A)

My name is Erik, an alcoholic and GSB Trustee currently Chair of the Literature Sub Committee (LSC) and presumably everyone has looked at the presentation and report and covering letter which was sent out.

The PowerPoint presentation shows the changes made by the LSC to the literature items for the 55th General Service Conference since those items were circulated several weeks ago.

These changes have been made based on feedback from the Fellowship and discussion within the LSC. I am asking Conference to approve these items as now presented.

We are presenting four pieces:

1. Pamphlet: "Carrying the AA message to people who are deaf or have hearing loss"
2. Card: "Hints and Suggestions for 12th Steppers"
3. Pamphlet: "Growing into Service"
4. Pamphlet: "Now that you have stopped: 15 Points"

One and two are new revisions coming to Conference this year. Three and four are carried over from last year when Conference was cancelled.

All the items that were in the presentation did reflect all of the feedback received by March 31<sup>st</sup>. We met, we had a special meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April to review any last minute feedback that had been received and the items you are voting on are the items in the presentation.

Pamphlet: **"Carrying the AA message to people who are deaf or have hearing loss"**

***Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Card: **"Hints and Suggestions for 12th Steppers"**

***After full discussion Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Pamphlet: **"Growing into Service"** carried over from the last Conference

***After full discussion Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Pamphlet: **"Now that you have stopped: 15 Points"**

***Conference approved the above proposal with a two-thirds plus majority.***

Thank you very much Conference.

## **Archives**

(Thomas Baldwin – Non Alcoholic Trustee)

As my name indicates I am a Non-Alcoholic Trustee (NAT) and this is my first Conference so for me this is an extraordinary occasion. I have never been to a gathering of quite this scale and kind and I do think you are all tremendous people and I won't say anymore than I am blown-away by it so far with everything working and the record of service you all bring to this Conference.

I have tried to set out in my presentation the present state of affairs and the fact that you can, not at the moment by the AA website but by going to the catalogue system of the Borthwick Institute, look at the catalogue, as it stands at the moment, for the AA Archive. We have a plan for the future to renew our relationship with the Borthwick Institute, we need to work out the detailed rewriting of Chapter 11 of the Service Handbook which governs things such as access to the archives and the Archives Team needs to work with the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Team to make sure we put on a good show at the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention.

The main points of the presentation are:

### **The AA Archives Borthwick Project**

The origins of this project go back to the Conference Committee 5 resolution 2016 which recommended that the Board:

'conduct a feasibility study to improve access to the Archive including but not limited to, the following means':

- (a) Digitisation
- (b) Online catalogue (and others)

The General Service Board then entered into negotiations with the Borthwick Institute at the University of York which led to a decision to transfer the GSO AA Archive to the Borthwick Institute where the papers could be held under proper archival conditions, sorted and catalogued, and selected digitization could be undertaken.

This transfer is a central part of the Borthwick Project which was agreed in May 2018.

This is a three year project to be undertaken by a qualified archivist specially appointed for the project.

An archivist, James Neill, was then appointed and started work in November 2018 – so his three year appointment comes to an end in November 2021.

It is worth emphasizing that although the Archive is now located at the Borthwick Institute, it remains the property of the GSB, which is AA's registered charity.

The main aims of the project are:

- The proper packaging of the existing archive,
- The creation of a full catalogue of it which is to be made available online,
- The development of a new provision for access to the archive which takes account of data protection rules,

A digital archive for 'born digital' materials,  
Outreach work to publicise the archive,  
The digitisation of selected materials if time allows.

### **Progress Report: (i) Packaging and Storage**

- Most of archives materials transferred from GSO at Toft Green to the Borthwick Institute have been repackaged and stored under proper archival conditions.
- A recent major addition is group history material, which includes records of closed groups deposited with the GSO.

### **Progress Report: (ii) Catalogue**

- The catalogue has been developed in an online format and continues to be updated, amended and edited.
- The online catalogue can be accessed from the Borthwick Institute – <https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/aa>
- It has always been the intention that there should be a link to the catalogue from the AA website, and this should be established soon.
- The catalogue is currently divided into 13 major categories of materials.
- Each category (e.g. service structure) is then divided in turn into further sub-categories (e.g. regions), which is divided again until one reaches folders with specific papers – e.g. minutes for some period of time.
- What one cannot find online are the specific documents – e.g. minutes themselves. For of course access to these is protected by general GDPR rules and the special requirements of AA anonymity.

### **Access**

- Access to papers and other materials in the GSO Archive is currently governed by the rules set out in Chapter 11 of the Service Handbook, which distinguish between four categories – 'General' (i.e. open to public access), 'Supervised access', 'For Research Only', 'Confidential'.
- These categories and associated rules need to be modified to take account of the transfer of the GSO Archive to the Borthwick Institute and of new legislation such as GDPR (General Data Protection rules).
- The Archives SC and the GSB have been working on new rules, though some of the work has been delayed by the fact that the sub-committee has not been able to visit the Borthwick Institute because of Covid.
- The sub-committee expects to be able to complete this work and include it in a revised version of Chapter 11 of the Service Handbook which can be put to 2022 Conference in time for approval.

### **Digitisation**

- Although digitization of elements of the archive has always been part of the Borthwick Project, priority needed to be given to packaging and cataloguing the materials transferred to the Borthwick Institute.

- Now that the bulk of that work has been completed, the Borthwick AA archivist is giving more attention to digitization, though here too work has been delayed because of covid restrictions.
- The Archives SC has agreed that priority should be given to
  - (I) Fragile materials – e.g. papers that are not in good condition
  - (II) Photographs and other pictures which are especially useful for exhibitions.

In undertaking this work the Archives SC will work closely with the new AA web team, so that images which will help to illustrate the historical development of AA GB can be added to the web.

So the Archives SC expect that digitisation will be an important part of the further development of the Borthwick Project.

Equally, however, the SC are well aware of the importance of protecting the core tradition of AA anonymity, which places strict limits on access to many AA papers and thus qualifies one reason for digitising them.

### **Promotion and Engagement**

- One of the original goals of the Borthwick Project was to help to promote the AA's archive and make it more available both to the Fellowship, and to the wider public.
- Because of covid restrictions on public meetings and travel this work has been very difficult.
- However, now that there does seem to be an end to most restrictions by July we can begin to plan for some public events.

### **The Future**

- Now that the current 3-year contract with the Borthwick Institute is coming to an end, GSB needs to plan an ongoing relationship with the Borthwick which includes further additions to the AA Archive and arrangements for access to the archive there. It is worth adding that the current contract states that:

‘Additional deposits made to the Alcoholics Anonymous Archive after completion of the cataloguing project will be accessioned, packaged and listed by Borthwick archivists at no additional cost to Alcoholics Anonymous’.

- So the Fellowship can be confident that there is no commitment to any substantial long-term expense in maintaining the AA archive at the Borthwick Institute.

### **Future work for the Archives Sub-Committee**

- We have three main tasks for the next few months –
  - (i) To work with the GSB concerning the new relationship with the Borthwick Institute
  - (ii) To prepare a revised draft of Chapter 11 of the Service Handbook in time for submission to Conference 2022
  - (iii) To liaise with the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee concerning the preparation of an exhibition at the convention and a video for showing there.

## **The Archivist Network**

Last, but not least, I would like to commend to this Conference, and to the Fellowship generally, the tremendous work that is carried out by AA archivists – typically regional or intergroup. They do a magnificent job in maintaining local AA Archives, and I always enjoy the meetings of the Archivist Network – online or in person in York.

The Archives Sub-Committee is greatly strengthened by the presence of several experienced archivists, whose role will be especially important as the sub-committee undertakes the work just mentioned. We could certainly do with some more members, so I would like to take this opportunity to invite more applications from the Fellowship to join the sub-committee.

## **AA Membership Survey 2020**

(Mani Mehdikhani– Non Alcoholic Trustee)

Good afternoon Conference, my name is Mani Mehdikhani and I am a non-alcoholic Trustee and this is my fourth Conference. The Survey presentation was sent out to delegates a few days ago. It's been a very difficult year, we were delayed in the implementation of the survey by about six months and the original plan had been to do a postal survey but just as we had finalized the survey the pandemic occurred which threw our plans into disarray.

The decision was made to try an online survey and the results in my presentation are a selection of the data we have collected from the questionnaires and there is a lot of information we are going through at the moment which we are still analyzing and peoples' comments in the comments boxes that I think are valuable and need to be looked at.

I would like to give a big thanks to everyone involved in the survey – the Survey Sub Committee, Trustees who support it and the General Service Office staff and of course the Fellowship who returned these questionnaires.

The main points of the presentation are:

### **AA Membership Survey: a historical overview**

- AA has conducted regular (roughly every 5 years) surveys of the Fellowship since 1972
- A key aim has been to carry the message to professionals and to obtain about the status of membership to help inform future decision making
- Surveys conducted on behalf of AA by outside organizations including Marketing Means (since 2005)
- Survey items have changed over time but a number have remained consistent in all 10 waves of the Survey:
  - Demographics of the membership (age, gender);
  - Length of membership in AA
  - Length of sobriety
  - Frequency of attending AA group meetings
  - How members first heard about AA

## Survey method: Marketing Means

- Survey method has been broadly similar since 2005:
  - **Phase 1:** survey of all group secretaries and GSRs. Use of stratified random sampling; i.e. 250 of all responding groups above were selected to participate in Phase 2.
  - **Phase 2:** survey of AA members, via group secretaries and GSRs
- Key changes to the method in 2020, and due to Covid 19:
  - inclusion of CER for the first time, piloting online survey

And subsequent to Covid 19

- questionnaires sent out primarily online (i.e. email) at both Phase 1 and 2 for GB and CER
- approach potentially allowed for **total sampling** (ie *census* as opposed to *survey*)
- Previous surveys conducted under the guidance of special fixed term 'working groups' appointed by the GSB
- As instructed by Conference the GSB, for the first time formally inaugurated a full Subcommittee devoted to undertaking the survey in 2018
- The subcommittee adapted the 2015 Survey instruments as templates and a number of the previous items were retained. However, several new questions of interest were identified for exploration, for example:
  - What role does the concept of '**Higher Power**' play in members' recovery? How do members define higher power and spirituality?
  - What role does **Service** play in members' recovery? How is service defined? The inclusion of a validated psychometric questionnaire (*Service in Sobriety*)

## The Survey & the Covid 19 Pandemic

- The Survey SC met at the York HQ on 31 January / 1 February 2020 and finalized the questionnaire for the 2020 survey and prepared to instruct Marketing Means to proceed with implementation ...
- ... that same weekend only a few miles away in a hospital in York the first case of Covid 19 in the UK was being reported; 23 March 2020 we went into lockdown
- Back to the drawing board: the original plan / method for survey no longer viable. A great deal of uncertainty about the future; wait for a return to 'normal'?
- The Survey SC decided to proceed by adapting the survey further to include items on the impact of Covid 19 on the fellowship.

## **The Results**

### **Response Rate**

Among the groups actually emailed (3,080), 35.5% took part in the 2020 survey. This compares with 42% (1,531) to postal version of the survey in 2015.

Considering the response rate from only those groups emailed, the response rate from GB is lower than the last two rounds of postal surveys of the groups on 2015 and 2010, but similar to that from the 2005 postal survey (the first round to have been conducted by Marketing Means).

Of 1,094 groups that returned a questionnaire at Phase 1, and were invited to take part on the second Phase, 427 did so, a group response rate of 39%. Most, however, did not return questionnaires from more than 1 or 2 members, giving a total of 1,784 completed Phase 2 questionnaires.

### **Attendance**

There are a number of potential sources of error when estimating attendance numbers across all AA groups based on the survey results only. Only 22% of all groups in GB responded, and 8% of all in CER. Those groups that did not respond may have had different characteristics from those who did respond, for example in terms of reported group size, though we have no reason to suspect that any systematic bias exists.

For the 2020 survey, we have the added difficulty that not all groups in each region were emailed a survey invitation (59% of those in GB and 47% of those in CER). It should also be noted that the numbers discussed here can only ever be an estimate of membership numbers as we cannot identify individual members' attendance, i.e. some attending multiple groups could have been multi-counted.

### **Comparisons with 2005/2010/2015 – attendance and membership**

Based on total attendance reported in GB only, 2015 saw an average of 18.2 group attendees compared with 18 in 2010 and 19 in 2005. The average value of 17.3 for 2020 is therefore slightly lower, though within the 95% error margins of previous results.

The number of groups whose details were provided by AA was 3,630 in 2005, giving a total of 68,970 attendances, 3,978 in 2010, giving a total of 71,604 attendances, and 3,651 in 2015, giving a total of 67,840 attendances. In all cases, these are lower than corresponding GB total of 81,460 derived for 2020, though very likely due to the larger number of GB groups recorded in 2020.

The questions relating to attendance were changed in 2010 by AA GB as it was felt that the former use of 'home members' and 'visitors' might be confusing for group secretaries. Instead 'attendees' and 'regular attendees' were used to measure attendance. Therefore, the only question that is directly comparable between 2005 and the 2010 and 2015 surveys is 'total attendances'. Using this would, however, make no distinction between alcoholic and non-alcoholic attendances (e.g. GPs, support workers etc). 2005 and 2010 used 'home group' attendances to calculate membership.

## Summary of attendance figures (inc. mean data)

- Total no. attended at last meeting: 17847 (GB) & 636 (CER)
- Average attendance at last meeting: 17.3 (GB) & 7.7 (CER)
- Scaled up *estimates* of total attendance based on above: 81460 (GB) & 8070 (CER)
- Total *estimated* membership of AA: 24250 (GB) & 2490 (CER)
- Total no. of attendees considering this their home group: 9865 (GB) & 658 (CER)
- Average no. of attendees considering this their home group: 9.7 (GB) & 77.6 (CER)
- Total no. newcomers per month: 5739 (GB) & 155 (CER)
- Average no. newcomers per month: 5.6 (GB) & 2.7 (CER)
- Scaled up *estimates* of total no. of newcomers per week based on above: 6300 (GB)
- Total no. attended most recent online meeting: 12987 (GB) & 524 (CER)
- Average no. attended most recent online meeting: 18.2 (GB) & 14.2 (CER)
- Scaled up *estimates* total no. attended most recent online meeting: 58760 (GB) & 6420 (CER)
- Total no. attended online meeting from 'outside of local area': 2303 (GB) & 184 (CER)
- Average no. attended online meeting from 'outside of local area': 4.9 (GB) & 7.7 (CER)
- Total no. attended online meeting from 'outside your region': 1636 (GB) & 157 (CER)
- Average no. attended online meeting from 'outside your region': 3.7 (GB) & 6.1 (CER)
- Total no. attended online meeting from 'outside other country': 874 (GB) & 105 (CER)
- Average no. attended online meeting from 'outside other country': 1.9 (GB) & 3.9 (CER)

## Characteristics of the Membership

In 2020, the proportion of GB members taking part in the membership survey that were female was only just short of half (47%). This was comfortably the highest proportion of females recorded in any wave of the survey. In CER, females accounted for the majority of responses (53%).

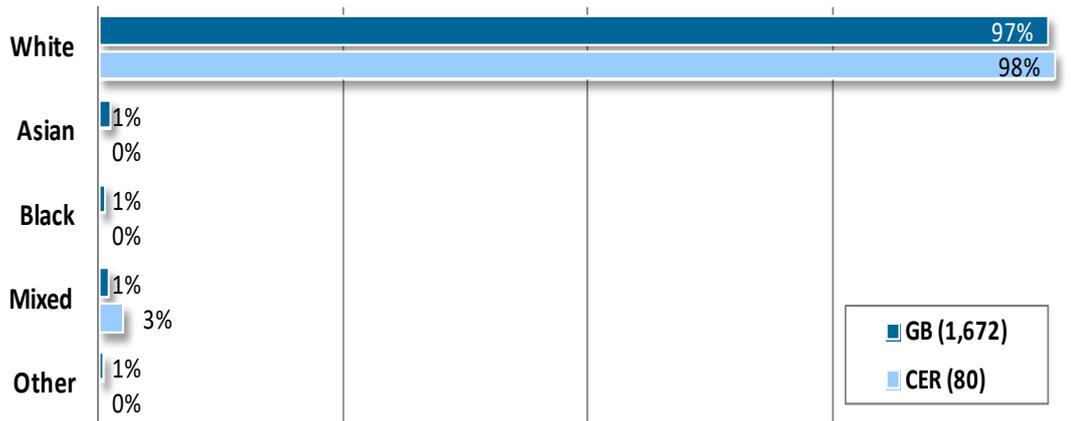
The GB population gender split is 51.1% female and 48.9% male, so females still form a lower proportion of AA members in GB.

The 2020 membership survey has the oldest age profile of any AA GB survey to date, despite the mainly online method of the 2020 survey. One in three respondents were aged over 60, while for the first time more than 60% of respondents were aged over 50.

Comparing the GB profile with CER, the latter sample having a significantly younger age profile. This was reflected in the mean ages of the two samples. The mean age of GB respondents was  $54.7 \pm 0.3$ , and that of CER respondents  $50.6 \pm 1.4$ .

Age profile of AA members taking part in the survey differs significantly from the UK profile, with a much higher proportions in the age ranges 51-60, but much lower than the GB profile in the 16-30 age range.

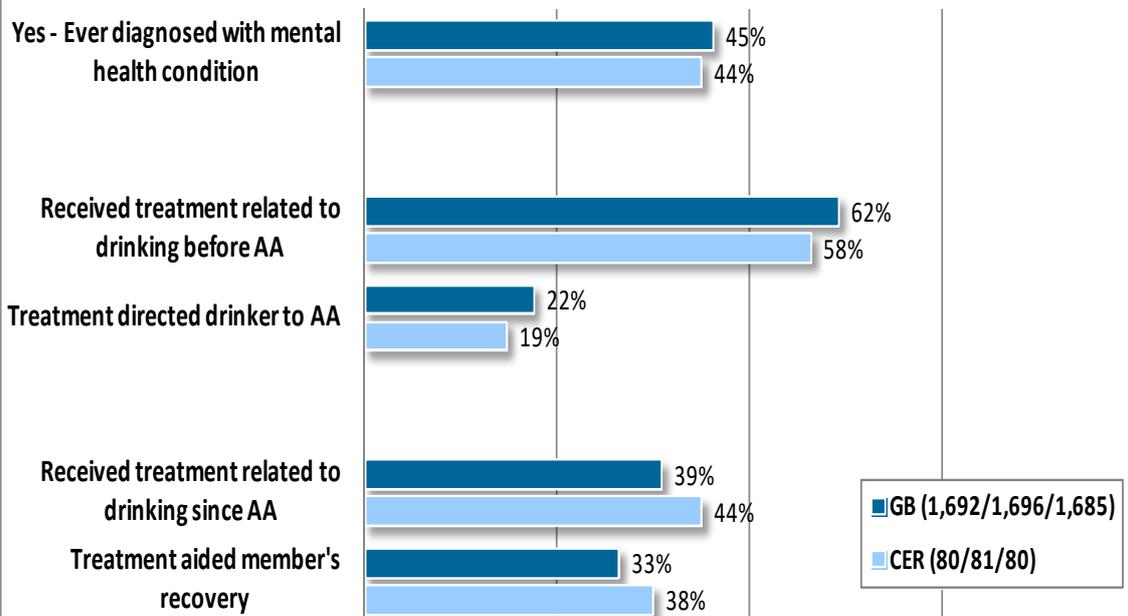
### Q22 What is your ethnicity?



Base: All members who gave a valid response

Ethnicity	All	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese /Other
Census 2011 (GB)	100.0%	88.4%	1.4%	6.6%	2.8%	0.9%
AA GB survey 2020	100.0%	96.8%	1.0%	1.2%	0.6%	0.5%
AA GB survey 2015	100.0%	95.9%	2.2%	1.3%	0.4%	1.1%

### Q24a Ever diagnosed with mental health condition other than alcoholism?/ Q25a Before AA, ever received treatment /counselling related to your drinking?/ Q26a Since AA, ever received treatment/counselling related to your drinking?



Base: All members who gave a valid response to Q24a, Q25a, Q26a

- Just under half (45% GB/44% CER) had ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition other than alcoholism.

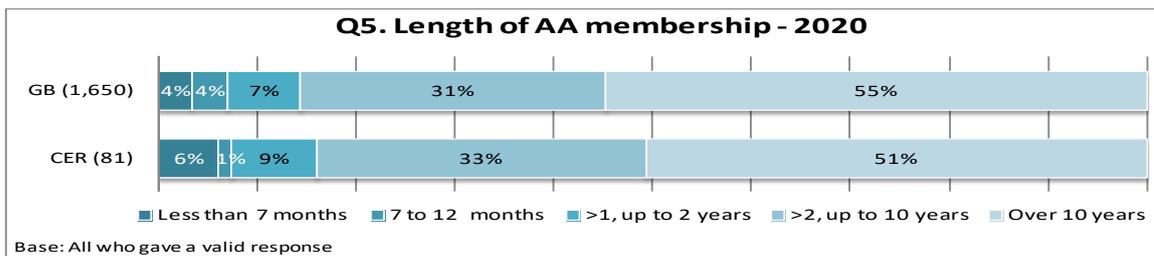
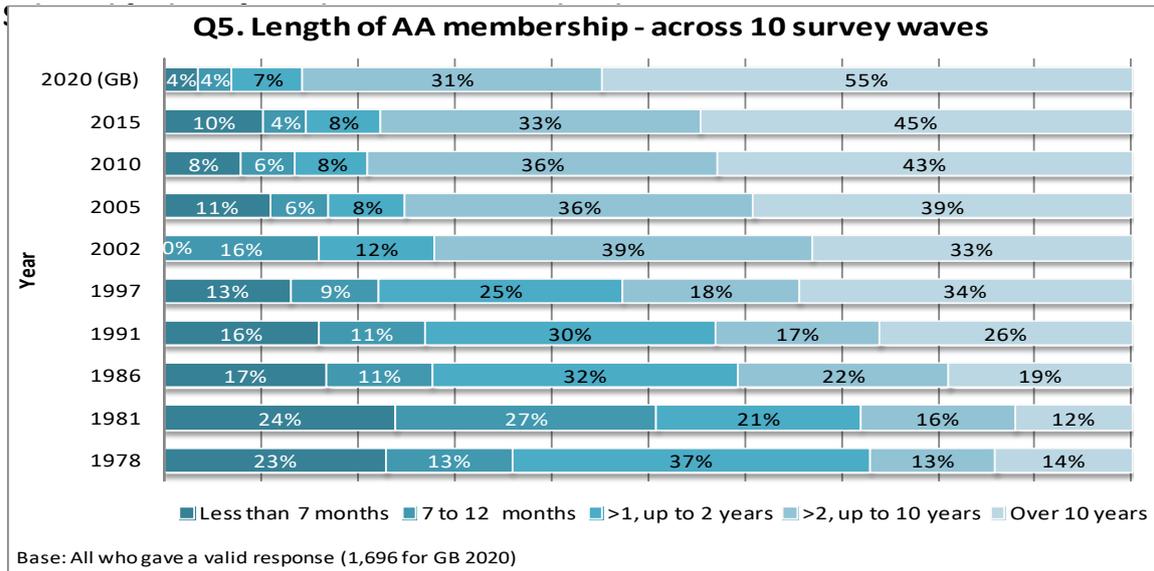
- Females were significantly more likely than males to have been diagnosed with such a condition (51% vs 40% respectively).
  - Members in the youngest two age groups were also significantly more likely to have been diagnosed (62% of 16-40s and 57% of 41-50s, but only 43% of 51-60s and 31% of over 60s).
  - Those who had been sober for the shortest time were significantly more likely to have been diagnosed with such a condition (57% of those sober for up to 6 months), as were those who had come to AA for the shortest time (57% of those who first attended AA up to 12 months ago). Newcomers since March 2020 were also more likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health condition other than alcoholism (57% of newcomers vs 45% of others).
  - Members with a disability were also significantly more likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health condition other than alcoholism (61% vs 41% of others).
  - The group of members with high AAH scores were, slightly but significantly less likely than others to have been diagnosed with a mental health condition (44% vs 49% of others).
- By far the most likely type of condition that members had been diagnosed with was **depression** or a **depression disorder**, which affected 73% of those who had been diagnosed with a mental health condition. Nearly two in five (39%) of those with a mental health condition other than alcoholism had suffered from **anxiety**. The only other condition mentioned by more than 6% of respondents was **PTSD/CPTSD**, by 11%.
  - Just under two-thirds of members (62% GB, 58% CER) had received treatment or counselling related to drinking before coming to AA.

#### Other indicators:

- Working status: 58% in GB (68% in CER) in full time employment. 26% in GB (15% in CER) were retired. Results similar to national statistics (2011 census) for GB respondents and 2015 survey.
- Disabilities: 81% in GB (81% in CER) reported no disabilities. Result similar to national statistics (Family Resources Survey 2018-19) for GB respondents and 2015 survey.

#### Summary

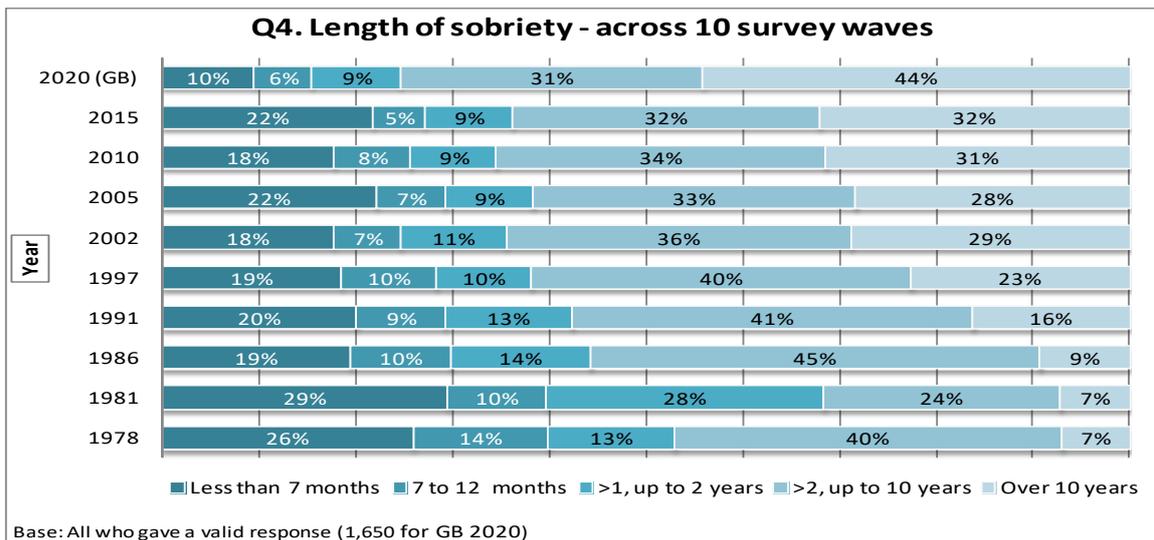
- Trends in demography:
  - increasing number of female members from 22% in 1972 to 47% in 2020
  - age profile: 36% under 40 and 10% of members over 60 in 1978; 14% under 40 and 33% of members over 60 in 2020
  - Ethnicity: 97% membership identified as 'white' (GB); compare with 88.4% nationally identified as white in 2011 census; Asians in particular appear to be underrepresented

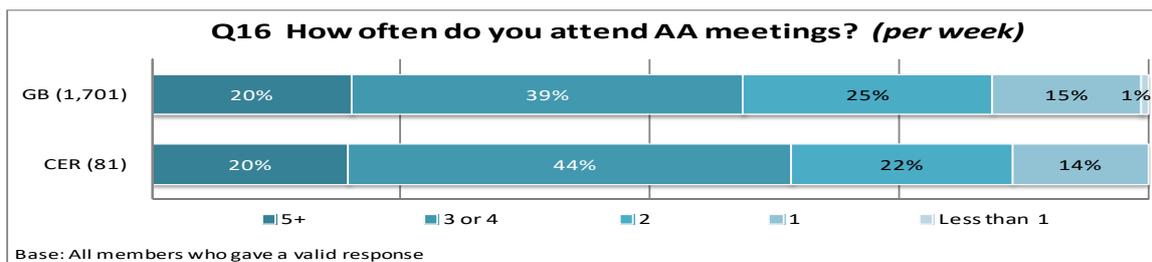
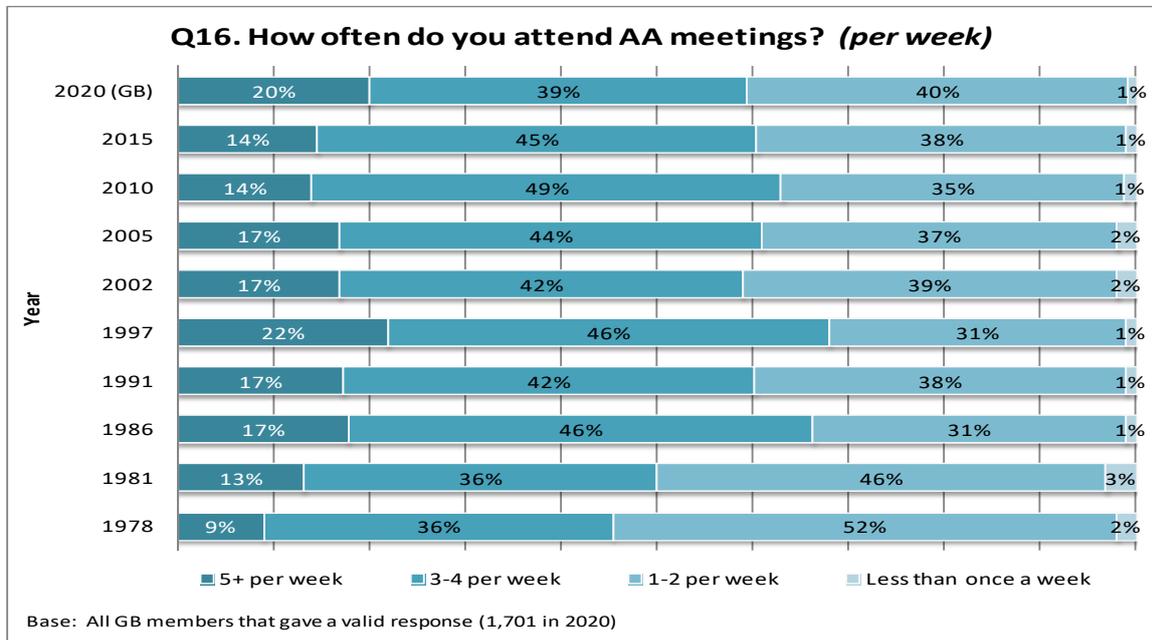
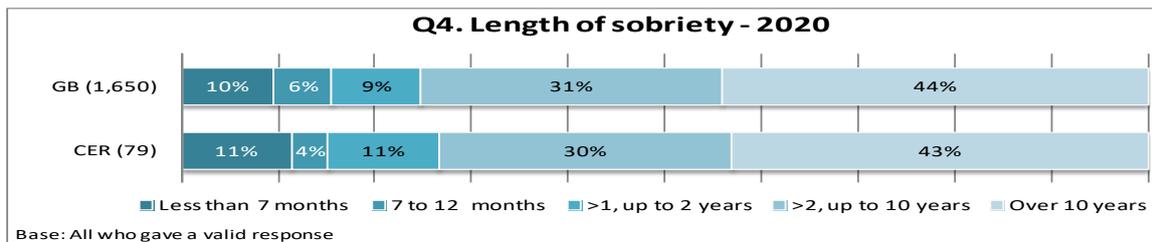


This was the first wave of the survey in which most of the respondents (55%) had first come to AA more than 10 years ago, a significant increase from the corresponding figure of 45% in 2015. A further 31% had first come to AA between two and 10 years ago.

The 2020 results continue a consistent trend of an ever-increasing proportion of long-term members (i.e. over 10 years since first attended). In 1978, less than one in seven respondents had been members for over 10 years.

At the other end of the scale, while just over a third of members (36%) in the 1978 survey had been attending meetings for no more than a year, this diminished to well below one in 10 (7%) in 2020.





The majority of members in 2020 attended three times or more per week (59%), exactly the same proportion as had done so in 2015.

The proportion attending five or more times a week had risen significantly since 2015 from 14% to 20%.

Only 1% of members stated that they attend meetings less than once a week.

The mean number of attendances per week in the 2020 GB members survey sample was 3.4 ± 0.1 compared with 3.0 ± 0.1 in 2015.

Overall, the more frequently that members attended AA meetings, the shorter the time that they were likely to have been sober. For example, a significantly higher proportion of respondents attending 5+ times per week had been sober for less than 7 months (23%) than was the case among respondents attending only three or four times per week (8%) or once or twice per week (5%).

Among those attending once or twice per week, the mean length of sobriety was  $13.6 \pm 0.4$  years. This reduced to  $10.9 \pm 0.4$  years for those who attended three or four times per week, and to  $8.0 \pm 0.6$  years for those who attended 5+ times per week.

## Summary

- Trends in Length of Membership, and Length of Sobriety
  - In 1978 around 14% reported over 10 years of membership; in 2020 that figure was 55%
  - In 1978 around 7% reported over 10 years of sobriety; in 2020 that figure was 44% (a jump from high 20s and low 30s in the previous 4 surveys)

## Impact of Covid 19

In GB, nearly a quarter (24%) managed to set up online in no more than three days but most took between a week and a month.

In CER, groups went online sooner than in GB, with 27% ready almost without delay, and nearly half (47%) online within three days. A further 32% took a week to go online.

Among those who did not set up an online meeting, the reason given most often was technical, with more than half in GB (58%) citing a lack of technical/IT skills, while 28% noted their lack of access to IT hardware or software.

More than one in three (36%) nevertheless stated that they felt that online meetings were no replacement for face-to-face meetings, while nearly as many (32%) had concerns over privacy/anonymity.

A significant proportion (14%) also added a comment, not included in the questionnaire's listed answer options, that there were enough other online meetings available for them not to need to take their own group online. It should also be noted that only 1% stated that they had not switched their own group online due to merging with another group.

Among GB groups that were running online, nearly 90% were collecting Tradition 7. Nearly half were using each of the three ways suggested in the questionnaire, with direct bank transfer to GSO slightly the most likely (49%), followed by members saving in their own pots at home for a return to physical meetings (45%) and using a group electronic payment account (44%).

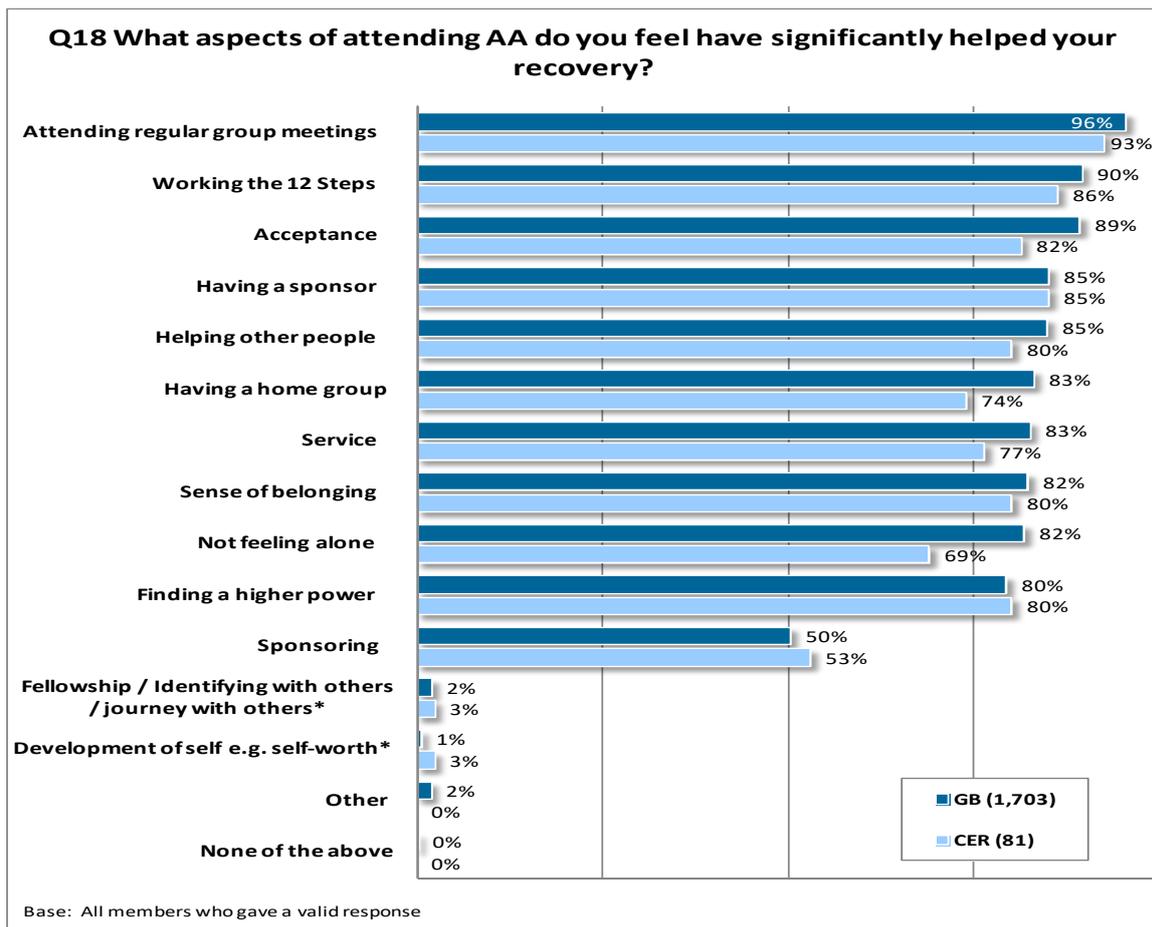
The proportions using the latter two methods above were very similar in CER, but CER groups were only half as likely to have individuals making direct transfers to GSO (24%). CER groups were also slightly more likely not to be collecting the 7th Tradition at all (18%).

## Summary

- Only 18% in GB had experience of online platforms before Covid 19; far higher percentage (54%) had similar experience in CER
- 93% able to change to online format since first lockdown

- Technical issue main obstacle to organizing online format for meetings; some members also cited perceived inadequacy of online compared to f2f and issues around anonymity
- Main difficulties identified by those going online were (in order of difficulty) around 'helping newcomers', 'sponsoring members', 'doing service' and 'carrying the message'
- 30% in GB and 37% in CER felt groups' financial situation had worsened since suspension of in person meetings
- Groups (GB/ CER) have continued to make contributions to Intergroup (52%/ 37%), GSO (20%/ 25%) and Regions (2%/ 14%).

## AA & Recovery



Every one of the 9 aspects listed in the questionnaire that have been included in the last three waves of the survey was selected by more in GB in 2020 than had done so in either the 2015 or 2010 surveys.

There were no significant differences between GB and CER respondents in regard to any of the aspects listed. The only one of the aspects in the questionnaire not to be selected by a very large majority of members as having significantly helped their recover was sponsoring, selected by only half in both GB and CER. This was an aspect included for the first time in the 2020 survey.

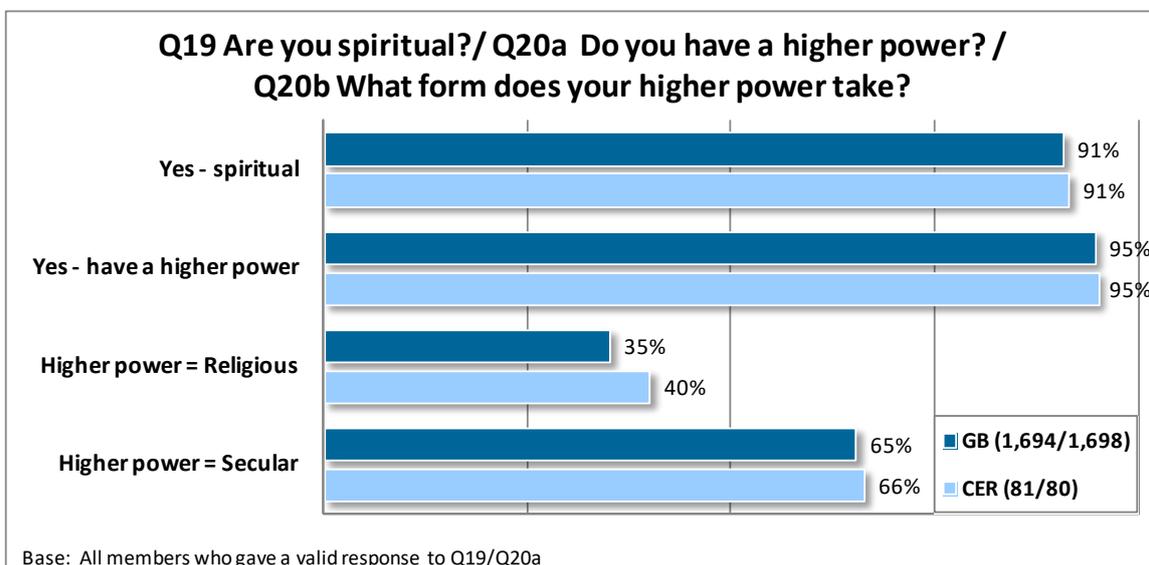
- Sponsoring was significantly more likely to be selected by older members (59% of over-60s), those who had been sober for longest (only 10% of those

sober for no more than 12 months, but 70% of those sober for more than 10 years), and those who had been members for longest, given by 64% of those who had come to AA for more than 10 years).

### Summary

- Members’ views of 9 hypothesized aspects of AA that were believed to have contributed to their recovery were at least similar (or higher) to responses in the previous 3 waves of the survey with ‘attending regular meetings’ identified as among the most significant by 96% of members in GB and 93% in CER
- ‘Service’ (83% / 77%) and ‘finding a higher power’ (80% / 80%) were also endorsed as key contributors to recovery by large majorities in GB and CER.
- Sponsoring (a new item in 2020) was endorsed by around half of respondents (50% in GB and 53% in CER) as a key contributor to recovery
- Other factors such as fellowship, identifying with others, self development and increased in self worth were endorsed by between 1% and 3% of the respondents

### AA Members’ views about spirituality



This was significantly lower among those who had been sober for only up to 12 months (81%),but rose to 94% of those sober for>10 years. Similarly, while only 78% of those who first came to AA in the last 12 months declared themselves spiritual, this rose to 93% of those who first came to AA >10 years ago.

The same applied for Newcomers who had joined since the Covid-19 lockdown, only 77% of whom declared themselves spiritual, vs 91% of other members.

An even higher proportion (95%) felt that they had a higher power.

Again, this was significantly lower among those who had been sober for only up to 12 months (88%),but rose to 96% of those sober for>10 years. While 89% of those who first came to AA

in the last 12 months declared themselves spiritual, this rose significantly to 96% of those who first came to AA >10 years ago.

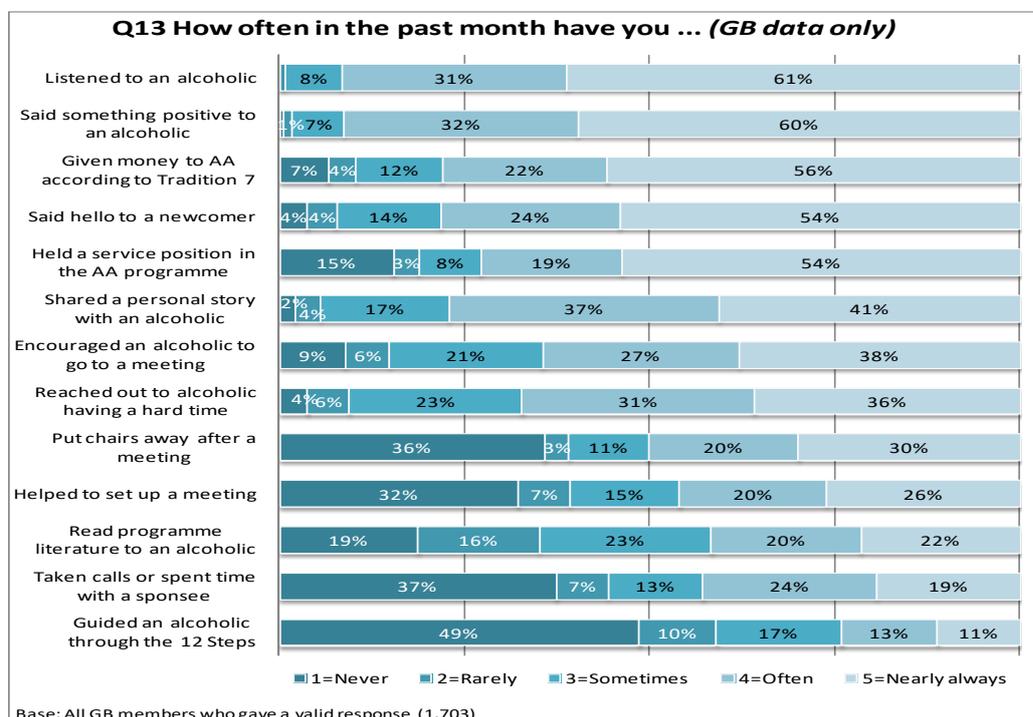
The same applied for Newcomers who had joined since the Covid-19 lockdown, only 86% of whom felt that they had a higher power, compared with 95% of other members.

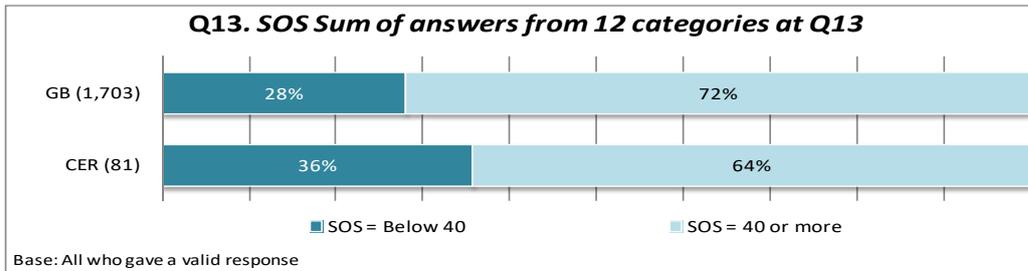
Just over a third of members (35% GB and 40% CER) stated that they had a higher power of a religious form, but having a higher power of secular form was more likely, nearly two-thirds of both GB and CER member stating this. Only 6% stated that their higher power was both religious and secular.

## Summary

- Concepts of Service (using Service in Sobriety instrument) and Higher Power were explored in more details:
- Higher power (HP);
  - In both GB and CER samples 91% viewed themselves as being spiritual and 95% had a higher power
  - 35% in GB and 40% in CER cited a religious foundation to their HP
  - 65% in both GB and CER cited a secular foundation to their HP
  - 6% said that their HP is both secular and religious
  - 88% of those who had been sober 12 months had a HP compared to 96% for those who were sober > 10 years
  - 89% of those who had joined AA in the last 12 months described themselves as spiritual compared 96% for those who joined > 10 years ago
- 2020 survey - first time a validated research instrument (Service in Sobriety) was used in an AA survey to measure concept of service.

## 'Service in Sobriety'





The two actions taken most often in the past month, with more than 90% doing each one either often or always, were both relatively general rather than specific actions; listened to an alcoholic (mean value of 4.5) and said something positive to an alcoholic (mean = 4.5)

Three other actions were taken 'always' in the past month by majority of respondents. Two were ongoing commitments, giving money to AA under Tradition 7 (mean = 4.2), and hold a service position in the AA programme (mean = 3.9). The other was more dependent on circumstances but clearly possible very often for most members, saying hello to a newcomer (mean = 4.2).

At the other end of the scale were several actions that a third or more of GB members claimed to have not done at all in the previous month; put chairs away after a meeting (mean =3.0), helped to set up a meeting (mean = 3.0), taken calls or spent time with a sponsee (mean =2.8), and guided an alcoholic through the AA 12 Steps (mean = 2.3).

In GB, nearly three-quarters of respondents fell into the 40-60 category (72%), while only slightly fewer did so in CER (64%), in line with their slightly less frequent actions as noted previously.

This group of members most likely to offer help to others and to the group tended to be older, with longer sobriety and length of membership.

Older respondents were the most likely to fall into the higher-scoring category, with 77% of over-60s meeting scoring 40+ but only 62% of 16-40s.

The same applied for those with longer sobriety. For those sober for 6 months or less, only 37% fell into the higher scoring groups compared with 79% of those sober for >10 years.

Only 43% of those who had been coming to AA for no more than 2 months fell into the higher scoring groups compared with 77% of those who had attended for >10 years.

Only 39% of newcomers since the March 2020 lockdown fell into the higher scoring category, compared with 73% of others.

Frequency of attending also had an impact, with only 63% of those attending once or twice a week falling in the higher scoring category, compared with 78% of those attending three or four times a week, and 75% of those attending five or more times per week.

Scores from 40 to 60 are considered to indicate a high level of "Alcoholics Anonymous-related helping" (AAH), in that these are members that take action most often to help support others in their group and to support the running of the group itself.

The group with scores of 40 to 60, with a high level of “Alcoholics Anonymous-related helping” (AAH), were also significantly more likely than lower scorers to agree that several aspects of attending AA had significantly helped their recovery. These included:

Service - 89% of the highest-scoring group (i.e. the high AAH group) felt that service had significantly helped them, compared with 65% of lower-scorers.

Sponsoring – 59% of the high-AAH group felt that sponsoring had significantly helped them, compared with 29% of lower-scorers.

Working the 12 Steps, having a sponsor, helping other people, finding a higher power, and having a home group all also drew higher proportions from the high-AAH group than the lower-scoring group in agreeing that they had been significantly helped in their recovery.

The high-scoring high-AAH group were significantly more likely than lower scorers to do service in their home group (88% vs 66% of those who scored <40).

## Summary

- 81% in GB and 88% in CER had done service in their home group
- In both GB and CER 52% reported having held service positions in the Fellowship structure
- Older respondents were less likely to have a sponsor (73% in the over 60s group vs 92% in the 16-40 group)
- Female members were more likely (87%) than male members (79%) to have a sponsor
- 72% of GB respondents and 64% of CER scored 40 or higher on the Service in Sobriety questionnaire, indicating high levels of ‘alcoholics anonymous-related helping’ or AAH; this has been suggested as a key predictor of recovery in past research.
- Older respondents, those who had longer periods of sobriety and those who had been coming to AA longer, and those who attend more frequently tended to have higher AAH scores

## Conclusions

- Methodological issues: first time the survey was undertaken online and the first time CER was included in the survey
- Response rates, broadly comparable to recent (since 2005) surveys; but considerable variation across regions in response rates. Not a census; questions around representativeness
- Results of the survey *broadly* similar between GB and CER, and in many cases either similar to past surveys and or national statistics, or continuing with the trends seen across multiple waves of the survey
- Very large data set that will require in depth analysis including analyses of quasi-qualitative information (i.e. from ‘comment boxes’); plan to produce a leaflet with the above information with help from PI SC and Literature SC
- Evaluation of the 2020 Survey; what were the roadblocks? and recommendations to address these
- Future surveys; 2025 and beyond

Due to time constraints discussion of the Safeguarding and Personal Conduct document was moved to the Saturday Open Forum to enable full discussion and for continuity is reported on here.

## **Safeguarding and Personal Conduct Document**

(Stevie S)

Firstly, we would like to thank all of you who attended our virtual Conference, organised by our Conference steering committee and our staff at GSO which went better than many of us may have thought. Many thanks to them for all their hard work.

Our Conference voted on and approved the Safeguarding and Personal Conduct document.

There were some provisos that were agreed, and these have now been reflected in the document that follows. A rethink on the use of the word “should” and the removal of the term victim in 8.1 were the obvious ones.

We have also removed the last part of 7.1 and added a slight change to 6.0 following feedback.

Further input from the Fellowship will be required on the areas that were highlighted over the weekend together with areas you may feel we have neglected.

Consideration of Special needs, Children at meetings and the danger of control were a few of the ones raised.

Conference asked that the document remain a live document to allow for further input from the Fellowship before we add it to our Structure handbook.

Our GSB sub-committees will be reviewing their Terms of Reference for compliance with our safeguarding guidance.

It was further agreed that we now require a period of consultation across the Fellowship, and we hope that you will all work to enable this to happen.

Members of the Safeguarding sub-committee from the GSB will be more than happy to attend any regional seminars/workshops where you believe that this would be beneficial.

## **Safeguarding and Personal Conduct**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The aim of this guidance is to provide the background and a general framework for AA groups seeking to tackle safeguarding issues. Since our beginning we have always had an understanding that safeguarding is for everyone.

*From Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*

#### **Tradition One**

**Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.**

*The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come depend squarely upon it. We stay whole or A.A. dies. Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat, our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God. His gift to us would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their cave, the alcoholic would reproach us and say, "What a great thing A.A. might have been!"*

*"Does this mean," some will anxiously ask, "that in A.A. the individual doesn't count for much? Is he to be dominated by his group and swallowed up in it?"*

*We may certainly answer this question with a loud "No!"*

*We believe that there isn't a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members; surely there is none which more jealously guards the individual's right to think, talk, and act as he wishes. No AA can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled.*

*Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee A.A.'s unity contain not a single "Don't." They repeatedly say, "We ought..." but never "You must!"*

## **5.1 History and Background**

In order to help protect and safeguard our AA Fellowship, the General Service Board of AAGB has produced a safeguarding Policy for the AA Fellowship. This guidance, the 'Safeguarding Policy Document', can be accessed via the AAGB website, or by contacting the General Service Office to obtain a copy.

A continuing function of the General Service Board as custodian of the Traditions is to inform and guide the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Board of AAGB is a charitable company and as such has a responsibility to the Charity Commission to report safeguarding incidents under active investigation by the legal authorities.

Every AA group makes an open invitation to its meetings to any member of the public having a desire to stop drinking. In terms of AA Traditions, it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the carrying of the message to all prospective, new or established members is done honestly and decently. We also understand that our Twelve Traditions, including that of group autonomy, do not place groups or members above the law, and that when individuals act injuriously to others, they are legally accountable. Our First Tradition reminds us that all members and groups have a responsibility for the common welfare and safeguarding of the individual member.

We suggest that AA groups recognise and accept responsibility for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and thereby protect the Fellowship and the overall good name of AA.

Note - Many of us who join AA have a chequered past and this is only to be expected. With recovery we can be restored to society and lead a fruitful life. Society has become progressively more concerned with safeguarding the rights of the individual and these concerns have been reflected in recent changes to the law. The Protection against Harassment Act 1997 and the Human Rights act 1998, together with the Care Act 2014, are specific examples. Most local authorities have now established Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Children Boards.

Neither the GSB nor AA groups are regulated care providers, but Tradition One requires that we understand good safeguarding practice and the duty to care for others in the group.

The potential damage to AA's unity and reputation arising from any wrongful/criminal acts of individual members, and of course the associated publicity, is of natural concern to the Fellowship.

*To be clear - No member of AA is above the Law for any offences committed prior to joining AA or any offences committed whilst attending AA. We as a Fellowship believe that "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions" (Tradition Twelve), but this does not mean that we allow the protection of anonymity to anyone to exploit or abuse our Fellowship, or any individual member of AA.*

## **5.2 What Constitutes a Safeguarding Issue?**

Abuse and Exploitation in all its forms, some examples of which are listed below, need not be tolerated at any level of the structure; our members have the right to feel secure in meetings and whilst going about AA service / business.

- Violence
- Threatening Behaviour
- Spiritual Abuse
- Racial / Sectarian abuse, extremism, or radicalisation
- Sexual Harassment, abuse, and exploitation
- Bullying or harassment
- Exploitation (criminal, commercial, financial or otherwise)
- Forced marriage
- Modern day slavery or human trafficking
- Health and safety issues
- Discrimination on any grounds of the Equality Act 2010
- Data breaches, including those under GDPR
- Offensive language or behaviour within meetings and online
- People may be abused or exploited, for example because of their religion, ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, age, stature, appearance etc. Abuse or exploitation may include cyber abuse, direct physical or emotional abuse, or negligent treatment

It is important to note that one need not be the direct object of such behaviour to feel concerned. A person witnessing such an event may deem it necessary to take appropriate action to stop such behaviour.

## **6.0 Addressing Safeguarding Issues**

### ***Tradition 12***

***Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.***

Groups, through their conscience meetings, may establish contingency plans to deal with Safeguarding issues and be mindful of the Safeguarding Policy document produced by the General Service Board of AAGB. It may be that groups appoint a safeguarding representative at either group, intergroup or region level; an experienced, respected AA member may be best suited to this role. As an example, any safeguarding issues that come through our on-line services will be forwarded to our General Secretary, who may wish to discuss a particular issue with the Board's Executive Committee. This will be done in a manner that respects anonymity.

We believe that individual welfare coupled with anonymity are central to the Fellowship's safeguarding responsibility. We suggest that any response be consistent and supportive. It is not our place to discuss, investigate or judge. We have one primary purpose, and we will always suggest recourse through trained professionals that sit within Local Authority Safeguarding boards.

In dealing with any unacceptable behaviour the response must also be measured and reasonable, given all the circumstances. Members should not place themselves in danger physically, nor open themselves or the group to legal repercussions. If an incident cannot be defused quickly and safely, members and groups may have to consider involving appropriate agencies – e.g., Police.

In cases of persistent inappropriate / predatory sexual / threatening / violent behaviour that prevents the carrying of the AA message, groups may refer to the following by Bill W: *"This amount of charity does not mean that we cannot exclude those who disturb meetings in progress or seriously interfere with the functioning of the group. Such people can be asked to quiet down or go elsewhere, or, to come back when they are better able to participate."* (Letter from Bill W 1969.)

### **6.1 Personal Action on Unacceptable Behaviour**

- It is often sufficient for the recipient of behaviour they feel is inappropriate to raise the difficulty with the person creating the problem by pointing out that the conduct is offensive. Anyone has the right to challenge unacceptable behaviour from any other members of AA at any stage, and request that the behaviour stop.
- Support and help – it should be possible for the recipient to prepare for this conversation with the help of their sponsor or another member if they wish. If they find it too difficult or embarrassing to raise the issue with the person creating the problem, it may be appropriate for the recipient to have the conversation with their sponsor or another member present e.g., the group's safeguarding rep, if it has one.

### **6.2 Group Action**

- When a personal approach fails or the recipient feels that this method is inappropriate, the recipient may approach the group Chair, or another trusted servant, for help and guidance, feeling secure in the belief that any safeguarding issue will be considered as a serious matter.
- The alleged offender should be told of the complaint as soon as possible.
- If the situation is sufficiently serious or complex, it may be necessary to involve members from outside the group.

- If the group conscience decides it necessary, unacceptable behaviour may result in temporary exclusion from the group. The ultimate decision on the return of the offender rests with the group conscience.
- The reporting of safeguarding instances to local authorities may be required.

### **6.3 Group Meetings**

- Members are encouraged to choose a home group in which true bonds of Fellowship will lessen the need to fear behaviour they might find offensive.
- It is suggested that Group Conscience meetings be held regularly (many groups hold them every 3 months at, say, the first meeting in March, June, September and December) plus additional conscience meetings as they become necessary.
- Where safeguarding issues (as described in 5.1 and including verbal abuse, discriminatory jokes, disparaging remarks, etc.) occur in a group situation, members in recovery have a responsibility to ask for the offending behaviour to stop.
- We suggest that an explanation of the dangers of unacceptable behaviour in AA be given at the time, or at the end of the meeting.
- Offensive behaviour cannot be condoned. Failure to challenge and stop inappropriate behaviour implies that the offender has permission to repeat the offensive behaviour and encourages others to follow suit.

### **6.4 Group / Intergroup / Region / Service Meetings**

Our collective experience has highlighted instances where individual members and groups have actively tried to dictate the conscience of service meetings through abusive and threatening behaviour.

When these instances have occurred, experience shows that it is perfectly acceptable for the Chair to stop the meeting, remind all attending of our primary purpose and our need to allow God, as we understand him, to express himself through our group conscience.

If the above suggestion does not have the desired effect, there may be a need to involve the appropriate authorities to assist – e.g., Police.

### **6.5 Primary Purpose / Service in Prisons / Probation / Social Services / Hospitals etc.**

Organisations expect any member of AA attending Prisons, Hospitals or any institution requiring security clearance, to abide by the rules of the organisation and follow their safeguarding guidelines. Should groups be asked to introduce a chit-type system for specific offenders, please make sure that both safeguarding, and anonymity are considered. Guidance on the chit system can be found in our Service Handbook section 9:3.2.

In addition to the above we suggest that each service within AA have its own safeguarding guidance within the terms of reference.

### **6.6 Safeguarding Children and Juveniles**

There are times when children or juveniles will be in attendance at AA open meetings or AA conventions. It is the responsibility of the group members or Committee to agree a safeguarding policy, preferably before they are in attendance; we suggest that parental responsibility be taken into consideration.

Should there be a need for child-care at our conventions, committees may need to give consideration to this.

If there are safeguarding issues involving children, we suggest that the Group Secretary (or any group member) act in accordance with the GSB's current Safeguarding Policy Document and consider whether it is necessary to report their concerns to the local Safeguarding Children Board.

## **6.7 Twelfth Stepping and Sponsoring of Minors**

Minors are defined as children and young people under the age of 18, although this legal definition may vary from country to country. If, however, the Fellowship uses it as a guideline, we can better ensure the safeguarding of these younger members.

We want to help minors who believe they may have a drink problem, but we must respect the law, and compromises will need to be made, both by AA members and the minors seeking our help.

When asked to help a minor we may need parental or guardian's consent. This must be explained from the outset. In law written consent is recommended.

Guidance ought to be sought from the group, intergroup or regional safeguarding representative.

The following guidance was offered following changes in the law affecting minors and vulnerable adults and supersedes that issued by the General Service Board in March 2007. It refers to all who come into AA including minors and vulnerable adults.

- As members of self-regulating groups, AA members do not require DBS or Disclosure Scotland checks for 12th Stepping or Sponsoring. This has been confirmed by the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the Scottish Government, following discussions with the General Service Board's solicitors.
- Nonetheless, the spirit of the law should be borne in mind and AA members should acknowledge the duty of respect that is due to one another.
- Sponsors should have substantial sobriety and be aware of the duty of care towards others.
- Contact with new members (including minors and vulnerable adults) to be conducted by two members – preferably a man and a woman. (not a single gender pair?)
- Any meeting with a new member would be best held in a public place and where appropriate the date, time and place reported in advance to the Group Secretary.
- Smaller groups and those in rural areas may find it useful to contact other groups in the area to pool resources for 12th Stepping.
- If members are able and willing to do so they may inform the Group Secretary of any DBS or Police checks held.

### **Resources:**

Hints and Suggestions for 12<sup>th</sup> Steppers  
Questions and Answers on Sponsorship

### **Additional information:**

Please refer to 6.5 for guidance on visiting schools / prisons (including Young Offenders Institutes) / hospitals etc.

## **7.0 The New Member**

Often when a new member joins AA a feeling of hope and the lifting of despair can lead to thinking that every AA member has their best interests at heart. We need to make the new member aware that AA is like any other part of society; many in AA will offer us great support, but some may not.

### **7.1 Sponsorship**

Within AA good sponsorship can be a vital for both our recovery and service. We have a pamphlet – *“Sponsorship Your Questions Answered”* - which can be very helpful. We suggest that groups have this readily available on their literature table. 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.

Good sponsorship involves making the sponsee aware that sponsors are not trained counsellors. All we have is our own experience of recovery from alcoholism. We believe that most sponsors would want to make the sponsee aware of the importance of personal confidentiality and trust. Concerning Step Five, all or any part of this can be taken with whomever the sponsee feels most comfortable, and that need not be the sponsor.

As individuals we decide whether we are alcoholic, and again, we as alcoholics choose our own sponsors. Some groups offer temporary sponsorship to new members which can be helpful in the beginning.

### **7.2 AAGB Staff Members / Public/Volunteers**

AAGB staff have the same rights and responsibilities as AA members with regard to safeguarding. No AA staff member need tolerate abuse or exploitation, in any form, and, likewise, none need be tolerated from AA staff members.

In regard to members of the public coming into contact with AA, be that at Public or Open AA meetings, or for any other reason, they are entitled to the same level of safeguarding as any member of AA.

## **8.0 About Behaviour**

All forms of abuse and exploitation being acted out, including violence, sexual abuse, bullying, harassment and offensive behaviour, are negative and unacceptable. Such forms of discrimination are in conflict with the AA Traditions and our way of life in recovery. All such behaviour needs to be taken seriously, and sober AA members must deal with it as it arises. Whether or not the behaviour is intended to be hurtful is irrelevant, the important point is that it is offensive. AA members, within their groups, need to recognise the power of their behaviour in their relationships with other members of the Fellowship and with potential newcomers. Members in recovery will understand that our behaviour influences others. Recognising that we can control our behaviour, we have a responsibility to set a good example.

Members have a right to expect that they will be safe at a group meeting. It is the responsibility of the group holding the meeting, through its members and leaders, to ensure that no member or visitor is subjected to, or experiences unacceptable behaviour of any kind.

### **8.1 Personal Conduct Matters**

The final report of the General Service Conference 1979 (Committee 1, Attraction by the Individual) contained the following statement:

*“The importance of the individual member in drawing the suffering alcoholic to the way of recovery was stressed. By guarding his/her own behaviour, morals, dress, ethics, tolerance, sympathy, compassion and understanding of all human beings [ a member] carries the message or leaves a slur on the name of AA.”*

Recommendations:

- Treat other people with respect and dignity.
- Recognise that newcomers to the Fellowship may be severely damaged survivors.
- Don't travel alone with newcomers of the opposite sex.
- As a newcomer, don't travel alone with an existing member of the opposite sex.
- Don't Twelfth Step or home visit newcomers or potential newcomers on your own.
- When making home visits, leave details of where you are going with a trusted friend or relative. Make sure this person knows when to expect your return.
- Be aware of the dangers of romantic and / or sexual attraction in sponsorship (See Section 7.1: Sponsorship).
- Never respond to offensive behaviour in a like manner.

Should someone speak to you about your unacceptable behaviour, listen to his or her criticism, think about what they have said and respond appropriately. You may even at a later stage wish to thank them for pointing it out to you!

### **Conclusion**

By Bill W.

*“It is an historical fact that practically all groupings of men and women tend to become more dogmatic; their beliefs and practices harden and sometimes freeze. This is a natural and almost inevitable process. All people must, of course, rally to the call of their convictions, and we of AA are no exception.*

*Moreover, all people should have the right to voice their convictions. This is good principle and good dogma. But dogma also has its liabilities. Simply because we have convictions that work well for us, it becomes very easy to assume that we have all the truth. Whenever this brand of arrogance develops, we are certain to become aggressive; we demand agreement with us; we play God. This isn't good dogma; it's very bad dogma. It could be especially destructive for us of AA to indulge in this sort of thing.*

*Newcomers are approaching AA at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable. We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of*

*nearly every race, culture and religion. In AA we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering.*

*Consequently, the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all. Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of AA, so long as he or she so declares."*

Bill Wilson, Toronto International Convention, 1965.

### **Suggestions at Group Level**

Your group conscience meeting may consider discussing and agreeing upon a clear statement for display, for example:

#### **This Group does not tolerate:**

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Discriminatory Behaviour
- Or any other form of abuse or exploitation.

#### **Personal Conduct Matters!**

**Bad Language often  
offends... But its absence  
never does**

### **Tradition Eleven**

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

## This Group Adheres to GBS's AAGB Safeguarding Guidance

No Member of our Fellowship should be a victim of Abuse or Exploitation

Marc closed the second Friday full session at 1.15pm. After lunch Committee meetings recommenced.

### Board Updates

#### **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention Update** (Stevie S)

In the 2016 Conference there was a decision to hold a 75<sup>th</sup> celebratory convention in 2022.

Board Trustees are charged with this organisational and financial responsibility.

A committee was formed of Board Trustees and members of the Fellowship with relevant experience were invited to assist the committee.

The financial aim was to be self supporting so particular attention has been paid to budgeting and learning as much as possible from the information and records from the 50<sup>th</sup> Convention.

The venue will be Leeds Arena.

A working group was formed to produce a special historical Booklet of AAGB for the event. The working group comprise of representatives of Roundabout, Share, Archives and a member of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee. All Regions have been contacted so that they can participate by including their histories in the publication.

Your Committee wish everyone, Groups, Intergroups, Regions and all the different disciplines in the Fellowship to be actively involved in this event. The Logo was chosen from over 100 entries and Surveys have been distributed at Regions and Conventions so that members of the Fellowship can give the maximum input.

This will be an unforgettable celebration.

#### **Over to you – Early Bird Tickets have been available since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020**

So here we are in 2021 and our Conference, this year, will be virtual.

Across the Fellowship we have had to adapt and our 75<sup>th</sup> Sub-committee has been no different. Our meetings are now held via Zoom which has its positive and negative aspects.

Firstly, we have had savings on the cost of running the Sub-committee, and throughout this year we will continue along the same lines. Al-Anon attended our last meeting and they now have a committee for the event.

To date we have over 100 volunteers from the Fellowship who want to do some service at the event... we still have yet to decide the colour of our Volunteers T shirts though I am sure they will stand out!

By June 2022 we hope that we will be free to travel and believe that this could lead to a significant uptake on our Fellowship members wanting to attend the Convention, not only from AAGB but from across Europe and further afield.

On the downside many of the people we need to speak with are furloughed! It's a bit two steps forward and one back at the moment... but we are getting there.

We have had an issue with the ticket supplier and the Committee have chosen to take this in-house.

We hope by the time of this report our Website – [www.aa75.co.uk](http://www.aa75.co.uk) is back up and running and able to keep up with the demands of the Fellowship.

### **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Publication Working Group Update** (Clive K)

This Working Group met four times during the last year. Only the February meeting was held in York while the others were held online via the Zoom platform.

Almost all of the 16 Regions have produced material to be included in the special publication. A generic history of the AAGB Service Structure has also been produced by my Archives Trustee predecessor.

The publication is taking shape and is on time for completion by June 2021.

I would like to thank the working group for their sterling work during this most challenging of years.

Some of them have also had health issues to contend with along with the pandemic restrictions.

My thanks also go to all the Archivists and other members who have contributed to this publication.

### **AA Service News Update** (Erik A)

*AA Service News* (AASN) is the General Service Board's principal medium for communication

of service events and developments throughout all regions of AA Great Britain. It is published quarterly, with articles that emphasise in particular matters affecting our Primary Purpose: to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

The annual Winter edition contains the Conference Questions and the Summer edition the recommendations from the General Service Conference in response to those questions.

Additionally, news and details about Parliamentary events in England, Scotland and Wales, and other notable service events are published throughout the year in articles written for and by the Fellowship. These include General Service Board Sub-Committees vacancy notices (and information on how eligible AA members may apply), regional Seventh Tradition and In Memoriam contributions, as well as a Concept or Tradition and a calendar of AA events in Great Britain and overseas.

Normally, copies are posted to the mailing contacts for all Groups registered in the Great Britain Service Structure, to intergroup and regional officers, and to the General Service Board. This past year, however, because of the pandemic and so many meeting venues being closed, digital-only editions were prepared and circulated via email for the Summer, Autumn and Winter issues. In addition, the calendar has been suspended until such time as face-to-face events can again be held and the information provided for them can be verified. This will continue at least through the Spring 2021 issue, and likely beyond. Hard copy production and distribution will resume as soon as it is deemed safe and viable to pack and post them.

If your group is not receiving AASN, please check that your Group Registration details – including an email address – are up-to-date with the General Service Office. (Alternatively, fill out a new registration form – also called the ‘Pink Form’ – and be sure to include an email address.) If in doubt, please contact the office.

A downloadable PDF of each edition is also posted in the Document Library section of the Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain (AA GB) website.

Many thanks to the staff at GSO for their work to collate and pass along information for each issue, and especially to Sharon who maintains the database and who is enormously patient in reminding me of the deadlines.

Thank you also to the volunteers – the AA members who usually gather four times a year at GSO to stuff the envelopes (and any additional notices) so that AASN can be posted on time. We are all hopeful that this valuable service can be performed again soon.

And finally, a big thanks to all contributors without whose articles and notices AASN could not be published. Your willingness to share your service related experience, strength and hope informs the Fellowship and encourages all of us – and our groups, intergroups and regions – to keep AA’s Legacy of Service alive and thriving.

## **Armed Services Update**

(Mike P)

There were lots of things going on before lockdown we were invited to Army Health fairs and to give talks to senior ranks and give presentations to medics, alas this all fell by the wayside as the barracks fell into the total lockdown in March 2020 but we did have some

communications and we will follow them up. Here are a few of the things we will be following up on.

There is ongoing dialogue with the RFEA (The Forces Employment Charity), in particular, Project Nova, with regards to how a cooperation can work. It is hoped to give a presentation to them over the coming months, following which AA will become one of their “tools”.

SSAFA head office is interested in cooperation. Their local offices will not engage with organisations unless it is part of head office policy – so an opportunity.

The Armed Services 12 stepper list is being updated and a plea will go out for additional volunteers as there are, currently, only about 30 members covering the whole country.

We had some presentations in the Health Departments such as Nursing staff and some frontline staff and these were well received.

One of the things that has been started in the Armed Services was the Blue Light Initiative, there has been contact with the Police and the Paramedics and we have a contact for the Fire Brigade, we are expanding this to include the HM Coastguard, RNLI and Mountain Rescue but due to Covid 19 there hasn't been a lot of movement on that front, this has also become part of other disciplines.

We are offering support to Intergroups and Regions to our ASLO'S and RASLO'S.

## **Electronic Communications Update**

**(Norman B)**

Our website has seen a busy year with the addition of a Coronavirus News page, in which we tried to keep members up to date with the frequently changing government regulations. Online meetings were new to many and we offered tips on how to set up and securely run online meetings using a few of the platforms available. As the pandemic progressed, some face-to-face meetings were able to reopen and we tried to indicate these when the format changed. All of this involved a huge effort by GSO staff and we are grateful for the many hours devoted to the task.

The format of our mobile Meeting Finder has been changed to offer a better experience for mobile phone users. The screen has been decluttered and the option now exists to list meeting by time (soonest first), or by distance, with a choice of radius of 5 miles, 10 miles etc. Preferences obviously vary depending on the type of location: rural v urban = few v many meetings.

Also impacted by the pandemic were our email-based Online Response Service and our one-to-one live ChatNow Service. Many members and newcomers used the services to check on meeting status, and/or to take the first step on the road to recovery. It is gratifying to note just how many suffering alcoholics have been helped by ORS, ChatNow and of course the Telephone Helplines, and we say a big thank you to all of the responders who give their time to run these vital services.

To preserve anonymity and to comply with GDPR, we continue to offer generic email addresses for posts at Intergroup and Region. To avoid delays with their issue, please ensure

that the Confidential Directory is kept up to date using the Intergroup and Region Officer Registration Form available from the website Document Library, which includes an optional request for an aamail.org email address.

## **Employment Update**

(Mike P)

This has been a particularly difficult year for all of us and we in Alcoholics Anonymous are not immune. There have been a few high spots in Employment.

There has been communication in various areas, the AXA Insurance asked us to have presentation given to its senior management teams. So we arranged to have two, a week apart, and the Tech was taken care of by a member from which we were able to get some feedback from the presentation. The whole thing on both occasions was a success and it was enjoyed by us as well. Several people asked questions in the Q & A sessions and told us they now knew where to send anyone who asks for help.

Our Blue Light initiative has been active and we have quite a few contact details for the Police, Fire Brigade and Ambulance. We are looking to expand the list to include HM Coastguard, River Police, RNLI, and Mountain Rescue. There has been quite a bit of movement in this area due to contact from the Essex area and possible contacts in the North Wales area and a presentation was given to the Serious Fraud Office.

We have been reaching out to intergroups and Regions to give support to the relevant ELO's and RELO'S. Alcohol Awareness week saw HR directors being sent summary of stories, these were shared on the Forestry England Intranet, and viewed widely. There has been contact with Equity (the Actors Union) and Unite, the BBC has been sent a pack of Literature.

A virtual Stand has been offered from the NAPO (National Association for Probation Officers) this will be attended by approximately three hundred Delegates and will run for three days, a good way of passing the message, the idea came from their own knowledge of an increase in drinking in lockdown.

We have produced a leaflet called "Now You Are an ELO" and have some pull up banners made.

We continue to look for ELO's and RELO's for all Intergroups and Regions.

## **Health Update**

(Terri S)

2020 was a vastly important year on the calendar for the Health Subcommittee. For the first time in five years a Health Seminar was organised with the approval of the General Service Board (GSB).

The Professional guest speakers from within various sections of medical services, treatment centres and relevant external agencies had been invited and the Health Subcommittee (HSC) members were pleased with the response.

Then with an immediacy never experienced before, accompanied with complete understanding and cooperation, the Coronavirus Pandemic enforced all activities by Health Liaison Officers (HLOS) to cease overnight.

Undaunted the Health Subcommittee members were able to assist Health Liaison Officers to adapt and find innovative ways to continue to fulfil our primary purpose to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Throughout lockdown in most Regions of AAGB members of the HSC and HLOS communicated with the health professionals whenever and in whatever way possible via emails, posting literature and maintaining telephone contact.

## ENGLAND

The Twelve Step Parliamentary Group at Westminster met virtually and members of the Health Subcommittee along with members from other disciplines responded to the invitation to attend.

HSC member Stephen M and Daniele V, HLO for London Region South, maintained their longstanding commitment to St Georges University College Hospital, (SGUL) to deliver the Open Meeting Workshops, (OMW's) albeit virtually.

These were delivered every six weeks to the various student/junior doctors, psychiatrists, lecturers and other interested professionals. The feedback from the question and answer section was probing and thoughtful whilst the evaluations were of the highest recommendation.

In South West Region, the Cornwall Intergroup Health Liaison Officer made contact with the Director of Nursing Training at Treiske Knowledge Spa and arranged a series of virtual presentations to the preceptor nurses which have proved to be popular and well received.

By August 2020, Robin H and Bob S HSC members and working with South West Region were able to re-engage with the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to restart their delivery of OMW's. The audience included 53 foundation GP's on their psychiatric placement. This two hour session commenced with a half hour session delivered by Dr Sarah Flowers, ex Non Alcoholic Trustee (NAT) of the GSB of AAGB followed an introduction to AA by Robin H and Bob S. The Open Meeting was then delivered by seven AA members followed by a question and answer session. A further OMW of this same format was delivered in February 2021 at the Sussex Education Centre at Mill View Hospital to 200 doctors again on their psychiatric placement. Two more OMW's will be presented in 2021 at Brighton and Sussex Medical School to a further 200 first year medical students.

## SCOTLAND

At Lockdown the HSC member and HLOs in Scotland were immediately denied access to all Hospitals, GP Surgeries, Treatment Centres, and University Campuses. However, the HSC member set up an Open Meeting Workshop (OMW) with ScotGEM, a graduate entry medical course offering students an opportunity to experience general practice and remote rural working. This meeting also allowed new IHLOS along with the newly appointed Trustee to the HSC, Barbara O, to take part in and experience this virtual presentation and meeting. This meeting was very highly recommended and will be repeated.

## WALES

In Bangor the 'Bridging the Gap' group members of the AA open meeting at Ysbyty Gwynedd, held discussions on the way forward during lockdown. Consideration for the safety of staff and the patients was paramount and a virtual meeting was set up within weeks of lockdown.

The hospital meeting zoom code was advertised on the AAGB website and also with the hospital alcohol liaison officer. This information was then forwarded to the senior staff member on each ward for circulation to patients. The group had previously created a booklet of member's stories for use on the wards this now too included the virtual meeting number. The hospital are considering providing devices for the patients on the wards to access pre-recorded members shares to aid their recovery and these shares will include meeting details.

#### CONFERENCES & EVENTS

The Medical Council on Alcoholism invited Alcoholics Anonymous to make a presentation at its annual Symposium in November 2020, this is rescheduled to take place in November 2021. There will also be an Open Meeting Workshop running throughout the buffet lunch break, to allow delegates to pop in and out to witness a live meeting. After lunch there will be the annual Dr Max Glatt lecture delivered by Dr Peter Rice, Chair of SHAAP (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems) and Director of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh, followed by a presentation on behalf of the AAGB General Service Board by current Non Alcoholic Trustee Dr Eric Carlin on the efficacy and sustained recovery of Alcoholics Anonymous.

#### HEALTH SEMINAR

The now four times rescheduled Health Seminar is booked for: date to be confirmed.

#### HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE

The Health Subcommittee worked diligently in their primary purpose to carry the message and to support the Intergroup and Regional Health Liaison Officers throughout AAGB and English Speaking Europe. Additionally, Robin H, this year completed updating and refreshing the Health pages of the AAGB website, the Fellowship may access this new updated information in the near future. Bob S compiled a File store of information and copies of presentations etc which hopefully will be beneficial to I/RHLOS throughout AAGB stepping into new service posts.

This is a snapshot of Health Subcommittee service carried out on behalf of the Fellowship in 2020. If your Intergroup or Region is carrying out innovative work with the Health professionals, share that information with us please, or why not consider joining the Health Subcommittee, for what may well be a tsunami of enquiries from Health professionals post pandemic.

#### **Prisons/Criminal Justice Service Update** (Pat McG)

There has not been much happening in this discipline due to the Pandemic no Prison Meetings, Alcohol Courts suspended and lockdowns affecting Group meetings etc.

So we had to look at various ways of carrying the message and one way was Postal Sponsorship which is working quite well as Liaison Officers in HMP Verne received an award for reaching out to prisoners by mail. (Well Done).

Another way was by Zoom which was rapidly taken up, a meeting in your home or a counselling by your Officer or a talk with your Sponsor works very well.

We are working on an Electronic Training Programme for Prison Liaison & Postal Sponsorship and we are nearing completion.

The Chit System is in operation and Chits can be obtained from GSO (New chits that cover all areas).

The Sub-Committee are also looking at a new Pamphlet as well as literature for service in this discipline.

Clearance Procedures still spring up in some areas this could be due to new Contractors not knowing security procedures and new and inexperienced staff which can be easily sorted out with engaging with MOJ contacts that the Sub-Committee sent out.

We also delivered Roundabouts and Share magazines whether it be hard copy or online which was appreciated by inmates.

That concludes my report to Conference.

## **Probation Update**

(Maxine W)

Activities this year have been severely affected by the ongoing pandemic. Our subcommittee meetings have been successfully run via zoom and we have maintained contact with those in service by phone as well.

We have dealt with various queries and information requests and continue to manage the chit system now adapted for online meetings.

Our zonal meetings are far from assured so may have to move online. We will be liaising with the Prison Subcommittee to organise this and our presentations.

We will be having a presence at the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary convention to include a history of probation services in AA.

We hope the work in the probation service will continue to grow and when situations become more normal we can continue to build new relationships by which we may carry the message.

## **Public Information Update**

(Charles R)

Public Information (PI) operates through AA members, Groups, Intergroups, Regions and the General Service Board and its Public Information Sub Committee. Our Non Alcoholic Trustees assist with carrying the message to every area of the wider community. PI is often the first contact the public have with the fellowship.

## **P.I. Sub Committee**

We are grateful for the inspiration and service given by Peter F., our Chair and P.I. Trustee, who has rotated out of this service.

We welcome new committee members, and their fresh enthusiasm. Public Information offers a wide and inexhaustible range of opportunities for our primary purpose. Close communication and cooperation with other service disciplines in our fellowship is a valuable joy.

Rotation does provide vacancies for committee members for this 4year service; details are regularly published in AA and PI Service news, as well as being available' with an application form, on the AA website.

The pandemic has introduced constraints and new opportunities for our Sub Committee. We do miss the face to face interaction and networking provided by committee meetings at York. Scheduled Friday pm and Saturday am quarterly meetings have been maintained online, with additional shorter interim meetings for continuity of our working programme being a practical and desirable advantage. Our annual meeting with Regional PILO's or their representatives was well attended, enhanced by the convenience of the meeting being held online, with a useful exchange of ideas and experiences.

## **Media Events**

The formation of a Communications Sub Committee has become necessary to co-ordinate the response of the fellowship to enquiries. This committee works and meets, on occasion, with the PI Sub Committee. (PISC) The 'Comms S.C.' consists of 2 NATs and 2 Alcoholic Trustees. The NATs are asked to represent our fellowship for the media, for example in live verbal and visual interviews, without the constraints of anonymity. This committee is able to provide a consistent and unified response to enquiries receive by our General Service Office, and any other source.

The PISC is available to help with and answer any enquiries, as required. In principle, local PI opportunities are referred by personal communication to the relevant Region or Intergroup, seeking confirmation that the PI Liaison Officer, or representative, is willing and able to respond, and has support if needed.

Specific 'Press releases' are recorded on the Fellowship website; numerous newspaper and magazine articles are generated by members. Many of these, together with increasingly numerous local radio broadcasts, are recorded in the monthly PI Service News.

## **Advertising Campaigns**

An extensive range of 'tried and tested', as well as innovative and ingenious ideas throughout the fellowship are recorded, often pictorially, in the monthly PI Service News. The PI subcommittee shares 'what works 'and 'how it works' with enthusiasm.

## **New PI Video – "Young People"**

Produced to attract **Young People** is available on the AA Members website, home page, and click on the picture of young people with the signage New “New to AA”. A press release is underway.

### **Forums and Workshops**

The **South Midland** and **Eastern Region Forums** were postponed and are scheduled for this June. A P.I. in action presentation is prepared.

2 Helpful workshops to update and share experiences were held online with **Continental Europe Region**. Similar workshops with groups of GB Intergroups and Regions are planned.

### **PI Sub Committee Work Plan**

**Charts** with columns defining the **Item** to be addressed, the proposed **Action** and **Timeframe**, the **Start** and **Finish** dates of the action, the Sub Committee **Member** responsible and a **Progress** report, are used and updated at each meeting.

Items include implementing PI initiatives directed by the General Service Board from Conference.; liaising with and supporting other Sub Committees in identifying, developing and implementing PI opportunities; carrying our message and increasing awareness of how AA works; establishing good relations with professionals and media; creating clear and consistent messages that that differentiate AA from other organisations; supporting Regional and Intergroup PILO's, sharing resources, information and seminars; ensure good governance.

### **P.I. Website**

Suggestions are prepared, in anticipation of the appointment of a professional Web manager, to simplify negotiation of the **PI website** for members and the general public. An extended, extensive **Resource Library** is proposed. A ‘trial module’, currently available by invitation on Google Drive, has been well received in the interim.

### **Public Information Service News**

Circulated monthly throughout our fellowship by email, it shares current and reflective P.I. experiences, event advertisements and information related to our primary purpose. 2 ‘extraordinary editions’ were published early in the current pandemic to share ideas and experience of how to continue carrying our message.

A new editorial team from the PI Sub Committee has now rotated into service, with refreshed ideas! All contributions welcomed, via GSO or personal communication.

Past editions are available in the P.I. archives, containing a wealth of detail of P.I. activities and experiences.

## Telephones Update

(Jonathan P)

*Terms of Reference for the National Telephone Sub-committee (NTSC)*

*To maintain the existing telephone system, to enable the suffering alcoholic access to a local contact through a single national telephone number, in a manner which is efficient, effective and economic.*

*To keep the use and cost of the system under constant review.*

*To be responsible for all changes to the system and to liaise with the system providers following consultation with Regions.*

*To investigate any new technology which may be beneficial to the Fellowship's telephone service.*

*To keep constant review of the facilities offered by other service providers.*

*The committee is a sub-committee of the Board and will be chaired by the Trustee with responsibility for the telephone service. Membership will normally consist of a minimum of four and a maximum of eight members drawn from participating Regions, who are suitably experienced to participate in committee functions. Where possible this will recognise geographical spread.*

*Membership of the Committee will be for a period of four years, allowing one year for sponsorship, thus the committee will be increased during sponsorship periods.*

The subcommittee has continued in its work, supporting Regional Telephone Liaison Officers (RTLOs) and TLOs, especially in the time of disruption to the normal functioning of AA. Office based helplines had to stop and were replaced with home-based systems. This took longer in some areas than others but the ability to reroute 0800 calls allowed to load to be shared nationwide. Overall, the speed of adaptation was remarkable. One example was the implementation of a "virtual" 12step service set up to fulfil the gap left when face to face meeting became impossible.

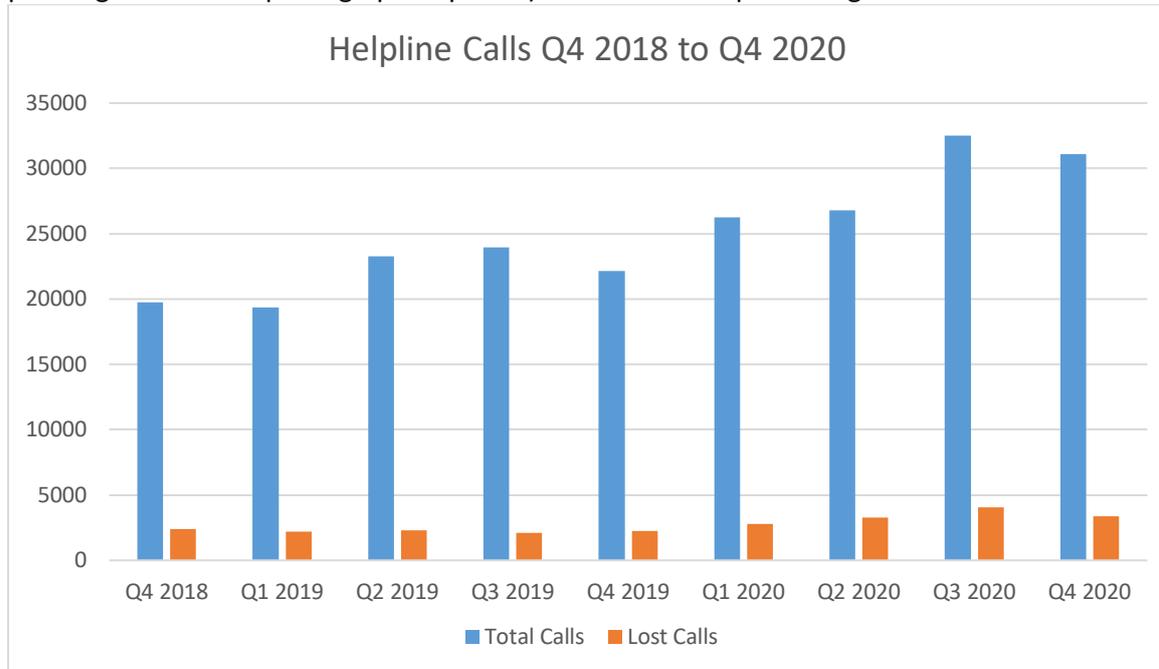
In November 2019 a major restructuring of the Scottish helplines was completed, and now Scotland, (as has been true in Wales for some time) has a national service.

During the course of 2020 the NTSC has extensively explored the possibilities of transferring the 0800-helpline number to another provider. This was triggered by GSO's move from BT and our terms of reference to seek the most efficient, effective and economic provision of the national number. More than one option was developed and tested but in the end the decision was made to remain with our current provider, BT.

Telephone administrators (i.e. RTLOs) and responders can make good use of the various features of the AA website. The 'where to find' now has details of local helpline telephone numbers for every meeting. Anyone ringing will be put through to a responder in their locality.

In the final quarter of 2020, there were according to BT statistics 31,099 calls – over 2,300 a week, a 40% increase over the year before. Given the times we are living in this increase is

not surprising but what is outstanding is that the multitude of Telephone responders and 12steppers have risen to the challenge. Lost calls, including Ring Tone No Reply calls (a caller phoning and no one picking up the phone) remain a small percentage of total calls.



There are no accurate figures for how many of these calls are from the still suffering alcoholic. However, looking at those areas that log different types of calls, a reasonable estimate would be 800 still suffering alcoholics are phoning the helpline each week. It is worth pointing out that the majority of the RTNR calls were under 10 seconds giving little time for the responder to pick up.

The NTSC produces a newsletter twice yearly and in August this year we have a Telephone seminar, to which all RTLOs and TLOs are invited, during this event we will be looking at what we do and how we can do it better.

The Helpline depends on the tens of RTLOs, the scores of TLOs, the hundreds of Telephone Responders, and the thousands of Twelve Steppers. The Service they all provide is essential, valuable, rewarding and is always in need of more people coming forward to be involved at all levels.

I end this report with a quote from the 1997 conference:

*“AA speaks with a special voice. It is the voice of experience, understanding and compassion. It is a voice which talks to silence, to fear, to sobbing hopelessness or shouting anger - it is the first and only voice the newcomer should hear.”*

Still very true today.

## Young People Update (Sandi A)

I would like to start by thanking Amanda S (my fellow trustee) for sharing her experience when she was sponsoring me into this role, and for her kindness and understanding. As a sub-committee we are thrilled that she is now the GSB Chair-elect

We said goodbye to 3 sub-committee members who rotated out in March, leaving Mark D, Helen Y and Craig B and in November 2020 Anna D and Simon B joined us. The YPLO role is still relatively new but several Regions and Intergroups have YP posts filled.

Since March 2020 all our sub-committee meetings have been on Zoom and we discussed various topics, one of them being pamphlets aimed at young people. We are looking at updating them and making them more relevant to today's young people and will present our ideas to the Literature Sub-committee after this conference. We have also looked at safeguarding and our terms of reference and this is ongoing.

In 2019 we were tasked by Conference to take Roadshows round the country to encourage young people into service. Our first Roadshow was held in Winchester in November 2019. Our second Roadshow was to have been held in Glasgow in June 2020. Owing to the Corona situation this was rolled forward to November 2020, and then we hoped for March 2021 and now - watch this space! The YPLO role is open to those who came to AA at the age of 30 or younger. Their experience of coming to AA at a young age and what they went through to get here can be invaluable when talking to schoolchildren, university students and young people in all walks of life. Young people can work with all the other liaison officers and hopefully all Intergroups and Regions, and can put their experience and enthusiasm to good use. The sub-committee was invited to a YP Workshop held by Midlands Region. Helen gave a very informative report and took part in the subsequent Q&A session with Craig.

Just after Conference 2019 new young persons posters and a video were designed and accepted by the sub-committee to be taken to Conference 2020 for their approval. As the posters and the video will be so useful in our primary purpose work the conference steering committee (the conference between conferences) felt able to approve these in November 2020. I am sure most of you will have seen the video on the GB AA website. It has been used widely, with very good feed-back, and AA New Zealand have requested permission to use it. The posters are in line with the video and can be obtained from GSO. I would like to thank the conference steering committee for allowing these to go out and be put to the use for which they were intended.

In November 2020 we held the Region YPLO workshop. As it was on Zoom it gave us the opportunity to invite Intergroup YPLOs. The workshop was well-attended and an enjoyable day. All sub-committee members had a role in the proceedings. Amanda came and talked about the YP role in the structure. The PI sub-committee joined us to discuss how they could help disseminate information about young people in AA. Nico (London Region North YPLO) shared his "YPLO welcome pack". This is full of information and ideas to help those getting started in the role. Nico was happy for this to be shared, and this document is in the filestore.

Stevie, our vice-chair and chair of the 75th anniversary sub-committee, talked about the hope that lots of young people would be involved in service at that convention. I have the privilege of representing young people on the committee for that convention.

This has been an extremely challenging year for everyone in the Fellowship. Our young people have embraced the opportunities afforded by Zoom and other online platforms. Some of things they have done are:

1. Online talks to schools and universities and other organisations involved with young people.

2. Helped other LOs with presentations and talks.
3. Reached out to the Polish community.
4. Helped set up online meeting guides.
5. Created a YP meeting finder.
6. Created and shared with fellow AAs "How to do service during the Covid 19 pandemic".
7. Organised workshops on how to run meetings online and FtoF during the pandemic.
8. Organised Step, Tradition and Service workshops.
9. Lots of YP conventions have been organised, some with evening entertainment. Watching 100+ people dance in their homes in various countries is entertainment in itself!

(All these events have been totally inclusive, welcoming people of all ages.)

## **Roundabout Update**

(Terri S)

Introduced to my new service role as chair of AAGB's Scottish Fellowship Roundabout magazine at the annual workshop in Glasgow in March 2020 I was filled with enthusiasm. Little did I know that the Higher Power had other ideas in the form of Coronavirus. March 2020 was to be the last live meeting of the Roundabout Subcommittee of that year and this year to date. Never daunted the editorial team who make up the subcommittee did not miss a beat and with the support of the General Service Board the next issue, April 2020, was uploaded as a free PDF download on the AA Website. This allowed members to print off free copies and give a copy to those members who lacked access. Additionally free printed copies were made available to Service Liaison Officers for distribution to prisons and other institutions. The Roundabout Subcommittee met regularly by virtual meetings throughout the pandemic and held a well-attended Workshop for Roundabout Liaison Officers etc in October 2020.

A review of the Terms of Reference and the Roles and Responsibilities of the service posts within the Subcommittee identified a Link Liaison post which could engage with and provide support to Intergroup and Regional Liaison Officers {as advertised in Roundabout and AASN}. Following on from this appointment the temporary Subcommittee Liaison Officer was invited by several Intergroups and Regions to deliver a presentation prior to their respective assemblies. The positive feedback from these presentations was encouraging.

The Subcommittee also welcomed a new Assistant Editor to the editorial team and in addition to her role in shadowing the Editor she has undertaken a thorough review of the Roundabout magazine Web pages, including implementing a regular analysis of the articles and interviews online to monitor and review Fellowship feedback.

The editorial team themed the 12 issues of the 2020 Roundabout Magazine and these twelve issues are now printed and available for members to buy in the form of the 2020 yearbook. The last yearbook to be printed was in 1994 and it is hoped that this new edition will form a reflective archive for members of the future. The feedback in favour from these themed issues encouraged the Editorial Team to continue with these themed issues throughout 2021

Roundabout magazine will have a room at the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations in Leeds in June 2022 where the Roundabout 2020 Yearbook will be available to purchase by the wider Fellowship.

The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue of the first ever edition of Roundabout Magazine was printed in February 2021. This was an enormous task for the magazine editorial team who produced a

very poignant and memorable issue and I am certain that whilst the comparison between the 1951 first edition and the 2021 edition may be remarkably diverse in physical appearance both editions equally fulfil the Roundabout Magazine primary purpose to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

The Roundabout Subcommittee members are constantly reminded by members of the Fellowship of the important part the magazine has made in their recovery and for many a newcomer it was the first tool in their spiritual toolkit and how in the early days of sobriety they could read and identify with a short article when a chapter was daunting.

The Fellowship in Scotland consider Roundabout Magazine to be their 'meeting in print' and it has been an important and vital part of sustaining recovery during this past difficult year. One newcomer wrote in an article "when I am having a bad day I pick up a copy of Roundabout and I just read it. I think I have a copy in every room of my house! Having the magazine on the AAGB website has been a real blessing these last few month".

## **SHARE Update**

(Maxine W)

During the pandemic our fellowship magazine has proved an invaluable aid to many in isolation. Both readers and contributors have expressed gratitude for the continued availability of Share made possible via the free internet copies as a supplement to hard copy subscriptions.

Due to the lockdown AA venues were closed and uncollected copies of Share lay on the floor of many a church hall. This problem was discussed by the Board, subcommittee and our trustee of the other fellowship magazine Roundabout. We concluded the best way forward was to make both magazines freely available on the website whilst also endeavouring to post hard copy to subscribers.

After nearly a year the subject of availability was revisited and it was decided to end free copy and have a 50p downloadable edition on the website.

We are grateful for all involved in overcoming the many challenges of the recent times to ensure the continuity of our Share magazine.

We have enjoyed some new additions to our content ie The Interview, which has proven popular and lately contributors have increased.

The lovely calendar and useful AA diary were produced on time and have sold well under the circumstances.

COVID allowing, we will hold a Share seminar in July at York and have invited Roundabout participation. We hope to welcome many intergroup and regional service reps and any others interested in serving the fellowship in any of the related positions.

As I enter my final year as trustee for Share I must express sincere gratitude for the privilege of working with such a dedicated team.

We look forward to seeing you all at the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention 2022 where we will have a display including the history of our magazine through the decades!

## **National Conventions Updates**

### **Northern**

(Barbara O)

Sadly, both the Convention in 2020 and 2021 had to be cancelled because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The committee have met regularly over the year to keep the situation under review.

A decision has been made to defer the Convention until March 2022

### **Southern**

(Mike P)

The Southern National Convention was cancelled last year and a few people rotated off of the committee and we are still trying to recruit from various regions.

We are still looking for a new venue for the convention to take place as the Mill Rythe will be shut for renovation.

We have a few vacancies to be filled internally, we are still in dialogue with Sandy Balls Holiday Park, New Forest regarding this venue.

In our January 2021 meeting it was discussed as to whether we could hold a viable hybrid or a full Zoom meeting, this was put on the backburner until our next meeting in March to see what happens with the vaccine rollout and the way the lockdown is still in play.

### **Scottish**

(Stevie S)

The current situation in Scotland sees us short of two Trustees, Scotia and South West Scotland, in the Interim I have been asked to help out and represent the Board with the Scottish Convention Committee.

It would be fair to say that the Committee work very well together and require very little in the way of assistance.

January's meeting of the Committee was cancelled and the hope is that come March we will have a clearer picture as to how to proceed given the current situation.

### **Welsh**

(Jonathan P)

In 2019, once again Wales and Borders Region offered a very warm welcome to all those who attended the convention. The theme was 'Sobriwydd - tiath gyffrous' 'Sobriety – an exciting journey'. The venue as usual, The Metropole Hotel, Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells, Powys which is in the beautiful heart of Wales.

We didn't have quite the same number of people attending compared with 2018 but those who did come were treated to a well organised and much appreciated convention. People came from all parts of the UK and Ireland and we welcomed old friends and new visitors alike.

The meetings were very well attended, and the speakers were, as always, lively, eloquent and entertaining, in carrying the message. A Welsh Language meeting, also well attended, was held and was well received by both Welsh and English (there was simultaneous translation) listeners. Come and Go meetings ran throughout Saturday.

A workshop on Archives run by John M. was a success and builds on the excellent work done by him and other Archivists in Wales to not only retain our history but have it so well displayed.

Sadly the 29<sup>th</sup> Convention in 2020 had to be cancelled but the theme “Sobrydd – Cryfder gyda’n gilydd” “Sobriety – Together stronger” will be retained for the Convention this year. Everything is in place (all being well) for this year’s Convention – 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2021.

The venue is as always, the Metropole Hotel who have frozen prices and will honour all previous bookings that have not already been refunded.

Virtual Flyers have already been sent out and to Share, Service news and the website.

Bookings have already been made – don’t delay book today!

## **Parliamentary Events Updates**

### **House of Commons, Westminster Event**

(Mike P)

For all those who do not know there is a House of Commons meeting every year this is to be my first House of Commons Meeting as we did not have one last year because of Covid 19. I am one of the two Trustees and the chair of the committee, and grateful for the experience and the privilege. This year is going to be a bit different as well as we will be doing via Zoom.

We have a MP sponsor this year which will be Caroline Ansell the MP for Eastbourne; she will introduce us. We have had a good response to our registration and we will be sending out more invites soon, the Presentation will be on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

We have speakers lined up from Public Health England and a Non-Alcoholic Trustee for our guest speakers and two people sharing their Experience, Strength and Hope. Things are now falling into place and the excellent work done by the committee has made this happen.

### **Scottish Parliament Event**

(Terri S)

In March 2020 Alcoholics Anonymous were invited to set up an information stand on the concourse leading to a prestigious Art Exhibition planned for the members area of the Scottish Parliament. This would have been a wonderful opportunity to carry the message on a one to one with MSP’s and invited guests. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus pandemic the exhibition was cancelled. However, it is hoped the Art Exhibition and Alcoholics Anonymous’s invitation will be reinstated post pandemic.

The Annual Presentation delivered each year in October was also cancelled. Negotiations are already underway to prepare for the event in October 2021. At this early stage in the process

a working group will be set up with members represented from the five Scottish Regions. It is envisaged the presentation theme will complement Alcoholics Anonymous' s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Convention planned for June 2022 in Leeds.

### **Welsh Assembly Event**

(Jonathan P)

The last event took place at the "The Pierhead", Welsh Assembly Campus Cardiff. Tuesday 12th November 2019.

It opened with the Chair of the Board, Nigel P., making a short speech followed by Caroline Jones AM for her opening remarks. Caroline had done her research and knew the history of AA which she was happy to share with all. She was then followed by the Trustee for Wales and Borders, Jonathan P. who gave a talk about what AA is and does.

The P.I. and Health videos were shown and Andrew, one of our new NAT's, gave a talk on what it is like for a non-alcoholic to be part of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We then had two AA speakers who shared their "experience, strength and hope" "Bethan W" and "Joanna W". They did a wonderful job – the honesty of their experience, the braveness of their strength and the trust in their hope. They really had the audience listening.

The presentation ended with a Q&A session that took us just past the official finish time. A buffet lunch was provided, and AA members mingled with the guests. Yet again the event was appreciated by all who took part.

Since that time the 2020 event was cancelled, and we are now waiting on the result of Senedd elections in May this year before we can arrange the next Assembly Presentation.

## SATURDAY 17 APRIL

At 9 am the Committees reconvened to discuss and finalise their recommendations to Conference which were submitted to GSO staff by 1pm for the preparation of the preliminary report.

### Third Full Session – Open Forum

Marc welcomed everyone back to the Open Forum session and hoped that the everyone had had a very enjoyable experience in their Committee this morning.

Marc explained that the Open Forum would be mostly taken up with the Safeguarding Document and proceeded to take questions on this document and after full discussion the document was approved to go forward with a two-thirds plus majority. Please see the Safeguarding Report under Board Presentations on page 37 of this document. There was a minority opinion that the document should not go forward.

At 2.30pm the Preliminary Report was distributed to all electronically with delegates going to their regional breakout rooms for discussion of the report before the Committees reconvened at 4pm.

The day ended at 5.30 with an optional AA Meeting.

# SUNDAY 18 APRIL

Marc welcomed everyone back for the third and final day of Conference and hoped that everyone had enjoyed themselves up to this point and have taken away a lot of how the structure works and with regards to Conference and feeding back the answers to the Fellowship. He continued with the preamble and asked anyone who wished to join in with him.

As agreed at Conference 1995 each recommendation will be voted on and whether or not it is a two-thirds majority will be recorded.

Marc then invited the Chairs of the six Committees to present their respective reports which were fully discussed and adopted.

These Committee Reports are included in this report on the pages indicated below:

Committee No. 1	Pages 69 - 71
Committee No. 2	Pages 72 - 74
Committee No. 3	Pages 75 - 77
Committee No. 4	Pages 78 - 80
Committee No. 5	Pages 81 - 83
Committee No. 6	Pages 84 - 87

## ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR CONFERENCE 2022

The nomination received on Friday evening was presented and, after a vote, Adelle S (Scotia Region) was duly elected.

## CONFIRMATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

(Nigel P, Chair GSB)

Hello again Conference, my name is Nigel, and I am an alcoholic. We are almost at the end now, but I have a couple of duties to carry out and end my service.

First of all, is the confirmation of new Board members. Last year I asked the Conference Steering Committee to do this for us, and they agreed to confirm in place the following who I would like to introduce to Conference:

Charles R, who is serving on PI

Barbara O, who is serving on AA Service News, Health and the Northern National Convention

Justin T, who is serving on Literature and Archives.

And our NAT Tom Fox who is serving on the Communications Working Group, Prisons,

And now it's time for the confirmation of 2 new board members; they are:

Jo F from Eastern Region who will serve on AA Service News and the Conference Steering Committee

Gretchen S from London Region South who will serve on Surveys, Finance and the Houses of Parliament event

Rotation ensures that everyone has the opportunity to serve the Fellowship, and no one can become too fixed in position, and it's time to say goodbye to some of our trusted servants.

I'll start with those trustees that left us last year; they were:

Our ex-vice chair Roger E  
Denise H on Literature  
And Peter F on PI

Before I talk of those leaving us this year, let me introduce two people who have hit rock bottom in the AA service structure, that is our new Honorary Treasurer, Clive K and the new Chair of the Board, Amanda S.

To make room for them, like the bubbles in a bottle of sparkling water, leaving the Board and shooting back up to the top of the service structure are my good friend, with whom I have trudged the road of happy destiny nearly a quarter of a century, Brian J – our ex-honorary treasurer.

And lastly, myself, thank you for letting me serve, it's been both an honour and a blast, and I have learned something new from every day of it.

Before leaving, I'd like to ask the question first asked by Gerry F, a US Regional trustee back in 1995. "What was this Conference all about?" – he responded ...

*"Not one of us is given a torch big enough to lead the drunks of the world out of the darkness and into the light. Instead, each of us has been given a candle that burns for a short while with a flickering flame. If we stand together, the light will outshine the greatest torch.*

*If we argue and bicker and blow at each other's candle so that each of us starts shielding our own little flame, then the alcoholics of the world will continue to suffer in darkness, and so will we."*

And with that, I am declaring myself your ex-Chair of the General Service Board, and I will hand over to Amanda to finish the job on behalf of the Board.

### **Amanda S – Chair General Service Board**

Thank you, Nigel. My name is Amanda and I am an alcoholic. I would firstly like to thank Nigel for his service leading the General Service Board in the last three years and having shadowed him over the last eighteen months I know what an all-consuming role it is. He has been a great example to me and I want to thank him for his patience, gratitude to AA and his friendship. I want to thank my fellow Board members for putting their trust and faith in me and I am grateful to continue in service.

Conference, the recommendations you have voted on today will be carried forward by the General Service Board and the relevant sub-committees will carry on the work on the Board's behalf.

The service structure of AAGB and English-speaking Continental Europe Region will celebrate 75 years of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain with a 75<sup>th</sup> Convention from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>

June 2022 to be held at Leeds Arena. The idea of a celebration for the Fellowship to celebrate all that AA has done for us in the past 75 years came out of a Conference decision in 2016.

So, from tomorrow tickets for this Convention will be available from the AA 75<sup>th</sup> website and the web address is [aa75.co.uk](http://aa75.co.uk) and there are 1500 early bird tickets at a price of £25 and once they are gone tickets will be £35. So, if you can pass that back to your groups, intergroups and regions we would love to see as many members as possible at the event which will include Al-Anon participation.

I have also been asked by Stevie, our Vice-Chair, who chairs the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee, to ask the Regions if they would like to appoint a member to liaise with the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee to get in touch with him by emailing [trustee.vicechair@gsogb.org.uk](mailto:trustee.vicechair@gsogb.org.uk)

Finally, before I hand back to our Conference Chair, Marc, I would like Conference to thank Sharon, from the General Service Office, who organises Conference under the direction of the Conference Steering Committee for the Fellowship and today she celebrates her 30<sup>th</sup> Conference.

## **Concepts Video**

Marc asked for comments on the video and then a vote was taken and Conference approved this video with a two-thirds plus majority.

## **Close of Conference**

(Marc D)

It has truly been a weekend of unity, recovery and service. It has been a privilege to serve as your Chair this year and to be here on Friday and officially open Conference has been one of my proudest moments in sobriety. Sadly, it is also my job to close our 55<sup>th</sup> Annual General Service Conference 2021.

When we meet together due to our common problem we unite and share our common solution. Each person here has been an example to the Fellowship today and for tomorrow.

I would like to thank everyone for participating in their Committees, as well as the Steering Committee again for their sterling work throughout the year. As well as all the staff at GSO who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

I would also like to thank our Board of Trustees who spend countless days each year to carry out the work of the Fellowship across Great Britain and beyond.

A special thanks to our General Secretary Ranjan and Sharon our Conference co-ordinator.

To all our overseas observers, thank you for attending and at this point I would be wishing you a safe trip home but unfortunately this wasn't to be.

I would like to congratulate next year's Chairs – Shirley S, Carina H, Kathryn C, Shirley C, Dena A and Levey P.

A wonderful experience awaits you over the next 12 months, and I mean this for all the right reasons when I say I hope it is 12 months and not 24.

And to next year's Conference Chair – Adelle S (Scotia Region).

I have found it an experience that will never fade and not many in the Fellowship have been asked to carry out, treasure every moment.

It has been a very different experience this year and I certainly hope Conference won't have to consider doing again in the future, with that being said, through all the restrictions it truly has been amazing to watch the Fellowship doing such fantastic service this weekend. I am very grateful to have served as Chair this year, I was looking forward to seeing you all in York in our usual venue and worrying about standing on a stage mapping out fire exits, in case it didn't go well, but it wasn't to be. I can't stress enough gratitude to all the Steering Committee as well as Ranjan, Sharon, Brian and Sandi, thank you.

*"I'm living out the life I used to fantasize about, and I have a whole lot of work still in front of me. I have hope to share and love to give, and I just keep going one day at a time, living this adventure called life."*

### ***The Missing Link, Part II (1), Page 288***

There is always work to be done in A.A and grass roots are the most important but service contained in Intergroup and Region is the missing link that each member should try and encourage everyone to do, that way even more people may find this adventure called life too. I'm certain I will see my friends old and new face to face in the future soon. If you would all please help me close out our General Service Conference 2021 with the Serenity Prayer for the last time, thank you.

***Serenity Prayer:*** *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.*

## **DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT CONFERENCE**

The Fifty-Sixth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain will be held at the Park Inn, North Street, York on 8 - 10 April 2022.

## FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2021

# COMMITTEE No. 1

CHAIR                      GEOFF C                      EASTERN REGION

SECRETARY              SHIRLEY S                      SOUTH EAST REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

### 1. **Would Conference:**

- a. **Review Chapter 10 of the AA Service Handbook for GB 2018.**
- b. **Consider publishing a telephone responders' leaflet to include malicious calls.**

a)

The Committee recommends that the GSB requests the Telephone Sub Committee and Literature Sub Committee to review Chapter 10, especially with regard to the use of mobile phones and new technologies.

We would also recommend that this opportunity be taken to review the national telephone service as a whole, including Continental European Region, to promote unity and consistency. All the feedback from the Fellowship will be provided to the National Telephone Sub Committee in order to support the review.

The vote was unanimous.

b)

This Committee recommends that the review of Chapter 10 include guidance to responders on how to handle malicious calls. We also recommend that more comprehensive information be included in a pdf document to be stored in the document library freely available to all responders. This recommendation also takes into account the safeguarding of members.

The vote was unanimous

### 2. **Would the Fellowship share experience of appropriate resources and support for alcoholics who have special needs or disabilities?**

The Committee received a lot of feedback regarding this question.

Resources are available for members with disabilities through AA GB, GSO and The AA World Service [aa.org](http://aa.org) website.

Literature and other AA resources include:

*Carrying the AA Message to people who are Deaf or have Hearing Loss*  
*Problems other than alcohol*  
*Medications and other drugs*  
*Violence and Personal Conduct*

CDs are available, also DVDs in British and American sign language

Some online platforms have closed captions

12 Steps & 12 Traditions

Large print and braille

As the background to the question is concerned with conduct at meetings, the committee stated that there is ample guidance in The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter 5.

It is the responsibility of the Group Secretary/Chair to maintain safe and secure conduct throughout the meeting, with the help of the group.

A group may want to appoint a Disability Liaison Officer.

A Deaf and Hard of Hearing group said that we should not try to “reinvent the wheel” which, sometimes, did not improve things.

It is also important to have resources of the right quality in terms of vision, sound and correct sign language.

The best person to give guidance on what adjustments may be needed to ensure a warm welcome and full participation in AA is the person themselves.

The online Meeting Finder has an accessibility drop-down. Roundabout, Share Magazines and online audio files are valuable resources for members to share their experiences of AA.

It is through the Group Conscience that best practice can be established.

The committee vote was unanimous.

**3. Would Conference share its experience and discuss any benefits of separating intergroup meetings into a GSR section and a Public Information & Cooperation with the professional Community section?**

The Committee found that the question was not clear because the background information is directed at different issues, e.g. intergroup does far more than discuss matters arising from Conference.

It was emphasised that each intergroup is autonomous and therefore responsible for organising their business meetings in whatever way they wish.

Experiences shared through a great deal of feedback from the Fellowship showed that there was little benefit to be gained from separating GSR meetings from the PI and Officers' meetings.

Committee vote was unanimous.

4. **Review proposed addition to the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018, in the chapter 'The General Service Board', section 3, under the heading 'Appointment of new members of the General Service Board' (pages 112-113)**

*"Interviews for prospective Trustees will be conducted only when there are two or more Trustee candidates from the region."*

The Committee voted by a simple majority for the proposal.

The (Concept V) minority view was that adding this sentence to the AA Structure Handbook is unnecessarily inflexible and see that there's value in the Board reviewing this practice.

5. **Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Shirley S of South East Region as Chair of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2022.

6. **Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Andre M of Continental European Region as Secretary of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2022.

*All recommendations on Committee No. 1 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.*

## COMMITTEE No. 2

CHAIR                      JOHNNY J      SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION

SECRETARY      CARINA H      CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION

The Chair opened the meeting with a moment's silence and the preamble.

- 1. Can Conference consider whether the General Service Board be given authority to approve posters, videos and pamphlets produced by Subcommittees without these items needing additional approval by the General Service Conference, which may cause unnecessary delay?**

This committee notes that the process as described in this question does not exist. The General Service Conference (GSC) does not give *additional* approval to publish posters, videos, and pamphlets. GSC is currently the only approving body.

The committee recommends that the General Service Board (GSB) ought not be given authority to approve posters, videos and pamphlets produced by sub-committees, for the following reasons:

1. Giving the GSB authority to approve literature items (pamphlets, posters, videos) would be contrary to the following concepts: Concepts I, II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII.
2. Article 9 of the Conference Charter already explains how to proceed in an urgent case: "... Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services" (Structure Handbook of AA Great Britain, page 107). This means if the need arises to approve posters, videos and pamphlets in between Conferences, a structure to consult Conference is in place.
3. It is vital that prospective literature items (including posters, videos, and pamphlets) be subjected to scrutiny from the fellowship via the Conference process before they can be designated as 'A.A. Conference Approved Literature'. It is more important to get literature right than to produce it quickly.

Approved unanimously

- 2. Could Conference emphasis the benefits and share experience of effective formats for pre and - post conference meetings at Region level?**

The Committee has discussed the following benefits of pre- and post-conference meetings. They:

1. Give GSRs and members the chance to speak directly to the Delegates.
2. Ensure that all opinions are heard.
3. Help the Delegates to feel adequately prepared for Conference.
4. Promote unity of the fellowship.
5. Encourage participation and attract members into service.
6. Increase the knowledge of the Conference Process.
7. Inspire enthusiasm for Conference.
8. Involve members in the Conference process, which is vital for the future of our fellowship.
9. Allow groups to have their voice heard at Conference and give an opportunity for Delegates to report back.

The committee shared the following experience of effective formats for pre and - post conference meetings at Region:

1. Holding pre- and post-conference meetings separately from normal Region Assemblies attended by Delegates, encouraging GSRs and members to participate.
2. Publishing minutes from pre- and post- conference meetings.
3. Utilising online technology to hold pre- and post-conference meetings.
4. Offering members the opportunity to speak to Delegates about their committee during a pre-conference meeting.
5. Including Q&A sessions at the end of a pre- or post-conference meeting.
6. Conducting workshops on the Conference process and the Twelve Concepts.
7. Scheduling the meetings over a few weeks or taking one full day to discuss all questions.

Various regions have found it helpful to schedule their pre- and post-conference meetings accordingly:

1. January: Conference Questions Workshop – including attendance by GSRs, Delegates, and members.
2. February/early March: Pre-Conference Assembly – groups’ responses to questions passed to Delegates.
3. Post Conference: Feedback to intergroup and groups, and guidance on submitting questions for the following year’s conference (due by August 31st).

Approved unanimously

**3. Review the revised chapter The General Service Conference, section 1.5 Delegates, point B, Rotation in the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain**

This committee is in favour of accepting the changes for Point 1.

This committee recommends changing Point 2 to read:

“Any attendance by an alternate delegate will normally count as part of the three-year term of the delegate whose place is taken and would not therefore usually have the effect of extending the term of the delegate originally elected.

However, this determination is ultimately up to the sponsoring region.”

This committee considers it unnecessary to cross-reference another section of the handbook, as this practice may lead to future errors when sections are updated.

15 in favour / 1 abstention / 1 against

The following minority opinion was expressed:  
This process is unfair to the alternate delegates.

**4. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Carina H of Continental European Region as Chair of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2022.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Kate Mck of Scotia Region as Secretary of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2022.

*All recommendations on Committee No. 2 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.*

## FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2021

# COMMITTEE No. 3

CHAIR                      ALLAN M                      EAST OF SCOTLAND REGION

SECRETARY              KATHRYN C                  NORTH EAST REGION

**1. Would the Fellowship consider how any person or persons wishing to open a new meeting may be guided as to the effect on other groups and AA as a whole?**

The Committee recommends that persons wishing to open a new meeting (in-person or online) consider our primary purpose of carrying our message to the alcoholic who still suffers, as stated in Tradition Five.

When looking at the local provision of meetings it is worth considering what neighbouring groups and intergroups are offering. This could avoid unforeseen duplication, potential issues filling service positions and possible impact on tradition 7 contributions.

The Committee further recommends that members familiarise themselves with the existing AA structure and notes that there is already substantial guidance available to persons wishing to open a new meeting both in AA literature and on the AA GB website. This can be found in: 'The Group' chapter, pages 74-76 of The AA Structure Handbook of Great Britain 2020; 'The AA Group' pamphlet; the long forms of Traditions 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7; and under the 'AA Meetings' tab of the AA GB website sections 'Starting A New AA Group', 'Submit Your Meeting Information (Pink Form)', and 'Online/Telephonic Meetings'.

The Committee recommends that members let people know that the new meeting exists by submitting their meeting information (pink form) to the General Service Office.

*The answer was carried unanimously*

**2. Can groups reflect on and share their experience of how they select officers?**

Across the fellowship there is variation in the practices surrounding the selection of officers at group level. These differences emerge due to variations in group size and the availability of members for officer roles. However, the approach of most groups is underpinned by the key guidance in the Structure Handbook. In particular, groups practice rotation in service roles, consider a member's length of sobriety and regular attendance at the group.

In terms of the practical aspects of selection there were a number of different models. Three of the most-reported are described below.

- a. Some groups, often where there are not multiple candidates for roles, simply discuss vacancies at a group conscience or business meeting, volunteers are sought and their selection agreed there and then.
- b. Other groups announce vacancies to seek candidates prior to a business/ group conscience meeting. The candidates present their experience, either verbally or in a written CV, and then the home group members vote on the candidates.
- c. Other groups use a steering committee, which convenes and proposes the best-qualified candidate for a vacancy ('The AA Group' Pamphlet, pg.13; also 'The Group' chapter, Structure Handbook 2020, pg.74).

Some groups create service roles so that every member that wants do service is able to. Others mentioned a 'service ladder', which generally starts with greeting or making tea, often supported by a more-experienced member.

Experience at Intergroup and Regional level is that they tend to adhere more robustly to the guidelines (AA Structure Handbook) and there seemed to be less variation in the selection procedures.

*The answer was carried unanimously.*

### **3. One member, one vote**

**What more can be done to raise understanding across the Fellowship of the spiritual principle that we do not take part in the business or policy of groups which we visit, but which are not our home group?**

The Committee recognises that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting AA as a whole and in such matters, e.g. Questions for Conference, the Committee suggests following the principle of One Member, One Vote. The Committee notes that some groups regularly read the Traditions before Business and Group Conscience Meetings, have an established statement which outlines who is eligible to vote, and also promotes understanding of the Concepts. The Committee recognises that 'it is a privilege to vote on issues that affect AA as a whole' (AA Service Manual for World Service, pg.S25) and it is recommended that members consider both when and how to vote.

However, the Committee identified a need for a clear and unified source of guidance on the principles of participation and One Member, One Vote. The Committee recommends that the General Service Board (GSB) ask the Literature Sub-Committee to revise the 'Business Meetings, the Group Conscience and Group Conscience Meetings' pamphlet and update the AA Structure Handbook to reflect the principle of One Member, One Vote.

The Committee recommends that the General Service Board (GSB) ask the Literature Sub-Committee to consider the following AA literature in making these revisions:

- a. Traditions 2 & 4;
- b. 'The Twelve Concepts Checklist', Concept 4;
- c. 'Business Meetings, the Group Conscience and Group Conscience Meetings' pamphlet;

- d. AA Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, pg.S25;
- e. 'The AA Group' pamphlet.

*The answer was carried unanimously.*

**4. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Kathryn C of North East Region as Chair of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2022.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Thomas H of Continental European Region as Secretary of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2022.

*All recommendations on Committee No. 3 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.*

## FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2021

# COMMITTEE No. 4

CHAIR                      RANALD Mac      HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS REGION

SECRETARY              GARETH P              NORTH EAST REGION

**1. Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations with regards to the issue of rotation within AA's structure, as envisioned by Bill.**

Feedback from our Fellowship indicates that:

- a) Most groups agree that the spirit of rotation is important and support the principle of regular rotation. All service positions should rotate except for archivists who, in return, do not have a vote.
- b) Rotation creates a strong foundation of experience and knowledge across a group of members rather than a limited number of individuals. Younger members tell us that the more organised the group seems, the less daunting it feels to commit to service as a new member.
- c) Rotation assumes there is going to be a steady flow of new members into position. Rotation is a beautiful concept when there are sufficient people. But for some positions there can be problems. Prison service can be difficult due to the problems of getting clearance. Some people have been known to stay in roles for 10 - 15 years. Conversely some Intergroup posts remain unfilled for many years.
- d) Service post swapping and rotation are not the same. Some members are more interested in service than others and may tend to rotate posts among themselves. This breaks the principle of Tradition 12 i.e. "principles before personalities", as well as allowing prestige to divert us from our primary purpose. It also hinders the right of participation.
- e) Some intergroups think that service positions should not be occupied for longer than the stipulated time. Keeping roles vacant until they are filled can be beneficial in getting those much younger in sobriety into service.

(Some groups found the background to this question to be quite obscure stating: the only way that rotation could be relevant to helping new GSRs to integrate at intergroup is if existing serving officers are not rotating out)

Committee 4 received many recommendations from our Fellowship including the following which are listed in no particular order of importance:

- a) The conscience of the group, intergroup and region plays an important part in determining rotation. It would be beneficial to discuss roles at group conscience, intergroup and region and share about service in meetings.
- b) It is not in keeping with the spiritual principles of AA for longer term members to monopolise service positions. Long-time members should adopt the "*elder statesman*" rather than the "*bleeding deacon*" approach (Tradition 2).
- c) Including a record of rotation dates in minutes is helpful.

- d) Members are encouraged to read the Service and Structure Handbooks and other literature for information on rotation. Individual responsibility to read available literature is paramount. Prescribed reading for each post is given in the Service Handbook.
- e) The pamphlet "The AA Group" describes the principle of rotation in much detail under the heading "Is Rotation Important?".
- f) The Structure Handbook states on page 81 a minimum period of service for Group Service Representatives (GSRs) of 2 years. In keeping with other service positions the committee suggests that conference recommends a maximum term for GSRs to be included in the AA Structure Handbook.

Vote was unanimous.

## **2. Could Conference discuss ways the Fellowship can assist sponsors in their responsibility of encouraging newer people into service positions?**

The committee recognised that we had to discuss a sponsor's responsibility in encouraging newer people into service positions in order to identify how the Fellowship could further assist. Examples from the Fellowship included the following:

- a) Sponsors help others to recover and encourage new people to give back through service.
- b) Sponsors explain that the 3 legacies of recovery, unity and service are needed in equal measure to achieve lasting sobriety.
- c) Sponsors guide by example by doing service themselves.
- d) Sponsors encourage newer members to do service from their early days to overcome selfishness and learn to work in a group. They help and support them while bearing in mind that a member cannot be forced to do service.
- e) Sponsors stress the benefits of service, particularly on spiritual development. If members do not do service of some sort, then they may not grow (Survey 2020 indicates that 83% of members who responded felt that service had helped their recovery).
- f) Sponsors encourage sponsees to attend Group conscience/business meetings.
- g) Sponsors take sponsees along to Intergroup, Regional assemblies and workshops, deepening their recovery and relationship with the Fellowship.
- h) Sponsors direct sponsees to the relevant literature about service positions and guide them through the requirements.

Feedback from the Fellowship on how sponsors could be supported in this role included, amongst others, the following examples:

- a) Groups can add as many service positions for newcomers as they want e.g., putting out the literature, making coffee and tea. The biggest service can be welcoming the newcomer and making them feel at home.
- b) At a suitable point in their recovery, members seeking further opportunities for giving back could ask a member with the appropriate experience to sponsor them into a particular position - acting as a service sponsor (also known as shadowing, or 12 stepping into service)
- c) Groups could encourage members including sponsors to read the updated pamphlet "Growing into Service", which now has a section called "Sponsorship into Service"
- d) Groups could invite members to share their experience and the benefits of service in meetings especially when they are due for rotation.
- e) Members should be encouraged to talk positively about service as an active, essential part of recovery.

- f) Groups could have leaflets on service on display at meetings - the pamphlets 'Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered' and "Growing Into Service" draw attention to sponsoring into service.
- g) Groups, Intergroups, Region and service disciplines could hold more frequent service and sponsorship workshops on-line or otherwise e.g. "Service: The Sponsor and Sponsee" where officers raise awareness of what their service position involves and the benefits of service.
- h) Conventions could hold sponsorship forums.
- i) Share, Roundabout and AA Service News could be used more to advertise these workshops and forums.
- j) Since the pamphlet "Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered" contains little guidance on sponsoring into service, the literature sub-committee is asked to review this and add a section on this topic.

Furthermore Committee 4 recommends that:

- a) Newly available on-line technologies be explored by the Fellowship as a matter of urgency to enhance the support not only to sponsors but to all aspects of service.
- b) A leaflet specifically on service sponsorship be produced by the Board.
- c) Guidelines are dotted around AA literature, but a proper focussed pamphlet would be helpful. The US pamphlet P15 "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" for example, contains valuable information.
- d) Section 1 of The Service Handbook (Growing into Service) is reviewed by the Board to include the roles of sponsorship and service sponsorship.

Vote was 16 for and 1 abstention.

**3. Review revised Chapter 3 AA and Electronic Communications, section 3.6 The AA GB Website of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2018.**

The committee recommends that the last line of section 3:6 The AA GB Website in Service Handbook 2018. P37 is changed to:

*"All other external links will require Board approval and must display clear disclaimers and warnings if the link takes the user away from the AA GB website".*

Vote was unanimous.

**4. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Shirley C of Eastern Region as Chair of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2022.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Jon S South West Region as Secretary of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2022.

*All recommendations on Committee No. 4 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.*

## FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2021

# COMMITTEE No. 5

CHAIR                      ZELMA K                      WALES & BORDERS REGION

SECRETARY              DENA A                      CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION

- 1. Can Conference discuss their experience of sobriety requirements for Prison Liaison Officers and members sharing at prison meetings and, if deemed necessary, recommend amendments to Chapter 8 of “The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain” in order to give more clarity?**

The Committee shared experience and recommended that the minimum period of sobriety for the roles in question should be as follows:

### **Intergroup & Region Prison Liaison Officer (PLO)**

PLO organizes schedules for prison visiting and anything concerning communication with the prison, reports back to intergroup and region  
Length of sobriety – three years

### **Prison Sponsor (Facilitator)**

Regularly facilitates a meeting in a prison e.g., Chair/Secretary of a meeting who goes in to the prison on a regular basis  
Length of sobriety – three years

### **AA members who are invited to speak or visit a prison group**

All members sharing in prisons are invited at the discretion of the Prison Sponsor and/or the PLO who have a duty of care to any AA members invited into a prison.  
Length of sobriety - One year and accompanied by a Prison Sponsor (Facilitator). There was a minority view that three years' minimum sobriety is required.

The Committee recommended that the General Service Board (GSB) direct the Prison Sub-Committee to provide definitions of roles with named positions in addition to providing clarification in Chapter Eight of the AA Service Handbook to include (but not limited to) the above recommendations.

The Committee's vote was unanimous.

- 2. Would Conference consider the implications of the adoption of the practice by AA in Great Britain of inviting speakers from overseas and paying their expenses? Make recommendations.**

The Committee considered that the implications of the practice of paying speakers from overseas to attend conventions included the following:

- a) Encouraging a “Celebrity culture” circuit and professionalisation of AA which conflicts with our spiritual principle that what we receive freely we freely give away.
- b) Acknowledging that circuit speakers do attract audiences and their message may provide identification.

- c) Group autonomy - Tradition Four allows a convention committee to decide whether or not to invite an overseas speaker.
- d) Possible incorrect use of Tradition Seven monies to cover expenses at Conventions, as expenses should be covered by the registration fee.
- e) Possible professionalisation of AA and contravention of Traditions Eight and Twelve.
- f) Local speakers lose valuable opportunities to gain experience sharing with larger audiences.
- g) Overseas could not be clearly defined especially in Continental Europe

In considering all of the above the Committee makes the following recommendations:

The wording of the Conventions section Finance paragraph in the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain should be changed from:

*At the planning stage it is sensible to cover all projected costs through the registration fee, remembering that the "Pot" is traditionally AA money.*

TO

*All projected costs should be covered through the registration fee, remembering that the "Pot" is traditionally AA money used for primary purpose work and not to be used to cover expenses.*

Text is added to the Chairperson and Speakers section of the Conventions section in the AA GB Structure manual as follows:

*Usually Conventions invite the chair and speakers to participate well in advance. If speakers are invited from outside the local area and their reimbursement for travel is to be paid this should be borne in mind when assessing the registration charge. Fees should not be paid to AA speakers as to do so would imply professionalism and violate the spirit of Tradition Eight.*

If accepted by Conference the Committee recommends that this wording is updated in the AA GB Structure Handbook, Chapter on Conventions. The Committee noted that the practice recommended by the 1995 Committee (given in the background information) had not been added to the Conventions Section of the AA GB Structure Handbook.

The Committee's decision was unanimous.

- 3. Would Conference consider the best way to keep archive material intact? Should there be a move to ask all Region and Intergroup archivists to pass their older material - say anything older than 10 years - up to York for safe keeping?**

**Would Conference also consider that Intergroup or Regions' Archive material, even though stored at the home of the Archivist or under lock and key elsewhere, remain the property of A.A., despite voluntary rotation, or the incumbent passing away.**

The Committee noted that fellowship feedback was consistently critical of the lack of any background material provided with the question and recommend that this is taken into account by the Conference Steering Committee when compiling future questions.

The Committee however recognized that despite the lack of background information the issue of preserving the archives of AA is of great importance to the fellowship. After discussion, the recommendation to Conference of the three points raised in the question is as follows:

1. The Committee agreed that the best way to keep archive material intact is for it to be moved to GSO/Borthwick for best protection of the fellowship's history.
2. The Committee recommends that there is a request made to Region and Intergroup archivists that material older than ten years is passed to GSO for storage, bearing in mind the autonomy provided to all by Tradition Four. A minority view was expressed that this request should not be made.
3. The Committee agreed that in considering the moral ownership of the material, AA archives belong to the fellowship and not the individual; legal imperative notwithstanding.

The Committee recommends that the GSB instruct the Archive Sub-Committee to provide clear guidance to the fellowship about items that should be included with the archive material. This guidance should be added to the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter 11 "Archives".

The Committee hopes that the above recommendations inform the ongoing review being undertaken by the Archives Sub-Committee of the views of the fellowship on these points.

The Committee recorded a majority in favour of the decision. A minority view that the question should have been postponed until further background information was made available was expressed, fully considered and respected.

#### **4. Elect Committee Chairman for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Dena A of Continental European Region as Chair of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2022.

#### **5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Richard F London Region South as Secretary of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2022.

*All recommendations on Committee No. 5 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.*

## COMMITTEE No. 6

CHAIR            ADELLE S            SCOTIA REGION  
SECRETARY    MICHAEL M            GLASGOW REGION

- 1. Conference is asked to consider and make recommendations on ways to reach out to problem drinkers in black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Membership of AA is still predominantly white, even in racially mixed towns and cities.**

The fellowship acknowledges that there may be more Primary Purpose activity required in carrying our message to the suffering alcoholics from minority ethnic groups, as confirmed by the 2020 AA survey and validated by participation at Conference 2021.

Ethnicity varies greatly across AAGB and CER and to avoid assumptions being made in how to address this issue, or the extent of the issue, we recommend a combined approach across the service structure.

Local groups/intergroups could consider the option to:

- Host more meetings in diverse types of venues.
- Approach community leaders to raise awareness about the availability of AA.
- Invite non-alcoholics from minority groups to attend open meetings to raise awareness.
- Pi Walkabouts of local area to distribute literature and posters.
- Consider use of online meetings to encourage those who might find it difficult to attend face to face meetings.
- Utilise experience of existing members where appropriate to ensure all cultural implications are considered prior to activity commencing.

GSB/Sub Committees:

This committee recommends that the GSB implement a review of all current literature (posters, leaflets, videos etc.) to ensure most effective outreach to minority ethnic groups. These relevant subcommittees should make readily available the translated versions of our leaflets and collate them on the AAGB website.

This committee recommends that the GSB instruct the Electronic Communication Sub Committee to review Ethnic Communities page on the AAGB website and add links to relevant literature.

Roundabout/SHARE could consider specific editions or frequent contributions from members from minority ethnic groups.

Finally, we recommend that all areas mentioned above utilise the experience, strength, and hope of existing members from minority ethnic groups to ensure appropriateness of solutions and that all cultural considerations are taken into account.

*The vote was unanimous.*

**2. Would the Fellowship share experience in reaching out to the growing homeless community, many of whom have problems with alcohol?**

The fellowship has varied experience around reaching out to alcoholics within the homeless community.

This reflects the fact that there are varied and complex needs among these vulnerable members of our communities, and the geographical location of these communities.

The initiative shown in Brighton is to be applauded. Similar activity in other regions includes:

- a. Homeless/Hostel Liaison Officers in post.
- b. Public Information Officers have this as part of their role where relevant. In some areas, additional Sub Committees have been formed to support the specific activity required.
- c. Use of specific lived experience which has been very useful in carrying the message.
- d. Outreach activity with charities, night shelters, food banks and hostels.
- e. Hosting meetings in or near hostels, rehabs, or shelters.
- f. Making AA literature available to individuals who work with homeless people.

*The vote was unanimous.*

**3. Would the Fellowship share experience of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on AA in Great Britain at group level and make recommendations on suitable commitments and an appropriate service path for newcomers at online meetings?**

The Coronavirus Pandemic needs no introduction. The AA Fellowship quickly adapted to change, diversified and grew through the application of the Traditions, never forgetting the fulfilment of our Primary Purpose.

The experience of the fellowship in this evolving situation is as follows:

**Online Meetings**

1. Whilst online meetings previously existed, the pandemic has accelerated the use of online meetings.
2. Online meetings have worked successfully, with members achieving sobriety solely through online meetings and remote sponsorship.
3. It is felt that online meetings will be a part of the fellowship going forward as it has worked well as part of the structure.
4. At group level, scheduling has been found to be important to avoid clashes.
5. Members are able to access meetings all around the world, and the fellowship has widened.
6. Some newcomers and members find online meetings easier to access and, in some cases, are less daunting than a physical meeting.

7. Greater access to specific, non restrictive diversity meetings
8. Some felt that these meetings compromise emotional connection.
9. Initially it was difficult to find service positions for newcomers and members, however positions have been identified and created such as:
  - a. Welcomers (Greeting newcomers and members)
  - b. Readers (Preamble, Cards etc.)
  - c. Local Literature delivery
  - d. Chip Person (Birthday/Anniversary Secretary)
  - e. Tradition 7 Announcer
  - f. Literature Announcer
  - g. Timekeeper
  - h. Sponsorship and Contact Coordinator
  - i. Social Secretary
  - j. Screen Sharer
  - k. Tech Person
  - l. Host and Co-Host
  - m. Chat Monitor
  - n. Chair finder
10. Online meetings may not be accessible for everyone due to personal preference and/or technology limitations, however some groups have given guidance and/or resources to help members to access meetings.
11. Security concerns remain however groups have introduced a number of mitigations to minimise risk as referenced in the 'Online Zoom Meeting Hosting Guidelines' document on the AAGB website.
12. Various applications or platforms have been used to encourage communication between meetings.

#### **Tradition 7**

1. Online payments and contactless payments have been successfully used with some groups experiencing an increase in contributions.
2. In online meetings, links are being posted in the various chat facilities for tradition 7.
3. Some groups have shared licences with other groups to reduce costs.

#### **Online Intergroups**

1. CER has had an Online Intergroup for years.
2. Any group can join any intergroup or form an intergroup with other groups.
3. There are mixed views expressed across the fellowship on the creation of new online intergroups.

#### **Physical Meetings**

Where physical meetings have taken place there have been tremendous efforts to adhere to applicable law, legislation and guidelines.

#### **Hybrid meetings**

Hybrid meetings - after teething problems these turned out to be quite successful, particularly where there was experience with technology.

**Recommendations:**

This committee recommends that GSB form a specific working group/sub committee to address the ongoing changes resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic and issue further guidance as appropriate.

This committee recommends that GSB revisit Conference 2018 Committee 2 Question 1 recommendation to address online payments and produce guidance for the fellowship.

***The vote was unanimous.***

**4. Elect Committee Chair for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Levey P of Continental European Region as Chair of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2022.

**5. Elect Committee Secretary for Conference 2022.**

The Committee elected Vikki C of Wales & Borders Region as Secretary of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2022.

***All recommendations on Committee No. 6 were passed with a two-thirds plus majority.***

## FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE 2021

### LIST OF DELEGATES

**CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN: MARC D (South West Scotland Region)**

### GENERAL SERVICE BOARD

		<b>COMMITTEE NUMBER</b>	<b>TERM OF SERVICE</b>
Nigel	P		
Sandi	A	6	
Erik	A	1	
Norman	B	4	
Brian	J	2	
Clive	K	5	
Pat	McG	5	
Barbara	O	3	
Jonathan	P	1	
Mike	P	1	
Charles	R	3	
Amanda	S	5	
Stevie	S	2	
Terri	S	3	
Justin	T	3	
Maxine	W	4	
Jo	F (Elect)	2	
Gretchen	S (Elect)	6	
Thomas Baldwin		4	
Tom Fox		5	
Mani Mehdikhani		6	
Andrew Wetherell		1	

### GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

Ranjan B	General Secretary	Committee Support Admins
Sharon Smyth		Steve Hexter
Angela Varley		Anne-Marie S
Mandy Tervet		Chris North
Gillian Thompson		Emma W
		Jenny Pryke
		Jean-Pierre S

**COMMITTEE  
NUMBER**

**TERM OF  
SERVICE**

**EASTERN REGION**

Geoff	C	1	3
Gerald	M	2	1
David	C	3	3
Shirley	C	4	2
Graham	B	5	3
Maggie	P	6	1

**LONDON REGION NORTH**

Charon	B	1	3
Marco	L	2	1
Mary	W	3	1
Elaine	C	4	1
Cameron	D	5	A
Gabriel	S	6	2

**LONDON REGION SOUTH**

Gemma	B	1	3
Tony	S	2	2
Frank	O	3	1
Ian	E	4	2
Richard	F	5	A
Ben	D	6	3

**MIDLANDS REGION**

Jane	K	1	1
Michelle	C	2	1
Alex	J	3	3
Linda	D	4	3
Jill	R	5	3
Chris	H	6	1

**NORTH EAST REGION**

Lynne	H	1	1
Adam	P	2	1
Kathryn	C	3	2
Gareth	P	4	3
Jan	C	5	2
Ian	M	6	1

		<b>COMMITTEE NUMBER</b>	<b>TERM OF SERVICE</b>
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### **NORTH WEST REGION**

Charlie	C	1	2
Harry	R	2	1
Peter	M	3	2
Neil	W	4	1
Simon	D	5	1
Angela	S	6	2

### **SOUTH EAST REGION**

Shirley	S	1	2
Eleanor	E	2	1
Robin	H	3	1
Jean	McL	4	1
Mark	F	5	3
John	S	6	1

### **SOUTH MIDLANDS REGION**

Suzanne	G	1	2
Johnny	J	2	3
Tim	B	3	2
Keith	V	4	2
Mark	H	5	2
Corinne	C	6	2

### **SOUTH WEST REGION**

Nick	P	1	1
Jo	R	2	3
Iain	W	3	1
Jon	S	4	1
Mick	H	5	1
Caroline	C	6	1

### **WALES & BORDERS REGION**

Graham	S	1	3
Adam	W	2	1
Roger	E	3	2
Janette	P	4	1
Zelma	K	5	2
Vikki	C	6	A

**COMMITTEE  
NUMBER**

**TERM OF  
SERVICE**

**EAST OF SCOTLAND REGION**

Lynne	A	1	1
Anne	T	2	2
Allan	MacL	3	3
Eric	L	4	A
		5	
Gerry	K	6	1

**GLASGOW REGION**

Hugh	S	1	3
James	K	2	1
Thomas	S	3	3
Sandy	C	4	1
Sean	M	5	A
Michael	McL	6	2

**HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS REGION**

Cath	W	1	A
Marion	McK	2	3
		3	
Ranald	MacA	4	3
Mairi	B	5	1
		6	

**SCOTIA REGION**

Jane	R	1	1
Kate	McK	2	A
Jeannie	F	3	1
Norrie	D	4	1
Ray	S	5	2
Adelle	S	6	3

**SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND REGION**

Lenard	C	1	3
Angus	MacG	2	1
		3	
		4	
Willie	D	5	1
		6	

**COMMITTEE  
NUMBER**

**TERM OF  
SERVICE**

**CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN REGION**

Andre	M	1	1
Carina	H	2	2
Thomas	H	3	1
Daniel	G	4	2
Dena	A	5	2
Levey	P	6	2

**OBSERVERS**

Andrey	Z	(Bulgaria)	1	1
John	T	(Ireland)	2	1
Barbara	A	(Ireland)	3	1
Andrzej Bujkowski		(Poland)	4	1
Miguel	L	(Portugal)	4	1
Ramona		(Romania)	5	1
Daniel		(Romania)	6	1

## Glossary of Abbreviations Used

AA	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i>
AAA	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness</i>
AASN	-	<i>AA Service News</i>
AAWS	-	<i>Alcoholics Anonymous World Services</i>
ASL	-	<i>American Sign Language</i>
ASLO	-	<i>Armed Services Liaison Officer</i>
BSL	-	<i>British Sign Language</i>
CER	-	<i>Continental European Region</i>
CMS	-	<i>Content Management System</i>
CSC	-	<i>Conference Steering Committee</i>
DAAT	-	<i>Drug and Alcohol Teams</i>
ECLO	-	<i>Electronic Communication Liaison Officer</i>
ECSC	-	<i>Electronic Communication Sub Committee</i>
ELO	-	<i>Employment Liaison Officer</i>
ESM	-	<i>European Service Meeting</i>
GSB	-	<i>General Service Board</i>
GSO	-	<i>General Service Office</i>
GSR	-	<i>Group Service Representative</i>
HLO	-	<i>Health Liaison Officer</i>
HSC	-	<i>Health Sub Committee</i>
MOJ	-	<i>Ministry of Justice</i>
NAT	-	<i>Non-Alcoholic Trustee</i>
NHS	-	<i>National Health Service</i>
NICE	-	<i>National Institute for Clinical Excellence</i>
NNC	-	<i>Northern National Convention</i>
NOMS	-	<i>National Offender Management Service</i>
NSO	-	<i>Northern Service Office</i>
NTA	-	<i>National Treatment Agency</i>
ORS	-	<i>Online Response Service</i>
PI	-	<i>Public Information</i>
PLO	-	<i>Prison Liaison Officer</i>
PPS	-	<i>Prison Postal Service</i>
PR	-	<i>Public Relations</i>
P/SS	-	<i>Probation/Social Services</i>
RECLLO	-	<i>Regional Electronic Communication Liaison Officer</i>
RELO	-	<i>Regional Employment Liaison Officer</i>
RTLO	-	<i>Regional Telephone Liaison Officer</i>
SPPS	-	<i>Scottish Prison Postal Service</i>
SPS	-	<i>Scottish Prison Service</i>
SSAFA	-	<i>Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen &amp; Families Association</i>
SSASM	-	<i>Sub Saharan Africa Service Meeting</i>
SSO	-	<i>Southern Service Office</i>
TLO	-	<i>Telephone Liaison Officer</i>
TOR	-	<i>Terms of Reference</i>
YPLO	-	<i>Young Peoples Liaison Officer</i>
YPP	-	<i>Young People Project</i>

## The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity
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.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. AA as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

