

CONFERENCE FEEDBACK 2018

Committee One

Question 1.

Would Conference discuss a) whether the Fellowship's use of the terminology 'closed' and 'open' to describe AA meeting attendance restrictions confuses newcomers and thereby detracts from our primary purpose, and b) if required, recommend a better solution?

The Committee shared experience of the Fellowship's use of the terminology 'open' and 'closed' and concluded that these terms are confusing to some newcomers when used without definitions.

However, we found that these terms do not necessarily detract from our Primary Purpose.

The Committee recommends that Groups, Intergroups and the General Service Board minimise the identified confusion to newcomers when publishing AA meeting listings by:

- a) Moving the definitions of 'open' and 'closed' to the most prominent position in local and national Where to Find directories
- b) Placing 'open' and 'closed' definitions in the most prominent position for someone browsing for meeting information on the Alcoholics Anonymous GB and local websites
- c) Accompanying the terms 'open' and 'closed' with the definitions as stated on page 74 of the The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017, anywhere they are used.

As part of the process, 12 members of the Committee voted to retain the terms 'open' and 'closed' and 6 members of the Committee voted against. Having accepted the majority view, the above response was unanimous.

Conference vote: carried. 58 for / 41 against / 7 abstentions

Question 2.

Review Chapter 4 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017 'For AA Members employed in the Alcoholism Field'

With reference to our Traditions, especially Tradition 10, this Committee reviewed Chapter 4 of The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017 and recommends the removal of Chapter 4 in its entirety.

The Committee further recommends that there is no need for a pamphlet at this time.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 1 report.

Conference vote: rejected. 29 for / 70 against / 7 abstentions

The Committee elected Mike E of Midlands Region as Chair of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2019

The Committee elected Charon B of London Region North as Secretary of Committee No. 1 for Conference 2019

Committee Two

Question 1.

Would Conference please discuss and share its experience about Tradition 7 monies being collected electronically?

This committee recognises that 'Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole' (Tradition 4).

The small number of groups that collect Tradition 7 contributions electronically report the following experience:

- Evidence of increased contributions outweighs any expense associated with transaction fees. These fees are accounted for as group running expenses
- Anonymity has not been compromised
- User friendly / ease of use
- Cash collection via the pot still available

The majority of groups have no experience of this method of collecting Tradition 7 contributions; however, they express the following reservations:

- Potential breach of anonymity
- Personal transaction data may be used for external marketing purposes
- May be off-putting for the newcomer, other members and the group treasurer
- Cash needs always to be available to meet day to day group expenses
- Concerns about abuse, potential fraud, human error and chargebacks (ie payment reversal)

Further research on this is needed. Groups are encouraged to share their experience via the service structure.

If this method of collection becomes more widespread, the Fellowship may need to consider potential changes to existing AA literature.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 2 report.

Conference vote: carried. 94 for / 4 against / 7 abstentions

Question 2.

Would Conference discuss, consider and make recommendations on whether 'speaker tapes' – audio files and /or podcasts of AA members sharing their experience, strength and hope – could be incorporated into the AA GB website www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk ?

This committee recognizes that audio versions of Share and Roundabout submissions are already available on the AA GB website.

Having considered all the responses received, this committee recommends that audio clips of AA members sharing their experience, strength and hope be added to the website to help carry the message to the newcomer, thus fulfilling our Primary Purpose.

This Committee recommends that Conference direct the General Service Board to assume responsibility for this project and, if possible, to implement this proposal by Conference 2019.

We further recommend that the audio clips be:

- short
- clearly signposted
- reflect the diversity of the Fellowship
- and preserve anonymity

Committee 2 approved this response unanimously

Conference vote: carried. 105 for / 1 against / 1 abstention

The Committee elected Bob S of South East Region as Chair of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2019

The Committee elected Jonny J of South Midlands Region as Secretary of Committee No. 2 for Conference 2019

Committee Three

Question 1.

Would Conference discuss the idea of adding a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) AA Helpline service to the AA GB website?

This Committee welcomes the idea of adding a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) AA helpline service to the AA GB website as an additional way for the still suffering alcoholic to contact the Fellowship. However, based on feedback from the Fellowship, we have concerns with:

- a) possible breach of caller's anonymity
- b) possible burden on responders

We understand that some calls to the 0800 number are already being made using VoIP.

This Committee recommends that the General Service Board undertake a review of the value, cost and feasibility of the idea and present recommendations to Conference 2019.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 3 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

Question 2.

Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on how we are able to introduce telephone and internet banking at all levels of service, being ever mindful of our current practice of requiring two signatories on each cheque issued?

Having discussed this question and shared our experience, this Committee notes:

- a) A general trend towards telephone and internet banking

- b) That guidance has been sought from all levels of service
- c) The importance of the recommended current practice of requiring two out of three signatories to authorise transactions (pages 79, 82, 90 and 95 of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017)

This Committee recommends that the General Service Board liaise with Regional Treasurers regarding this issue with a view to updating the relevant sections of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2017 and other literature, if possible, reporting its progress to Conference 2019.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 3 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

The Committee elected Gretchen S of London Region South as Chair of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2019

The Committee elected Allen M of East of Scotland Region as Secretary of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2019

Committee Four

Question 1.

Inventory questions:

- a) Is AA still carrying the message of recovery effectively, ie sharing experience, strength and hope, offering sponsorship, talking about the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions?***
- b) Would Conference share its experience on how AA can do this more effectively?***

Feedback from our Fellowship indicates that AA is still carrying the message of recovery effectively ie. sharing experience, strength and hope, offering sponsorship and talking about The 12 Steps and The 12 Traditions. However, many suggestions were shared on how we can do this even more effectively.

The books Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, together with the Service and Structure Handbooks and our other AA literature offer guidance and experience on ways to increase our effectiveness.

Furthermore, Committee 4 received many suggestions from our Fellowship including, but not limited to, the following, listed in no particular order of importance:

Public Information

- i) Ensuring that AA is known by and accessible to all who need it
- ii) Continuing to support and develop the AA GB website
- iii) Displaying posters in surgeries, libraries and courts etc where possible
- iv) Advertising in accordance with Tradition 11
- v) Holding open Public Awareness meetings
- vi) Remembering that PI is the responsibility of Groups, as well as Intergroups, Regions and the General Service Board

Newcomers

- i) Actively greeting and engaging with newcomers eg in the 'meeting before the meeting'
- ii) Ensuring that newcomers feel welcome in the group
- iii) Providing the opportunity for one alcoholic to identify with another
- iv) Carrying the message of recovery

Sponsorship

- i) Using the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, as a guide to sponsorship
- ii) Making members aware of those who are willing to sponsor, or temporarily sponsor, others
- iii) Sponsoring into service, referring to our leaflets and handbooks

Service

- i) Filling vacant service positions, particularly external liaison functions such as PI
- ii) Respecting the 'spirit of rotation'
- iii) Encouraging members into service through sponsorship, job-shadowing etc.
- iv) Bringing new members along as observers to all our service and Twelfth Step activities
- v) Increasing the understanding of the Twelve Traditions and Concepts, in support of our Primary Purpose

Personal Responsibility

'I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that I am responsible'.

- i) Leading by example
- ii) Putting AA principles into action
- iii) Being active in the Service Structure

Love and Service

In his farewell talk, Dr. Bob said: 'Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words 'love' and 'service'.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 4 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

Question 2.

Review new addition 'Chat Now Service' to be added to Chapter 3 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017.

The Committee recommends that the new addition draft 'Chat Now Service' be added to Chapter 3 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2017 with the following amendments:

- i) Spelling: change 'enquires' to 'enquiries'. Line 10
- ii) Consistency: capitalise 'Online Responder(s)' on lines 10 & 11
- iii) Consistency: change 'AAGB' to 'AA GB'. Line 2
- iv) Spelling: change 'program' to 'programme'. Line 14
- v) Change: 'and each may also appoint an assistant' to 'and may also appoint assistants'.
Line 23

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 4 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

The Committee elected Justin T of South West Region as Chair of Committee No. 4 for Conference 2019

The Committee elected Tim M of London Region North as Secretary of Committee No. 3 for Conference 2019

Committee Five

Question 1.

Inventory questions:

a) Would Conference share experience and knowledge of the problems surrounding attracting members into service at Intergroup, especially in rural areas?

The Committee shared its experience with regards to this problem in rural areas and found that it is common throughout the Fellowship. The major problems identified were:

- i) The costs of getting to meetings
- ii) Not enough sponsorship into service
- iii) Lack of knowledge of service positions
- iv) Groups that choose not to participate in their local intergroup
- v) Negative perceptions about intergroup
- vi) Lack of rotation of service positions

The Committee stresses the importance of attracting people to serve at group and intergroup level and these are the suggestions that may help enhance this. The Committee found that there is no one solution to this problem. The solutions identified were:

- i) Sponsorship and encouragement into service positions. Sponsors and members to talk about the service they do and how it enhances their recovery
- ii) Regular and informed business and/or group conscience meetings
- iii) An active GSR is an invaluable asset to the group

b) Would Conference review the resources available to Intergroups and make recommendations on how best they are used to attract representation at Intergroup by Groups in their area?

The Committee suggests that the recommendations for part (a) are relevant to answer this question in addition to the following list:

- i) Use the AA Structure, Service Handbooks and AA literature which provide guidance for all service positions
- ii) Intergroup can offer support to groups in keeping their records up to date using the pink forms to ensure that groups can be contacted
- iii) Car sharing encourages fellowship and may enable more members to attend
- iv) Intergroup can pay expenses according to the guidance of the AA Service Handbook
- v) Group members can be encouraged / invited to attend intergroup as observers
- vi) Long serving members can pass on their experience to newer members

- vii) Intergroup may consider moving meeting locations around to make them closer to people in rural areas
- viii) Members of an intergroup to reach out to outlying and non-attending groups
- ix) Intergroups may produce a welcome pack to be distributed to GSRs
- x) It is possible to use online conferencing to enable groups to participate who otherwise might have difficulty
- xi) Intergroup can send out action points to GSRs or known group contacts

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 5 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

Question 2.

Would Conference consider how the Fellowship's social media presence can be improved to enhance AA's ability to carry the message?

Following discussion, the Committee concluded that social media has considerable and far reaching benefits, but it comes with considerable risks. Some of the concerns identified but not limited to the following are:

- i) The need to safeguard and preserve our Traditions
- ii) Risks to anonymity and privacy
- iii) Concerns about private and public bodies extracting data
- iv) Failure to adhere to AA's *Hints and Suggestions on Internet Safety*
- v) May discourage some people from seeking person to person support
- vi) Lack of clarity and transparency of service providers

Benefits include but are not limited to the following:

- i) Carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic
- ii) Enabling increased awareness for the general public and professionals
- iii) A medium more accessible to people who may not use other means of communication
- iv) 24 hour availability

The Committee concluded that it was unable to provide a recommendation on how to move forward and therefore requests that the GSB GB look further into this and report back to Conference in 2019 with recommendations.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 5 report.

Conference vote: carried. 105 for / 2 against / 0 abstentions

The Committee elected Mark F of South East Region as Chair of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2019

The Committee elected Zelma K of Wales & Borders Region as Secretary of Committee No. 5 for Conference 2019

Committee Six

Question 1.

Would Conference share their experience and make recommendations on:

- a) What can be done when a Group has no named Officers and/or the contact no longer attends?***
- b) Is there any way in which the local Intergroup can assist, given that we do not govern but are trusted servants?***
- c) Could GSO be asked to carry out an annual review/renewal process for Pink Form details for each Group to remain on the Internet listings, Where to Find etc., and also inform the appropriate Intergroup of any significant changes?***

The Committee shared experience and came to the following conclusions:

- a) Where some groups have not updated information because they are unaware of the pink form process, we believe that the Fellowship should raise awareness of how groups' details are updated
- b) We cannot tell groups what to do, but an intergroup may offer support and raise awareness through literature and shared experience
- c) The responsibility for review of the pink form remains with the groups who ought to be encouraged to update their details annually.

Recommendation: consider amending the Structure Handbook on page 76 Where to Find AA, first paragraph as italicised below:

In order to ensure that it remains accurate, *all groups ought to update their pink forms annually. Group Secretaries, or those responsible* are requested to keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in the address of the meeting place, the starting time of the meeting or the telephone contact numbers for the meeting.

In addition to considering updating the AA Structure Handbook, we recommend that any changes be communicated to the Fellowship including, but not limited to the following:

- i) Added to the revised pamphlet '*The AA Group*'
- ii) Included on the pink form
- iii) Include an article about the change in the Autumn edition of *AA Service News*
- iv) Include a pink form in the envelope with copies of the Autumn edition of *AA Service News*
- v) This updated guidance also to be included on the website

Meeting information listed in the AA GB online meeting finder (and microsite meeting listings) could include the date group information was last submitted, as is currently the case with the national *Where to Find*.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 6 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

Question 2.

Would the Fellowship share experience of money in AA bank accounts being inaccessible due to signatories having left the group and make recommendations as to how the Fellowship may make access to our Group funds possible?

Our shared experience is:

There are numerous situations where this has occurred whereby:

- i) Some group members have been successful in liaising with the bank and releasing the funds
- ii) Groups contacted the bank to establish the requirements necessary to operate the account

Recommendations

Where groups are unable to resolve the issue with the bank, seek further support from their intergroup, region or GSO.

For the future, as a preventive measure, the Committee recommends that groups follow the guidelines in the AA Structure Handbook page 79 Treasurer, page 82 Group Money and page 90 Intergroup Money.

Accepted unanimously as the Committee 6 report.

Conference vote: carried unanimously

The Committee elected Marc D of South West Scotland Region as Chair of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2019

The Committee elected Sue C of Midlands Region as Secretary of Committee No. 6 for Conference 2019
