

Committee 1 Question 1:

Would the Fellowship share experience on the use of Confirmation of Attendance 'Chits' in their Groups and consider the benefit of using the 'Chits' for other areas such as but not restricted to Employment and Social Services and any adaptations that may be required to accommodate other areas of our Service Structure?

Background

Conference 1987 agreed the Confirmation of Attendance System was not contrary to our Traditions.

Conference Report 1988:

Review the Fellowship's experience when co-operating with the Courts, and with the Probation Services in England and Wales and the Social Services in Scotland.

There was a feeling of cautious optimism in our experiences when co-operating with these bodies, but there was wide variation in the experiences of different Regions. Being aware that no-one in AA can guarantee another's sobriety, Regions and Intergroups should be referred to the recommendations of Conference 1987.

"That where Probation Officers request confirmation of attendance at AA Meetings by those on Probation, this confirmation should be provided wherever possible, with the permission of the member concerned. It is felt that this type of co-operation, handled carefully, is:

- a) Not contrary to our Traditions.
- b) Effectively co-operating with the critical area of Probation Services in England and Wales and the Social Services in Scotland.
- c) An important part of carrying the message

If we are willing to offer this method of self reporting to one group of members, do we not discriminate against others who may find of help?

Pamphlet 'How AA Members Cooperate'

"We cannot discriminate against any prospective AA members, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency.

Although the strength of our programme lies in the voluntary nature of membership in AA, many of us first attend meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by our inner discomfort. But continual exposure to AA educated us to the true nature of our illness.

Who made the referral to AA is not what AA is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern. We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic."

The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2013 Pages 61-62 Para 9.5 gives examples of how this system may operate for the Probation/Criminal Justice sector and could be used as a blueprint for other areas of our Service Sector.

The book 'Alcoholics Anonymous' Chapter 10 Pages 136 to 150 'To employers'

Consider the contribution to the carrying of the message, financial and practical implications when deliberating each question.

Committee 1: Question 2

Would the Fellowship consider reviewing the group service handbook page 39 4.2.1 “AA members employed in the alcoholism field”?

Background

On page 39 4.2.1 it states “It is recommended that members have several years of good uninterrupted sobriety before undertaking any paid alcoholism job or prior to enrolling in any alcohol related training programmes.

Five years sobriety has been suggested as the minimum although on page 41 it states a trainee counsellor felt that two to three years was sufficient. Two counsellors over ten years working in residential 12 step rehabs state should have at least five years sobriety but it then states generally it was felt two to three years was sufficient. It also states the longer the sobriety and the stronger the grounding within the Fellowship the less likely the member would get into difficulty.

Given the discrepancies in minimum sobriety highlighted would Conference share their experience on the need for standardising the guidelines on minimum sobriety lengths or not as the case may be.

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Committee 2: Question 1:

Would the Fellowship consider the role of “autonomy” in the relationship between Conference, the AA Service Structure and individual groups and share experience?

Background

- AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain.pdf
- The 12 Traditions, specifically Traditions One, Two, Four and Nine
- The 12 Concepts, specifically Concepts One and Two
- Recent Conference responses to questions affecting groups
- Declaration of Unity and The Responsibility Pledge

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Committee2: Question 2:

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

Background

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

The Continental European Region (CER) has created a GSC Annual Process Map that visually displays in a simple and clear way the annual timeline and various stages of AA's collective group conscience being expressed through our service structure. It has already been used successfully amongst CER's members to support the GSC process and is available in the following formats:

1. A printed Z-fold pamphlet (also available as a PDF)
2. An animated GIF (for online use)
3. An animated PowerPoint (for presentations)

The documents are available on the CER website, and at the following addresses:

www.bit.ly/GSC_APM
www.alcoholics-anonymous.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CER_AAGB_GSC_Annual_Process_Map_v2.0.pdf

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

References:

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

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Committee 3: Question 1:

Would the Fellowship share experience on how best to liaise between Intergroups and Regions especially where our boundaries don't match those of the organisations we are trying to work with.

Background

Sometimes AA's Region structure gets in the way of carrying our message. Take the example of a new Health Liaison Officer in Anyshire Intergroup, part of Central Region. The HLO soon finds that the people most need to liaise with outside of AA are the officials in the local NHS territory, NHS West. The people the HLO most needs to liaise with inside AA are fellow health liaison officers in the intergroups surrounding Anyshire. Unfortunately, the HLO finds that Central Region's borders slice across the local liaison needs. NHS West has its own territory, and it is nothing like the map of AA Regions. Worse, Anyshire Intergroup is on the periphery of the Central Region – only one other intergroup in Central Region adjoins Anyshire. Worse, each of the HLO's neighbouring intergroups belongs to a different Region. Even worse, the weight of AA's service structure presumes that the main channel for health liaison is through the Region structure. The HLO dutifully sends reports of activities to Region and in turn reads health liaison reports from other corners of the Region, but they no more relevant to the HLO as theirs are to them. The HLO finds that the Region Health Liaison Officer is based 70 miles away, knows little about Anyshire, and has never managed to convene a meeting of the Region's intergroup health liaison officers because, like the HLO, they don't see how Region can help. Because disparate intergroups are shoehorned together arbitrarily, the Region Health Liaison Officer finds his job impossible, but he has to soldier on – what are his alternatives? 'What is the point of Region?' the HLO starts asking. He has no time, energy or encouragement to liaise elsewhere. But what the HLO really needs is the flexibility to form his own local health liaison 'region' – with a small 'r' – composed voluntarily of the health liaison officers involved with NHS West. Meanwhile, fellow Anyshire liaison officers, in Employment, Probation and PI, are hitting organisational brick walls of their own, because their needs, in different ways, don't match the Region structure either.

AA unity comes first. Region may valuable for general service matters – organising Conference, for example. But a single Region structure, however the map is carved up, will never comfortably fit the local needs of all local liaison officers, and we may do better by not expecting it to.

Traditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12

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Committee 3: Question 2:

Would Conference approve a change of wording to The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013; to reflect the current practice of the General Service Board?

Page 120; “GSO Money”; 3rd bullet point

From: “...than is required to do the job well including a prudent reserve equivalent to the budget expenditure for the forthcoming year.”

To: “...than is required to do the job well, including a prudent reserve of more than the previous year’s expenditure, plus a quarter of the previous year’s expenditure to meet the General Service Board’s operating costs”

Background

Concept Twelve, Warranty Two; pages 63 – 66; The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013.

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Committee 4: Question 1:

Would the Fellowship discuss and make recommendations on the merits of AA posters that emphasise the positive aspects and benefits of sobriety as an addition to the current posters that concentrate on the negative aspects of alcoholism?

The intention of this, in accordance with Tradition 11, is to attract more people to the Fellowship by showing that achieving sobriety brings many benefits to both the individual concerned and others around them. For example, the “Park Bench” is an excellent poster aimed at the alcoholic. It could, however, also be used as half of a poster. One half showing the park bench and the other half showing a simple bedsit, or flat, showing that you can move on. Naturally the slogan would need to be thought about. Likewise a silhouette of an alcoholic in one half and the silhouette of a family in the other half -showing that they had found their family again. These are purely suggestions for consideration.

Background

In meetings, members often share the gifts (hope) that they have been given due to achieving sobriety – “I have a roof over my head”, “I have my family back”, “I have work”, “I am available” – the list is endless.

Many mutual aid agencies use these benefits in order to advertise their services in many ways. Recognising that AA does not promote (Tradition 11), it would be useful for potential members to recognise some of the benefits from a simple poster turning the negative aspects of alcoholism into a positive aspect of recovery.

In undertaking service I am often asked what the benefits are – the “what’s in it for me” attitude. Such new posters can act as conduit for more people to be attracted to AA.

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Committee 4: Question 2:

Would the Fellowship share experience of problems other than alcohol being shared at group meetings and consider issuing something similar to the letter first issued by GSO in March 1982.

Background

As a long standing member of the Fellowship who visits a lot of meetings each year, I have been concerned for some time now with the sharing at some meetings of problems other than alcohol, despite the Preamble and Primary Purpose card being read out at those same meetings.

**PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL
FIRST ISSUED IN MARCH 1982**

Over the years the General Service Office receive numerous calls from A.A. members who, after attending certain meetings, come away with a sincere concern that some A.A. meetings are used as a blanket therapy for problems other than alcohol.

We all have varying degrees of compassion for other social ills, such as over-eating, anorexia, narcotics, not forgetting problems within our own families, but the following quote from the pamphlet written by one of our Co-founders, Bill W. might help clarify the situation:-

“Our first duty, as a society, is to insure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multi-purpose activity. An A.A. Group, as such, cannot take on all the personal problems of its members, let alone the problems of the whole world.

Sobriety – freedom from alcohol – through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an A.A. Group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make non-alcoholics into A.A. members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics, and we have to confine our A.A. Groups to a single purpose. If we don’t stick to these principles we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone.”

This letter was issued by G.S.O., Redcliffe Gardens, London SW10 9BQ. The pamphlet referred to is “Problems other than Alcohol.”

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Committee 5: Question 1:

Would the Fellowship ask the General Service Board to conduct a strategic review of the future of its magazine publications, and make recommendations?

Intention: Share and Roundabout face significant challenges, including declining readerships, a shortage of contributions and difficulties in obtaining the service commitments needed to produce them. Meanwhile, readers within and outside the Fellowship are increasingly turning to online rather than purely print media. We find ourselves in AA GB producing, in Share and Roundabout, two competing fellowship magazines, with duplicated production costs, overlapping readerships and substantially the same message. The joint production of 'Fellowship' diaries (rather than 'Share' and 'Roundabout' –branded diaries) points to the logic of pooling resources. It is noted that elsewhere a single fellowship magazine (Grapevine) serves a diversity of cultures, nations and languages across US, Canada and beyond – perhaps it would be good demonstration of unity if AA GB adopted a similarly inclusive approach. Given AA GB's service role in Continental Europe, there may also be a wider European need. Service News, meanwhile, carries a message that overlaps that of Share and Roundabout and faces similar challenges. Conference is not a suitable forum for strategic planning, but it could request that a strategic review of fellowship magazines be conducted, and bring recommendations back to a future Conference.

Background

- **Share and Roundabout sections in Annual Report of GSB 2015**
- **Grapevine (www.aagrapevine.org)**
- **Tradition 1.**

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Committee 5: Question 2:

In 2015 many groups participated in a survey of the Fellowship membership. The data has been analysed by the Board and their findings and conclusions presented to Conference 2016. The survey team were thus able to receive some feedback. Would the Fellowship now discuss the results of this survey and feed back to Conference their perceptions of the survey and their interpretations of the results.

Background

The intention of this question is to promote fellowship awareness and discussion of both the results of the 2015 membership survey and the Board's interpretation of those results as presented in the 2016 conference report. In the 2012 conference, committee 5 in responding to a question about our use of GSB reports concluded that "members ought to encourage each other to read and take interest in AA reports for which we are all responsible". (2012 Conference Report, page 60) This question is intended to provide that encouragement.

The results of the survey have been summarised in the AA pamphlet titled "Alcoholics Anonymous 2015 Membership Survey" and further amplification of its commentary is available in the 2016 Conference Report, pages 26 to 32). Both of these documents have been sent to the groups and can be downloaded from the Document Library on the AAGB Website.

(<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Document-Library>)

Examples of questions we can ask ourselves are, but should not be restricted to, the following:

1. Are the results confirmed by our personal experience?
(The survey is a sample and samples can be misleading.)
2. What are the practical implications of the results?
3. How can the results be used to make us more effective in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic?
4. Do we have anything to add to the interpretation provided by the Board?
5. Is there any other data that we would find helpful?

The graphs show trends since 1978. A greater understanding of the changing nature of the structure of the AA membership should help us adapt to those trends and hence to improve upon our ability to continue to communicate our message to the problem drinker.

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Committee 5: Question 3:

Review revised Chapter Three: AA and Electronic Communications, The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain.

Background

Chapter Three: AA and Electronic Communications – original
Chapter Three: AA and Electronic Communications – showing revisions
Chapter Three: AA and Electronic Communications – final proposed version

b. Review revised page 114: AA (GB) Website, The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain.

Background

Page 114: AA (GB) Website – original
Page 114: AA (GB) Website – proposed

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Committee 6 Question 1:

Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations on the use of mobile‘phones and other devices for photography and video recording during conventions?

Background

Whilst AA members and non-members are usually respectful of Tradition 11 during the convention meetings, it has been noted that some attendees have been using mobile ‘phones to video or photograph portions of the social events which take place at the convention. Some of these recordings and images have appeared on the social media.

AA members have raised concerns with the convention committee that their anonymity has clearly been compromised.

Intention

The question was raised at a Regional meeting. The intention is to seek experience and guidance from within the Fellowship as to how convention committees can best ensure our common welfare by respecting individuals’ right to anonymity, in the age of mobile ‘phones and social media.

References

Tradition Eleven, (long form).

Tradition One.

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013:

a) Conventions pp 121-123

b) Personal Conduct Matters pp 83-85.

Hints and Suggestions On Internet Safety.

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Committee 6: Question 2:

Would the Fellowship discuss and share experience on the size of Intergroups both in terms of geography and number of constituent groups which would be effective.

Could the Fellowship provide guidance on how Intergroups too small or too large effect change?

Background

From 2016/2017 AA Regional and Intergroup Directory:

1. There are 16 Regions and 138 Intergroups
2. There are 2208 Service Positions at Intergroup with 755 vacancies
3. There are 240 Service Positions at Region with 77 vacancies

AA Structure Handbook (2013) Page 86. – Intergroup. Page 90 and 91 – Region.

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