

Conference Questions 2019

COMMITTEE No. 1

1. Inventory Question

Would the Fellowship share its experience and make recommendations with regards to the Young People's Liaison Officer (YPLO) service position, in particular:

- a. **Recent integration into our service structure**
- b. **Getting more younger members into AA and involved in service generally**
- c. **Relations with Young People in AA (YPAA) Conventions**

Background

Recent experience has shown that many people are now coming into recovery in their teens and twenties. Some of these members are also establishing groups and getting involved in other activities such as workshops and conventions specifically geared towards the needs of young people in recovery. Although these activities are often in alignment with our Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, they usually take place separately from our traditional service structure.

In 2015, Conference recommended that the YPLO service position be integrated into our service structure, with guidelines added to our service handbooks the following year. One fundamental aim of the YPLO was to get more younger members into AA and involved in service generally.

As it has been more than three years since the introduction of the YPLO position, the Fellowship would benefit from the sharing of recent experience of working with young people in AA, and then making further recommendations as to how our services can be strengthened in the pursuit of our Primary Purpose, all the while appreciating that our young members are the future of AA.

References:

Conference 2015 Recommendation Committee 2 Question 1

The Services of AA in Great Britain Handbook, Chapter Twelve: Young People's Liaison Officer

2. **Would the Fellowship consider reverting back to the name General Service Representative as intended by Bill W and as described in the Concepts?**

Background

The Term GSR was originally used by Bill W as the abbreviation for the General Service Representative.

"The strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative (GSR) the group elects. I cannot emphasize too strongly the GSR's importance."

Pamphlet 'The AA Group' page 11, 'What do Group Service Representatives (GSRs) do?'

Page 80/81 of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

COMMITTEE No. 2

1. **Would the Fellowship review our current "public image" as portrayed by our literature, with respect to our primary purpose, and identify any areas for improvement and make recommendations**

Background

AA Great Britain has a variety of communication materials and messaging, e.g. books, pamphlets, posters, videos, and websites, that have been developed over periods of time. These materials have helped us both carry our message to the still suffering alcoholic, health professionals and the public at large, and form our current public perception of AA.

References

Our current range of external communication materials including, but not limited to, our website, books, pamphlets, and videos

Concept 11

Tradition 8

Tradition 5

2. **Would the Fellowship review the AA GB pamphlet “Now that you’ve stopped: 15 Points” against our Twelve Step recovery programme and if any inconsistencies are found consider revising or withdrawing it from publication?**

Background

The Conference Approved AA GB Pamphlet “Now that you’ve stopped: 15 Points” claims to offer practical tips that should help make it easier to not start drinking again. These tips range from going to a meeting and cleaning your shoes, to taking a bath and drinking coffee with plenty of sugar. Upon closer inspection however, several of these tips may in fact be inconsistent with our Twelve Step recovery programme as defined in our book Alcoholics Anonymous. For example;

Tip #1 says to “try to understand that you have a choice - between unhappy drunken drinking and a happy, sober life by staying away from the first drink”. Whereas, our book Alcoholics Anonymous says on page 24 “The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent.” (Refer to Step 1).

Tip #8 says to not “allow yourself to think a drink or two would make some bad situation better.” Whereas, our book Alcoholics Anonymous says on page 37 that no matter how rational our thinking is, “there inevitably ran some insanely trivial excuse for taking the first drink. Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The insane idea won out.” (Refer to Steps 1 & 2).

Tip #12 says to link in your mind the idea that “a drink was the single cause of all the misery, shame and fear you have ever known”. Whereas, our book Alcoholics Anonymous says on page 24 that we are “unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink. The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us.” (Refer to Steps 1 & 2).

Furthermore, none of the practical tips in the pamphlet specifically suggest working the Twelve Steps. Whereas the main practical tip in our book Alcoholics Anonymous for how to not start drinking again is clearly stated on page 59: “Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery”.

References:

Now that you’ve stopped: 15 Points. 3045. Available online: https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/download/1/Library/Documents/Newcomers%20starter%20pack%20PDFs/Now_that_you_have_stopped%20-%2015%20Points.pdf

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book)

The Twelve Steps

12th Step Starter Pack Complete in Wallet. 3260

COMMITTEE No. 3

1. Will the Fellowship discuss the use of digital voting equipment during Conference?

Background

Conference is always tight on time and one of the most time-consuming functions is voting and counting. There is the possibility of miscounting if people get up whilst voting is taking place. Also, with digital voting equipment everything would be visible on the screen for delegates, for Yes/No/Abstentions. Although there is a cost element perhaps the efficiency and speed outweigh these.

Indicative costs are in the region of £2000 per Conference.

2. Would the Fellowship share its experience and make recommendations as to updating existing literature in order to raise further awareness for internet safety and security when using social media, apps and other forms of electronic communications.

Background

Whilst recognizing that there is the AA approved literature "Hints and Suggestions on Internet Safety" card, this does not cover the increasing ways in which the internet is now used. For example, potential employers may search the internet for social media posts by job candidates. This highlights the importance of making members particularly aware of the difference between "open", "closed" and "secret" groups within social media platforms. Likewise, similar issues surround being targeted by on-line "trolls" – who look for private information and then target people.

3. Would the Fellowship consider having a Young People's National Convention?

Personal Experience: *It has been my own experience that coming into A.A at a young age (21) there were always "hurdles" I came up against. I feared I had lost my entire life coming to A.A and everything a young person does at a young age revolves around drinking. Major dilemmas would be "how do I find a fulfilling life when everyone else is out partying and drinking?". I couldn't see past complete isolation and depression. The first couple of years this worry kept coming into my life as there really weren't any young people in sobriety and certainly none with any length of sobriety. I then found service and heard about the Young People's Project and it opened a new hope for me. I decided to try service and haven't looked back since. By then the Young People's Liaison Officer came about and I found my place and found new friends; sober, happy friends whom are still to this day.*

I think a Young People's National Convention can shed a little hope to every corner of A.A in GB to others like myself who felt quite alone at such a young age. I believe it will help young people who are still feeling this loneliness and isolation and mark an event for Young People to celebrate sobriety and to meet more people their age.

COMMITTEE No. 4

1. Would the Fellowship consider and make recommendations on the common practice at Intergroup, Region and other service committee meetings to collect Tradition 7 contributions and how it affects the 'power of the purse'?

Background

The section 'AA Money' in the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain states that most of AA's revenue consists of the voluntary contributions of members at group meetings. It does not state that these contributions are also collected at Intergroup, Region or at other service committee meetings such as workshops. Tradition 7 states specifically that that AA groups ought to be fully self-supporting.

Many Intergroups and Regions collect contributions from GSRs / Region Reps respectively as well as from other serving officers and visitors at their service and business meetings. The view is taken that these contributions pay for the meeting costs (rent and refreshments) and thus protect the monies received from contributing groups or intergroups.

Intergroups and Regions are not groups – they are service committees responsible to the groups they serve. As Bill points out in Concept 7, should the groups feel dissatisfied with the way in which their interests are represented by these service committees, they should always have the power to render them redundant by by-passing them when contributing funds to GSO. Bill calls this ‘the power of the purse’.

Such service committees, being starved of operating funds, would be forced to review their effectiveness and make good their commitment to serving the groups. If, however, Tradition 7 monies are collected at service committees to cover the committees’ meeting costs, the committees could continue to operate in a way that isn’t necessarily in the best interests of AA groups.

2. Would the Fellowship:

- a. **Share experience on how our Twelve Concepts for Service are currently being practiced at the group, intergroup, and region levels**
- b. **Provide useful examples of the Concepts as applied in practice at the group**
- c. **Recommend ways to further apply the Concepts throughout our Fellowship**

Background

Our Twelve Concepts for Service are as vital to AA as our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. However, it is still common for members to think that the Concepts are reserved only for the Conference and Board service levels, and that when the affairs of their local group are concerned, the Twelve Concepts are not often referred to.

In addition, many members are not aware that the principles contained in the Twelve Concepts also offer valuable guidance for groups, intergroups, and regions, and that the Concepts can be put into practice throughout our whole service structure, and not just at the Conference and Board levels.

Intention

By discussing this question at Conference, it is hoped the Fellowship will benefit from the helpful experience contained in the Concepts and be able to more easily apply them in our group service work.

References

The Structure for AA in GB Handbook

The Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain

COMMITTEE No. 5

1. Would the Fellowship discuss the feasibility of publishing a special edition of the Big Book with the original text but with British members’ stories at the back?

Background

Recently I learnt that Australia had a special edition of the Big Book printed with Australian members’ stories published in the back which has been very popular by all accounts. I believe it is a great idea first and foremost for identification for the newcomer. In my very early days reading the big book was too hard to understand and I chose to read the stories at the back. Whilst I enjoyed them I couldn’t help but struggle a little over the grammar used and the fact all these stories were all from North America.

I would like members, groups and Conference to give this question consideration given the wider picture

of reaching out to others in Great Britain and giving AA GB some identity in history that may be popular with our existing members too.

2. Would the Fellowship consider making the AA Meeting Finder available in app form?

Background

The current AA Meeting Finder has proved accurate, easy to use and hugely popular with over a million visits.

However, it requires internet access to function.

Once downloaded, an app version would continue to be available to those seeking an AA meeting in areas of GB where there is poor or no internet access, only requiring further access to Wi-Fi or 3G/4G for updates.

Access to the AA website is dominated by mobile devices and the Electronic Communications Sub Committee has begun to re-design the AA website, starting with its appearance on a mobile phone screen.

Perhaps there is an opportunity here to make the AA Meeting Finder even easier to use on a mobile phone, whilst increasing accessibility.

An app would require external links to the larger app stores, for example: Google Play and Apple's App Store.

References

Tradition Five.

Final Report. General Service Conference 2018, pages 19 and 21.

3. In order to help AA carry the message to the greatest number of Fellowship members, would Conference consider extending the remit of ECSC to allow the use of external links enabling those in service to download items such as the new Conference-approved videos?

Background

- For example, recently-produced videos are of a size that should several downloads take place simultaneously, our website is likely to crash.
- Precedent exists with the use of PayPal and Google Maps.
- Concept 3.
- Committee 6, Conference 2013 recommended that "All other external links will require Conference approval".

COMMITTEE No. 6

1. Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations on how individual groups could include within its Group Conscience a strategy to deal with safeguarding issues should they arise?

Background

Safeguarding Standards in AA Fellowship: June 2018

[https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/download/1/Library/Documents/Safeguarding/Safeguarding%202018%20\(GSB\).pdf](https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/download/1/Library/Documents/Safeguarding/Safeguarding%202018%20(GSB).pdf)

2. **Would the Fellowship consider that all posters and videos put to Conference be looked at on an individual basis i.e. voting on each poster and or video separately. And that all posters and or videos are circulated and made more accessible to the Fellowship through the service structure.**

Background

I refer to the last few years of Conference, the circulation of posters to the Fellowship has been almost non-existent. To the point that many members have not even known that there were posters and videos going to Conference.

Also, our Conference delegates had not seen any videos prior to plenary. As such they had not been prepared and were unable to carry the Conscience of their Regions. Videos and posters were put to plenary as an all or nothing vote, i.e. you could either have all of these or none of them. There were issues with a particular poster and a particular video.

Also see the 12 Concepts for World Service.

3. **Review changes to The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain on the following pages:**

Page 79	Treasurer
Page 82	Group Money
Page 90	Intergroup Money
Page 95	Region Money

Background

Draft changes to The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain.