

Group Service Representative (GSR)

Taken from p80 of the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017.

See Also – the Chapter “The Group” p 74 AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017

And – Chapter 1 “Growing Into Service” p7 AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017

The GSR’s responsibilities are fully explained in section 3 below.

Bill W. said “The strength of our whole structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative that the group elects. By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR a group helps its own future and the future of AA as a whole.”

To be chosen to represent a group is to be given the opportunity to take part in AAs Third Legacy, that of service, and to have the chance to become a trusted servant. The GSR should have at least two years' continuous sobriety and should serve for a minimum of two years.

The Traditions

While the above sets out how an ideal group may operate, the conscience of each group decides for itself how much it will do and the best way of getting it done. There are many ways of living up to *Tradition Five*, which says “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

Tradition Two reminds us that “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.”

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Working via the intergroup the GSR is the groups' link with the General Service Conference, through which groups share experiences and voice AA's collective conscience.

More from Bill W..... “The GSR – as the general service representative is known – has the job of linking his or her group with AA as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the groups' wishes to the committee member and to the delegate, who passes them on to the Conference and to the movement.

For this, GSRs need the confidence of the group. They also need a good ear for listening. We all realize whatever “authority” there is in AA resides in the group conscience. Because of this, a GSR can determine exactly what a group needs, what a group thinks about a situation, and can pass this information along to where it will be most useful in policy-making.

This is a two-way street, allowing the GSR to bring back to the group the problems and remedies that affect AA unity, health, and growth. To the extent that a GSR keeps the group informed, then expresses the group conscience, only to that extent can the Conference feel it is acting for AA as a whole”. (From The AA Service Manual)

Responsibilities

The suggested responsibilities are:

- Share with their group all Fellowship mail, communication and news items.
- Keep members informed about local service activities
- They may be contacts for referral to carry the AA message

- GSRs can also help their group solve problems by drawing upon the facilities of the General Service Office in York where the staff is ready to relay helpful AA experience from all over the World
- They can help see that up-to-date group information for the AA directory is sent promptly to GSO
- The GSR is the vital link in the chain of two-way communication between the group and intergroup. Each represents his or her group at intergroup service assemblies, sharing experiences with neighbouring GSRs in workshops and sharing sessions
- Prior to attending intergroup meetings, fully discuss agenda items with the group
- Represent and express the group's conscience at all intergroup meetings. The GSR should faithfully express the group's opinions whatever his or her feelings may be, thus putting principles before personalities
- Following intergroup, report back to the group
- The GSR has a responsibility to attend all such meetings and, if this is impossible, to brief thoroughly an alternate, chosen by the group to stand in
- Encourage observers to attend intergroup in order to foster their interest in the Fellowship and sponsor other members into Service
- Only GSRs and members of the intergroup committee are entitled to vote at intergroup meetings
- It is the GSR's responsibility to know the group so well that should unexpected matters come before the intergroup meeting he or she will have a fair idea of group's conscience

Qualifications

Groups should take due care in electing their GSR, giving particular regard to the following:

- It is suggested that the GSR should have at least two or three years' continuous sobriety and preferably not hold any other group office. (It should be remembered that the GSR may be eligible for candidature as a regional representative or as a Conference delegate)
- The GSR should have a working knowledge of the AA publications referred to in the introduction
- The GSR should have a good knowledge of the structure of AA
- The GSR should be a regular weekly attender at his or her own group and therefore be able, should necessity arise, to stand in for any other officer of the group who is unable to be present
- The GSR should be prepared to serve for a minimum of two years

By choosing as GSR one of the group's most qualified individuals the group helps its own future and the future of AA as a whole. It is suggested that groups should also elect an alternate representative who would attend meetings should the need arise. The GSR is the first vital link in the communications chain between group, intergroup, region and the General Service Board, carrying the group conscience to intergroup and the intergroup conscience to the group. Groups should take care in electing their GSR's. It is suggested that the GSR should have at least two years' continuous sobriety, as a GSR may be elected to intergroup office. The GSR needs to be familiar with the *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* and be prepared to uphold them, as well as being conversant with the following books: *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *AA Comes of Age*, the latest edition of *The AA Structure and Service Handbooks for Great Britain*, *The AA Service Manual*, and the pamphlet *The AA Group*.