



GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

2022 EDITION

A SERVICE HANDBOOK FOR IRELAND

General Service Board of AA,
Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park,
Swords Road, Dublin 9 D09 H584
Tel: 01-8420700
Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
Website: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

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 AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other Alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Growing into Service (from the pamphlet 'Growing into Service')

Alcoholics Anonymous is more than a set of principles; it is a Fellowship of alcoholics in action. Service is at the centre of every AA concept and activity. It is as fundamental to AA as abstinence is to sobriety. Without this giving of oneself to another, there would be no Fellowship. This desire to serve improves recovery. As newcomers, we see people giving time, energy and love in the service of the Fellowship, and it is suggested that we too should become involved. Those of us who have done this will tell you of the enormous benefits we have received by willingly stepping into service. A great paradox of AA is that rewards come when we begin to forget ourselves.

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.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE HANDBOOK (IRELAND)

“Our Twelfth Step - carrying the message - is the basic service that the AA Fellowship provides; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA is more than a set of principles; it is a Society of Alcoholics in action. We must carry this message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.” Bill W.

“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.” (Tradition 2). This Tradition is the sole authority for AA Services, whether for Groups, Area Committees, Intergroup Committees, or for the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Conference, therefore, begins with the Group Conscience. It also leads back to the Group, since the Group has the final responsibility for carrying out decisions made by Conference.

The General Service Conference of AA in Ireland ('Conference') is the means by which AA in this country functions nationally and is therefore the heart of AA's Third Legacy of Service. If Conference is to function effectively, it must operate according to orderly processes and procedures, the aim of which should be to involve the Fellowship as inclusively as possible. AA in Ireland continues to adhere firmly to the principles contained in the Twelve Concepts of World Service, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and to the Big Book “Alcoholics Anonymous”. These are the yardsticks by which the activities of AA in Ireland must be measured.

Over the years since the first Conference we have been able to work out procedures for Conference that are appropriate to the needs of the Fellowship in this country. These are set out in this handbook.

AA Service is any activity that helps us to reach out to fellow sufferers. These activities might take the form of a 12th Step call, a phone call or a cup of coffee with a fellow alcoholic. AA's General Service Office takes calls and requests for 12th Step help, both nationally and internationally. The sum total of these services is AA's Third Legacy of Service.

AA members willingly choose to comply with a set of suggestions and guidelines as contained in our General Service Handbook. This is a handbook of suggestions/guidelines drawn from AA experience from around the world. Its intention is to help Group members keep informed, to look beyond themselves to other Groups and get a glimpse of what it can be like to be grown-up members of the worldwide AA family.

Most of us learn that recovery from alcoholism is not just a gift to be clutched selfishly to oneself. It also means responsibility for service to others, in many ways, both inside and outside AA.

CONTENTS

Preamble.....	2
Serenity prayer	2
Introduction To The Service Handbook (Ireland).....	3
The Twelve Steps	8
The Twelve Traditions	9
Twelve Concepts For World Service.....	10
Structure Of Alcoholics Anonymous In Ireland	13
The Group	14
What is an AA Group?	14
How to become a Group member.....	14
How does the Group function?	15
Group Conscience – Sole Authority in AA.....	15
Steering Committee	15
Group Officers.....	15
Importance of Rotation	15
Chairperson.....	16
Meeting Secretaries.....	17
Treasurer.....	17
Literature Secretary.....	18
General Service Representatives (GSR).....	18
Group Autonomy	19
Group Responsibility to AA as a whole.....	19
Responsibilities of individual Group members	19
What meetings can a Group have?	20
Ordinary AA Meetings (Closed).....	20
Step and Tradition Meetings (Closed)	20
Group Conscience Meetings (Closed).....	20
Group Inventory Meetings (Closed).....	21
Open AA Meetings	21

Open Public Meetings/Public Information Meetings	21
Important points to remember about Meetings	22
The Area Committee.....	23
What is an Area?	23
Purpose.....	23
Officers of Area Committees.....	23
Importance of Rotation.....	24
Chairperson.....	24
Secretary.....	24
Treasurer/Finance	24
Intergroup Representatives	25
Election of Officers	25
Sub-Committee of Area	26
Others who attend Area Committee	26
Area Decisions	26
Who is entitled to vote at Area Meetings?	26
Area Meetings.....	26
Literature	26
Services Operated By Area Committees	27
Services in Hospitals and Other Institutions.....	27
The Hospital and Institutions Committee (H&I).....	27
Who forms a Hospital and Institutions (H&I) Committee?	27
The advantages of the H&I Committee.....	27
Qualifications for H&I Volunteers	27
Hospital and Institutions Convenor	28
Format for Hospital and Institution Meetings	28
Service in Prisons	29
Prisons Secretary/Convenor.....	30
Public Information Services	31
Open Meetings and Open Public Information Meetings.....	32
Format for an Open Public Meeting.....	33
Format for AA Open Meetings.....	33
Telephone Service	35

12th Step Work	35
Guidelines For Conventions And One-Day Events	37
Conventions	37
All Ireland Convention	37
Area Conventions and One-Day Events	37
Convention Events	39
One-Day Events	40
Official AA Ireland Logo	41
The Provincial Intergroup Committee	42
Composition of Provincial Intergroup	42
Election of Officers and Delegates	42
Intergroup Representative	42
Intergroup Officers	43
Intergroup Chairperson	43
Intergroup Secretary	44
Intergroup Treasurer	44
General Service Conference Delegates (GSCDs)	45
Alternate Delegates	46
Frequency of Intergroup Meetings	46
Funding of Intergroups	46
Intergroup Sub-Committees	46
General Service Office (GSO) and Central Service Office (CSO)	47
General Service Conference Of Ireland	48
Why do we need a Conference?	48
General Service Conference Delegates	49
Retiring Delegates	49
Intergroup Secretaries at Conference	50
AA Trustee/Director	50
Non-AA Member Trustees/Directors	51
Board/Company Secretary	52
World Service Delegates (WSD)	52
WSD Alternate Delegate	53
Relationship between Fellowship of AA and GSBAA	54

Board Meetings with GSCDs	54
Annual Report	55
The Business Of General Service Conference.....	56
Conference Charter	56
Articles.....	56
AA Finance.....	62
GSR expenses in attending Area Meetings	62
GSCDs' Intergroup expenses	62
Attendance at Conference.....	63
12 th Step Service	63
Bequests and Gifts	63
General Service Office (GSO)	64
A Declaration Of Unity	64
I Am Responsible	64
Decisions Of The General Service Conference.....	65
Appendices	66
Appendix 1 Suggested Group Conscience Meeting Agenda Template.....	67
Appendix 2 Privacy Guidelines for the Fellowship of AA in Ireland.....	68
Appendix 3 Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA Members	69
Appendix 4 Media Guide to AA	71
Appendix 5 Guidelines for Area Inventory Meetings	73
Appendix 6 Guidelines for Intergroup Inventory Meetings	74
Appendix 7 Online and Digital Meetings in Ireland.....	75

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as *we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as *we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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 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.

TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

By Bill W.

- I** The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective Conscience of our whole fellowship.
- II** When, in 1955, the AA Groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference - excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter - the actual voice and the effective Conscience of our whole Society.
- III** As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship between the Groups, the Conference, the AA General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with traditional "Right of Decision".
- IV** Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation", taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
- V** Throughout our world service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.
- VI** On behalf of AA as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognises that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- VII** The Conference recognises that the Charter and the Bye Laws of the General Service Board are legal instruments; that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document; that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the AA purse for its final effectiveness.
- VIII** The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of overall policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full

stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

- IX** Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of AA must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.
- X** Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority - the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and by laws.
- XI** While the Trustees hold final responsibility for AA's world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.
- XII** General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle, that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action every be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that, though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

The following are the six warranties:

- Warranty One** “The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power”
- Warranty Two** “Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.”
- Warranty Three** “None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.”
- Warranty Four** “That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.”
- Warranty Five** “That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.”
- Warranty Six** “That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of Government, and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.”

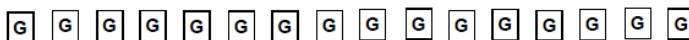
STRUCTURE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN IRELAND

“Our Leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

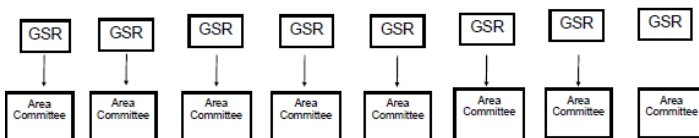
The graphic below illustrates the different units of the Fellowship and the relationship between them.

STRUCTURE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN IRELAND

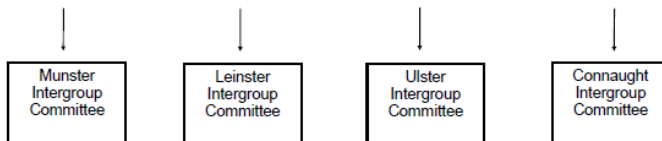
AA GROUPS (G)



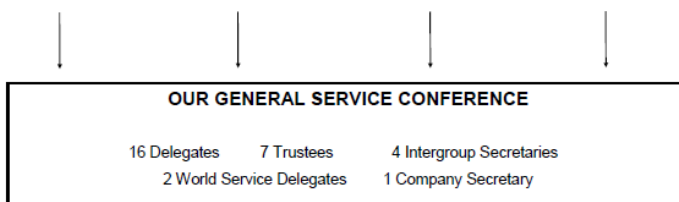
TWO GSR's FROM EACH GROUP FORM AREA COMMITTEES



FOUR MEMBERS FROM EACH AREA COMMITTEE FORM PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP COMMITTEES



FOUR DELEGATES FROM EACH PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP TO GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE



THE GROUP

What is an AA Group?

The primary unit of AA is the Group. Traditionally any two or more alcoholics meeting together for the purpose of sobriety many consider themselves an AA Group provided that, as a Group, they are self-supporting and have no outside affiliation.

The Group Conscience of AA has agreed the following points to define an AA Group: An AA Group is a group of people 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 primary purpose [of the members] is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety (from Preamble).

New Groups applying for a starter kit do so through the Intergroup Secretary via the Area Secretary.

1. All members of a Group are alcoholics, and all alcoholics are eligible for membership.
2. As a Group they are fully self-supporting.
3. A Group's primary purpose is to help alcoholics recover through the Twelve Steps.
4. As a Group they have no outside affiliation.
5. As a Group, they have no opinion on outside issues.
6. As a Group, their public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion and they maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, T.V. and films.

Regularly scheduled meetings are the chief activity of any AA Group. Some degree of structure is needed to ensure continuity and effectiveness. The members of the Group usually elect officers and members are delegated to housekeeping tasks and refreshments.

Outside meeting hours, the Group continues to exist, ready to offer help when needed. Other activities may include 12th Step calls, institution work and public information work.

How to become a Group member

We usually say that anyone is a member of AA if he or she says so. Tradition Three says "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking". None of us can pretend to judge the desire in another's heart. To join a Group is usually a simple process of attending its meetings regularly, becoming actively involved in the Group activities and being available for service in the Group.

Most members feel more at home in one particular Group than in others and consider it their "Home Group," where they accept service responsibility. They do not participate in the business or policy of Groups other than their "Home Group."

How does the Group function?

Group Conscience – Sole Authority in AA

Tradition Two states: “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.” The voice of Group Conscience is heard when a **well-informed** Group gathers together to arrive at its decision.

Therefore, the authority and responsibility for making all decisions affecting the Group rests solely with Group Conscience. It elects all Group officers, always bearing in mind that our common welfare comes first, and all Group officers are held strictly accountable to Group Conscience for their stewardship. It is suggested that Group Conscience meets regularly. In most Groups today, these meetings are held once a month.

In order to ensure the smooth functioning of Group Conscience, AA experience has shown that these meetings, conducted by an appointed Chairperson, having an agreed agenda (see Appendix 1 for sample template) open to motions from each member, with advance notice of the date and time of meeting, is the most effective way to hold a meeting. Only members of the Group should participate in Group Conscience.

Steering Committee

Questions about what a Group should do, and how, sometimes arise. The Steering Committee (some Groups call it the Group Service Committee) is one way of getting those questions handled for the Group.

As an experienced cross section of the Group membership, the Steering Committee can handle day-to-day operations for the Group. Anywhere from three to five members may be the right size Steering Committee for a small Group. For larger ones, twelve or so members provide a better cross-section and share the workload in a fairer way.

In many Groups, the Steering Committee consists of the Group officers. Sometimes, former officers make good committee members because of their experience.

Group Officers

Each Group decides how its services are carried out. Being autonomous, the Group selects the officers it feels are necessary for the smooth running of the Group. Group officers usually serve three months, six months or one year or as Group Conscience may decide. Each nominee is usually approached by other members of the Group, and if the person agrees, the name is put forward at the Group Conscience meeting, so letting the Group Conscience decide his/her election.

For example, a Group ought to have chairperson, secretary, treasurer, literature secretary and two Group Service Representatives (GSRs).

Importance of Rotation

Traditionally, rotation keeps AA volunteers from becoming fixed in their offices. Jobs, like almost everything else in AA, get passed around for all to share. After one term in any office, most members move on to other kinds of AA service. This way, problems based on personalities are prevented; no power or prestige gets built up; no individual

gets taken advantage of or imposed upon; and the benefits of giving service are shared by more and more members.

Qualifications

1. The Group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers, and a review of Traditions 1 and 2 is helpful at election times.
2. When an officers term is completed a Group Conscience should be held and new officers elected.

Chairperson

In larger Groups the Chairperson/General Secretary serves for a stated period.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Chairpersons/General Secretaries are generally responsible for maintaining good relations between the Group and the landlord. He/she in conjunction with the Group Treasurer ensures rent is paid.
2. Coordinates Group activities, preventing confusions or other misunderstandings in Group affairs.
3. Chairs Group Conscience/Steering Committee meetings.
4. Receives the Group's correspondence, including Area, Intergroup and Conference Minutes, and is responsible for reading them to the Group, and conveys any relevant information from Conference to the Group.
5. Conference recommends that in order to provide accurate group information, all Groups should complete a Group Information Sheet at least once a year and return it to the General Service Office (GSO) through the agreed procedure.
6. Send Group Information Sheets direct to GSO or complete the online version in the Members area of the official website.
7. Many Groups have no Chairperson because the Group Secretary serves in this capacity. In practice, it doesn't seem to matter which Group officer does which job so long as they all get done without confusion or conflict. It is important that all officers understand their roles.
8. Check the Group's official AA mailbox regularly for emails and correspondence from GSO and from other levels of AA Structure e.g., Groups, Area, Intergroup etc.

Qualifications

He/she should preferably have 2 years current, continuous sobriety in AA and have had other Group service experience.

Meeting Secretaries

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Arrive some time before a meeting is due to start, in order to arrange the room, usually with the help of other members, or the refreshment helpers.
2. Have speakers/readers organised and start the meeting punctually.
3. Usually make any AA announcements at the end of the meeting (e.g. news of conventions, new meetings, new literature, etc.).
4. Stress the seventh and twelfth Traditions and close the meeting with the Serenity Prayer.
5. He/she should have a confidential list of those members willing to do 12th Step work and pass on any calls for help.
6. Help the Treasurer to count table-top contributions and record these in AA Group Financial Guidelines and Record Book.
7. Provide safe storage for all Group data.

The Meeting Secretary, as well as other Group Officers, has a special responsibility for seeing that newcomers get help and are made welcome on arrival. In some Groups certain members are specifically asked to do this.

Qualifications

A minimum 12 months current, continuous sobriety is preferred for this position.

Treasurer

Duties and responsibilities

Money contributed at AA meetings belongs to the Fellowship as a whole and is not the property of the Group.

The Treasurer has overall responsibility for all Group monies. He/she pays the Group's bills and transfers surplus funds to Area committee, as agreed by the Group Conscience. A Group ought to maintain a prudent reserve to cover ongoing running costs. There is no pre-determined amount for such a reserve, but most Groups try to put aside enough money to cover at least 1 – 3 months' operating expenses as agreed by their Group Conscience.

Treasurers record the Group's financial activities in the 'AA Group Financial Guidelines and Record Book' available free from GSO, or CSO in Ulster.

Treasurers ought to give a comprehensive financial report to each Group Conscience meeting, supported by all relevant documentation such as bank statements, Financial Record Book, etc.

Problems can be avoided by keeping Group funds in a separate bank account which requires two signatures for all transactions.

The Treasurer, in conjunction with the Group Conscience, is responsible for making sure that there is a current Group Insurance policy in place and that this is paid on time to prevent lapse in cover.

Qualifications

A minimum of 12 months current, continuous sobriety is preferred for this position.

Literature Secretary

Duties and responsibilities

1. Make sure the Group has its own copy of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
2. Ensure the Group has a supply of approved AA literature for sale
3. Make sure these are on display and available for purchase by members.
4. Have the current edition of the AA Service Handbook for Ireland available, especially at Group Conscience and business meetings.

Note: Literature may not be given out for free, but sponsors may purchase literature for those they sponsor.

Service Materials and Literature

Only literature approved by General Service Conference of Ireland should be used by Groups. No individual or Group may produce or introduce any magazine, pamphlet or other literature in connection with AA without the prior written consent of the General Service Conference of Ireland.

The only official AA Website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie will be operated by GSBAA on behalf of General Service Conference of Ireland.

General Service Representatives (GSR)

'The strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative (GSR) that the Group elects. I cannot emphasise too strongly the GSR's importance' (Bill W).

Duties and responsibilities

The GSR as the Trusted Servant of both his/her Group and Area Committee, participates in discussions and decision-making at Area level according to his/her well-informed Conscience. She/he will carry the views of his/her Group to Area and report back to his/her Group at their next Group Conscience meeting, being careful to include brief details of all discussions and decisions taken at the Area meeting.

From Area meetings and from the reports of other officers the GSR will become familiar with what is happening throughout the structure of AA.

The GSR also brings Group donations to Area, where appropriate, and returns receipts to the Group treasurer.

As far as possible he/she should attend all Area meetings and all Group Conscience meetings (business meetings) of his/her Group. The GSR should hold no office in any other Group.

Qualifications

The GSR must be an active member of his/her delegating Group, and preferably have at least two years continuous sobriety.

He/she must enjoy the confidence and trust of his/her Group. He/she should be familiar with the programme and Traditions of AA, and the basic AA literature. He/she should be willing to place **Principles before Personalities**.

How GSRs are chosen and their term of office

Each GSR is elected by his/her Group Conscience. Where possible, there should be two GSRs for each Group, with one being replaced by election each year. The GSR's term of office is two years.

Group Autonomy

Tradition 4: Each Group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other Groups or AA as a whole. With respect to its own affairs, each Group should be responsible to no other authority than its own Conscience. When its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring Groups also, these Groups ought to be consulted. No Group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the Trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues, our common welfare is paramount.

Group Responsibility to AA as a whole

The continuing survival and welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous, its three great legacies of Unity, Recovery and Service, are the concern, and indeed the responsibility, of every individual member and Group of Alcoholics Anonymous. The AA Groups assumed full responsibility for the Fellowship in 1955 when "AA Came of Age".

The only way we can discharge this responsibility is through Group Conscience in the Group and the collective Conscience of the fellowship (the AA service structure).

Consequently, we ought to continue to make our Groups aware of the need for a responsible Group Conscience, (the sole authority) in the AA Group, our service structure, their duties and responsibilities for AA as a whole.

Responsibilities of individual Group members

In AA individual freedom is of the utmost importance. For example, any alcoholic is a member the moment he/she says so. We cannot remove his/her right to belong, neither can we put pressure on any of our members to believe or say anything. Ours is indeed "a large charter of minority privileges and liberties". Of course, this freedom brings responsibilities, and members are individually and collectively responsible for carrying the AA message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

"Sobriety - freedom from alcohol - through the practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of the AA Group. We must confine our membership to alcoholics, and we must confine our AA 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. Care should be taken to preserve anonymity and not to use the name of AA with outside agencies, particularly Courts, Social Services etc." (Extract from Problems other than Alcohol)

(See Appendix 3 - 'Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA Members')

What meetings can a Group have?

Our Fourth Tradition says that every AA Group is autonomous “except in matters affecting other Groups or AA as a whole”, so a Group can hold practically any kind of meeting they choose.

The most common kinds are:

Ordinary AA meetings (Closed)

Step and Tradition Meetings (Closed)

Group Conscience Meetings (Closed)

Group Inventory Meetings (Closed)

Open AA Meetings

Open Public Meetings

Where a meeting is designated “closed” the meeting is for AA members only. An agreed statement on personal conduct and appropriate behaviour at AA meetings is contained in *Appendix 3*. Copies are also available free of charge from GSO and from the members’ area of our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie.

Ordinary AA Meetings (Closed)

Usually these are meetings where members share their experiences, strengths and hopes with each other. The Secretary introduces a Chairperson for the meeting, who normally shares for 10-15 minutes and then opens the meeting to the floor, inviting members to share. The principal speaker at a Group meeting should preferably have at least three months continuous sobriety in AA.

Step and Tradition Meetings (Closed)

Since the Steps and Traditions are the basis of our fellowship, many Groups devote one meeting a week to a study of each Step and/or Tradition in rotation. The Chairperson shares for 10-15 minutes on the Step or Tradition and will then open the meeting to the floor for other members to share.

Group Conscience Meetings (Closed)

The voice of the Group Conscience is heard when a well-informed Group gathers together to arrive at a decision. The responsibility for all decisions affecting the Group rests solely with the Group Conscience, electing all Group officers, who are strictly accountable to the Group. Always bear in mind that our common welfare comes first and that we have a responsibility to other Groups and to the fellowship as a whole.

In most Groups today, these meetings are held once a month in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the Group and for the Group officers to report to the Group on their roles and to get Group guidance. Group business is transacted, and new Group officers are elected at such meetings. These meetings may take the form of a Group Inventory.

(A suggested ‘Group Conscience Agenda’ template is available at Appendix 1). This can be downloaded from the AA official website or by contacting GSO.

Group Inventory Meetings (Closed)

How is a Group Inventory taken?

Many Groups periodically take a 'Group inventory', using one meeting for an honest and fearless discussion of the Group's strengths and weaknesses.

For Groups wishing to take inventory of themselves, below are some suggested questions that might be helpful. This list is not exhaustive, and Groups may add questions relevant to their particular needs.

1. What is the basic purpose of the Group?
2. What more can the Group do to carry the message?
3. Considering the number of alcoholics in our community, are we reaching enough people?
4. What has the Group done lately to bring the AA message to the attention of the professional community and others who can be helpful in reaching those who need AA?
5. Is the Group attracting only a certain kind of alcoholic, or are we getting a good cross section of our community?
6. Do new members stick with us, or does turnover seem excessive?
7. How effective is our sponsorship?
8. Has everything practical been done to provide an attractive meeting place?
9. Does the Group stress to Group members the need and value of service to the Group and to AA as a whole?
10. Is adequate opportunity given to all members to speak and participate in other Group activities?
11. Are Group officers picked with care and consideration on the basis that such roles carry a great responsibility and opportunity for service to the Fellowship?
12. Is the Group sufficiently involved in carrying out its fair share of Area roles and responsibilities?
13. Are all members of the Group informed about AA as a whole, and about its activities, including our three legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service?

Open AA Meetings

These meetings are open to all who may or may not have an alcohol problem and they are arranged and publicised by AA.

The meeting is chaired by an AA member and it is usual to have two AA members speak of their experiences and recovery. The purpose of the meeting is to carry the message through the AA programme of recovery.

Open Public Meetings/Public Information Meetings

An AA member should chair this type of meeting. These meetings generally have the same format as the Open Meeting, but AA may invite an AI-Anon speaker and, possibly a professional person with expertise in the area of alcoholism, to participate. The meeting should conclude with an AA member sharing their personal experience of recovery through the AA programme.

Important points to remember about Meetings

Specialist Meetings

The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking (Conference 1989).

Big Book Study Movement Closed Meetings

The General Service Conference of Ireland has agreed that the Big Book Study Movement Closed Meetings which use unapproved literature or tapes are outside our structure in Ireland.

Ordinary closed meetings which read from and discuss the Big Book and are similar in format to other AA meetings are not considered outside our structure. As usual, no-one with a desire to stop drinking may be excluded from attending these meetings.

Literature

Only literature approved by the General Service Conference of Ireland may be used by Groups. No individual or Group may produce or introduce any magazine, pamphlet or other literature in connection with AA without the prior written consent of the General Service Conference of Ireland. Literature published by AA in any country other than Ireland may not be used until it has the approval of General Service Conference of Ireland. The only official AA website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie will be operated by GSBAA on behalf of General Service Conference of Ireland.

Group Information Sheets

The responsibility for updating and returning the Group Information Sheet (GIS) lies with each individual Group. The GIS may be completed online and forwarded, via AA email to the General Service Office email aagroupinfo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie. In order to provide accurate, current, information for the national Meeting Directory, all Groups ought to complete and AA GIS at least once a year.

Meeting Directories

AA meeting directories are confidential and for internal AA use only. The AA meeting directory does not list Specialist Meetings which exclude, or might appear to exclude, any individual who has the desire to stop drinking. An AA Directory without individual phone numbers is available at GSO. This directory is suitable for issue to Hospital and Professional people who may wish to refer alcoholics to AA.

THE AREA COMMITTEE

What is an Area?

In AA, an Area is a subdivision of the relevant Provincial Intergroup, usually a specific geographical area containing a number of individual Groups. Generally, an Area will comprise not more than 20 Groups. Should there be more than 20 Groups the Area Committee may divide and form a new Area.

The Area Committee is a Committee made up to two GSRs from each Group within that Area.

Purpose

The Area Committee - perhaps more than any group in AA - is responsible for the welfare of the AA Structure and for promoting growth and harmony throughout the Fellowship.

Each Group in an Area may send two elected representatives to its local Area. These representatives, called General Service Representatives (GSRs), bring the news and concerns from their Group to the Area and bring back to their Group any decisions or other information from the Area Committee. This is a vital link in AA's chain of communication. The role, responsibilities and qualifications to be a GSR are described on pages 18.

Area Committees have been delegated responsibility for many of AA's local services. It has been found beneficial for Areas to co-ordinate the functioning of these important services. The following is a selection of services undertaken by Areas:

- a) **Hospital Committee**
- b) **Prison Committee**
- c) **Public Information Committee**
- d) **Telephone Service**
- e) **Area Conventions**
- f) **Services for Hearing Impaired Members**
- g) **Maintaining a bank of AA Literature**
- h) **Organisation of Workshops**
- i) **Maintaining AA Archives, where appropriate**

Guidelines on the operation of services (a)-(d) above and on the organisation of (e) Area Conventions are included later in the Handbook. Area Committees may provide other services specific to their Areas.

Officers of Area Committees

Leadership must come from the officers. They must have the enthusiasm and know-how of the individual committee member plus the ability to get things done and give the committee direction and incentive. It is suggested that each Area puts considerable thought and care into the selection of its officers as the ability of the Area to function effectively is greatly influenced by the capability of its officers. It is vital that the best available and willing people are utilised.

Qualifications

All Area Officers should preferably have three years continuous sobriety in AA and have at least one years' experience as an active GSR. An Officer's term of office is for two years from date of election. He/she must have the respect and trust of his/her Area and have a record of dedicated service in AA.

Importance of Rotation

Traditionally, rotation keeps AA volunteers from becoming fixed in their offices. Jobs, like almost everything else in AA, get passed around for all to share. After one term in any office, most members move on to other kinds of AA service. This way, problems based on personalities are prevented; no power or prestige gets built up; no individual gets taken advantage of or imposed upon; and the benefits of giving service are shared by more and more members.

Chairperson

He/she should have considerable AA experience at Group and Area level. He/she should have a sound understanding of the Traditions and, better still, have the know-how gained by applying these guides to local problems. They should be able to lead and motivate others while still acting as a trusted servant of their Area. The Chairperson should be able to instill in others a keen interest in Conference Service and local services. They will keep in touch with local area sub-committees (Hospitals, Public Information Committees. etc.)

Secretary

The Secretary needs a good AA sense so that he/she can sift through thousands of words at meetings and get the kernel for inclusion in his/her minutes. The Secretary ought to keep their Area Committee informed of all communications received from Intergroup, Conference and the Board, as well as from other Groups in their Area. They need to keep up-to-date mailing lists and get minutes out on time for every Group in area to have the opportunity to discuss issues. GSRs, Intergroup reps and delegates also need to be copied on minutes. Many Groups, areas etc. now use recording devices to record meetings. Such devices should only be used with the agreement of meeting participants.

He/she should ensure that a copy of the Area minutes is emailed to GSO using the Area Secretary's official AA mailbox.

Treasurer/Finance

The Area Treasurer must be a careful guardian of the AA funds in their care and keep accurate records of financial transactions in their area. Written reports must be given at each Area meeting. This report should be circulated with the Area minutes to all Groups, GSRs and delegates in Area. A copy must be sent to GSO for record-keeping and regulatory purposes. Surplus funds should be transferred to Intergroup in a timely manner, in order to prevent unnecessary accumulation of funds in Area accounts. An Area Treasurer will keep their Area committee aware of our self-support tradition. The Area treasurer must promptly pay all expenses of the Area and make sure that the Area is properly insured and has member to member liability cover. Sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve should be the Area's guiding principle.

It is preferable that Area funds are kept in a suitable account with two signatories required for all transactions.

Expenses incurred by a GSR or other officer in attending an Area Committee Meeting will, if required, be borne by the Area Committee.

Conference recommends that we maintain our self-support tradition and refrain from running raffles at any AA events.

Intergroup Representatives

Each area is entitled to elect four members to represent the Area at Provincial Intergroup. Intergroup Representatives may continue to hold Area positions at the same time.

Qualifications

Intergroup representatives should have at least three years continuous sobriety in AA and have served for at least one year at Area level. A good knowledge of AA traditions and principles and a working knowledge of the Service Handbook are essential. The Intergroup Representative should report all Intergroup discussions and decisions to their area and attend all Area Committee meetings and visit as many Groups as possible in the area they represent.

Their term of office will be two years. An Intergroup Representative has a voice and vote in the Area Committee that they represent.

Election of Officers

When electing officers, there are occasions where consensus cannot be achieved. In such circumstances the **Third Legacy Procedure** may be invoked. All members of the Area Committee are eligible for election; the Chairperson asks whether any are unable to serve and withdraws those names. Remaining names are displayed. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.) All GSRs and committee members of the Area who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is displayed.

The first candidate to receive Two-Thirds of the total vote is elected.

After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds on the first ballot), any candidate having less than one-fifth of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the **Two Top Candidates** must remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain).

After the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except the **Two Top Candidates** remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and second-place candidates remain.).

A fourth ballot is conducted. After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the Chairperson asks for a motion, second, and majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot. (If this motion is defeated, balloting is over, and we go to the 'hat' immediately. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped. If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted).

If no election occurs by this time, the Chairperson announces the choice will be made from the hat. Lots are then drawn by teller, and the first one “out of the hat” becomes the delegate.

Sub-Committee of Area

Sub-committees of area such as prison, public information, hospital etc. are comprised of and chaired by, members of area and, as such, are always answerable to Area. Regular reports on sub-committee activities should be presented to area.

Others who attend Area Committee

Most Area Committees will have formed Public Information, Hospital, Prison or other committees in their local area and the Chairperson or Secretary of these will be required to attend Area meetings to keep Area Committee aware of their activities, needs and problems. These sub-committees should always be answerable to the Area Committee in their area and, through the Area Committee to the Groups and AA as a whole (see Tradition 9).

While under Concept 4, “Right of Participation” the representative from the sub-committee should be allowed a voice at Area meetings, it is suggested that, where the number of sub-committee representatives is 25% or less than the number of GSRs the former should be allowed a vote. However, the decision on whether they have a vote or not should be decided by the Area Committee Group Conscience.

Area Decisions

Not all decisions in the AA structure are taken by means of a formal vote. In many cases a “Sense of Meeting” decision is arrived at after a discussion of the topic at hand. When the cumulative experience of those present is brought to bear on the issue, a clear course of action usually becomes apparent to the Area Committee. However, in some cases, a more formal vote will need to be taken.

Who is entitled to vote at Area Meetings?

1. All the GSRs present.
2. The officers of the Area Committee.
3. The Intergroup Representatives of the Area.
4. Any Members of Conference present at meeting. Conference Delegates are Trusted Servants of all the institutions of AA in Ireland and by virtue of their office are, when present, entitled to a voice and a vote at all Area Meetings.

Area Meetings

Meetings should be held at least once every four to six weeks.

Literature

Area Committees should not produce or introduce any magazine, leaflet or publication without the prior written consent of General Service Conference.

SERVICES OPERATED BY AREA COMMITTEES

Services in Hospitals and Other Institutions

For the purposes of this important AA service, 'hospital' is taken to mean a hospital or treatment facility/rehabilitation centre where people are treated for alcoholism. In such institutions the purpose of the AA meeting is to carry the AA message to the patients receiving treatment.

The Hospital and Institutions Committee (H&I)

The AA Hospital and Institutions Committee has one objective – to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. It tries to reach the alcoholic who is in treatment or hospitalised. It does this by members sharing their own experience as individuals and as part of AA in learning to live without alcohol. All efforts in this field should reflect our gratitude for the gift of sobriety and our awareness that many outside AA are equally concerned about the problem of alcoholism. We must recognise that our competence to speak about alcoholism is limited in subject matter to Alcoholics Anonymous and its recovery programme.

Who forms a Hospital and Institutions (H&I) Committee?

The responsibility for forming a Hospital and Institutions Committee rests with the Area Committee and the H&I Committee is answerable to the Area Committee.

The advantages of the H&I Committee

- The experience, strength and hope of AA Groups in the locality are available to the H&I Committee, and through it, to the suffering alcoholic.
- The message carried is solely the 12th recovery programme.
- Any issues that arise can be dealt with promptly by the Area Committee, which has at its disposal the collective experience of Groups in the area.

Qualifications for H&I Volunteers

- It is recommended that H&I committee members have a minimum of two years continuous, current sobriety.
- He/she should be familiar with the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of AA and have an interest in 12th Step work.

Exceptions

Members should not volunteer if:

- He/she is an employee of the hospital/institution.
- He/she is involved in any way as a facilitator or therapist in the hospital/institution.

Important points to remember

- The Committee serves at the invitation of the administration of the hospital or institution, always remembering cooperation not affiliation.

- Visiting hospitals and institutions is a privilege extended to AA, therefore acceptance of such an invitation requires compliance with the hospital or institution's rules and regulations.
- Since we deal only with alcoholism, we are not qualified to give opinions on medical or other issues.
- AA has no opinion on outside issues and members must avoid comment on internal administrative issues. We carry only AA's message of recovery from alcoholism.
- The AA H&I Committee should not take or invite patients/residents out of institutions to outside meetings.
- There are no Tradition 7 collections at hospital meetings (Conference 1982).
- Area may purchase literature for free distribution at hospital meetings (Conference 1984).
- The most appropriate meeting for H&I is an Open AA meeting (Conference 1989).
- Where the hospital or institution does not accept AA guidelines for meetings, then AA ought not to be in that hospital or institution (Conference 1989).
- The anonymity of staff members who are also members of AA should be respected.

Hospital and Institutions Convenor

The H&I Convenor is appointed by his/her Area Committee in the manner agreed by the Area. Where an Area has one or more institutions, members of the H&I Committee may be given individual responsibility for specific meetings.

The usual term of office is two years.

The Convenor will keep the sub-committee well informed of hospital and institution rules and privileges. The Convenor is responsible for locating a suitable meeting venue.

The Convenor must report to Area at Area's regular meetings

Format for Hospital and Institution Meetings

The Hospital Committee Secretary/Convenor is responsible for organising the H&I meeting as an Open AA Meeting.

He/she should arrange to have a suitable Chairperson and two or three responsible AA speakers present. Speakers should allow enough time before the meeting to prepare, at least 10 to 15 minutes.

On opening the meeting the Chairperson:

- Should state that the meeting is an Open AA Meeting and explain what this means.
- Give a brief outline of what AA and its programme are about.
- Read the Preamble.
- Read How It Works from chapter 5 of the Big Book.
- Introduces the speakers, who should share for approximately 15 minutes each.

Patients should not be asked to share but should be encouraged to ask questions.

Before closing the meeting, the Chairperson should stress the following:

- AA Pamphlets are available.
- How people can contact AA on leaving the hospital through local Groups and General Service Office. The AA business cards, should be available for attendees (available free, through the Structure, from GSO).

The meeting should last approximately one hour.

What AA Does Not Do

1. Solicit membership or try to persuade anyone to join AA who does not want to.
2. Keep membership records or case histories.
3. Engage in or sponsor research.
4. Join counselling or social agencies, although AA members frequently co-operate with them.
5. Make medical or psychological diagnoses.
6. Provide drying out or nursing services, hospitalisation, drugs or any medical or psychiatric treatment.
7. Engage in education or propaganda about alcohol.
8. Provide housing, clothes, food, jobs, money or other welfare or social services.
9. Provide counselling services.
10. Accept payment for its services or any funding from non-AA sources.

Service in Prisons

The sole purpose of the AA Prison Committee is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic in prison and detention centres.

Qualifications

The Prison Committee consists of members who visit prisons and who hold the required permissions and clearances. It is suggested that all members of the Prison Committee have a minimum of two years continuous, current sobriety.

Duties and responsibilities

The Prison Committee's main responsibilities are:

- a. To the alcoholic inmate.
- b. To the prison authorities, with full compliance with the prison's policies and procedures.
- c. To the fellowship of AA, conducting ourselves in a manner above reproach, and avoid bringing AA into disrepute.

Important notes to remember

- We bring the AA programme of recovery to prisoners at the invitation of the prison Governor and authorities.
- Abide by all prison rules.
- Make sure all AA meetings commence on time.
- Do not attempt to intercede with prison authorities on behalf of any individual.
- Do not engage in any controversy over management or treatment of inmates, being mindful of AA's singleness of purpose.

- No goods of any sort may be exchanged or transferred between AA visitors and inmates.
- AA visitors are permitted to speak only with inmates attending the AA meeting.
- AA prison visitors are not qualified to give any opinions on medical or drug issues.
- AA visitors represent the fellowship and should conduct themselves appropriately.
- Prison policies and regulations are not the business of AA and personal opinions should not be expressed.
- No member should interfere or try to influence any prison, court, doctor, probation officer or police officer. Neither should he/she make any comments or promises regarding employment, parole, probation or medical problems to the inmate.

Prisons Secretary/Convenor

The relevant Provincial Intergroup elects a provincial Prisons Secretary/Convenor.

Term

Two years.

Qualifications

Two years current/continuous sobriety in AA. He/she should have a good knowledge of the Traditions and of the guidelines for prison visits by AA. The Prisons Secretary/Convenor is required to have an up-to-date knowledge of the visiting rules of individual prisons.

Duties and responsibilities

- Ensure that AA meetings are conducted at the appointed time by the appointed members.
- Provide AA literature for the appointed prisons.
- Ensure there is no collection at these meetings.
- Convenor will keep AA visitors to prisons fully informed regarding rules, regulations and privileges.
- He/she will be responsible for obtaining security clearance for the Committee members.

Committee members should have a real interest in this type of 12th Step work and for this reason they are usually selected by the Prisons Secretary/Convenor. The Prisons Secretary/Convenor is responsible for ensuring that the prison authorities are informed about AA and its services.

Format for Meetings

It is recommended that two members of the Committee should attend all meetings. In the interest of personal safeguarding, members should never visit prisons unless accompanied by another member.

The person opening the meeting (Chairperson) explains the programme of AA and the second member/speaker shares his/her experience, strength and hope, and how the AA programme is working for him/her. It is suggested that in a prison where young offenders are detained, a young Committee member should, where possible, be accompanied by an older, more experienced member.

Chairperson – How to conduct meetings

Conduct Meeting as follows:

1. Chairperson introduces him/herself, welcomes everyone to the meeting and explains that it is a regular meeting of AA.
2. Chair reads the Preamble.
3. Ask a regular attendee to read from Big Book etc.
4. Chair shares his/her own experience, strength and hope for five to ten minutes.
5. Introduces second AA speaker who shares for 15-20 minutes.
6. Asks those present to share.
7. At the end of the meeting, inform attendees that literature is available, explain how to contact AA on release.

Explain to attendees what AA does not do:

- AA does not solicit membership.
- AA does not keep membership records or case histories.
- AA does not engage in or sponsor research
- AA does join social agencies but may co-operate with them
- AA does not have any opinion on medical or psychological issues.
- AA does not provide any psychiatric or medical services, including hospitalisation or residential care.
- AA does not offer spiritual or religious services.
- AA does not provide any social or welfare services such as housing, clothing, food, money etc.
- AA is not a counselling service
- AA does not charge for its services and does not accept any funding from outside sources.

Should a disturbance arise at a meeting the chairperson should immediately contact the prison officer on duty.

Public Information Services

“In all public relationships, AA’s sole objective is to help the still-suffering alcoholic. We believe that our experience should be made freely available to all who express sincere interest.”

The General Service Board will handle public information (PI) at the national level, e.g. national newspapers, television, radio and other broadcast media, tourist boards etc. The Intergroup, Area, and Group PI Committees will handle PI matters in their local areas and deal with local media.

Election of the Public Information Committee

A Public Information Committee shall be elected by the Group Conscience of the relevant Area, Group or Intergroup and the Committee shall always be accountable to the Conscience of the Group, Area or Intergroup that elected them, and report to them on a regular basis. It is recommended that the members of the Public Information Committee should have at least two years continuous sobriety in AA.

For this very important and sensitive area of AA activity it is vital that we utilise the best available people from amongst the AA Groups in the Area or Intergroups. Sound sobriety, a good understanding of the AA Traditions, a good AA judgement, willingness to accept Group Conscience and a record of dedicated service in AA are qualities we should look for when selecting PI Committee members.

Duties and Responsibilities

Responsibilities include:

- Meet regularly, usually monthly, if numbers permit.
- Organise Open Meetings.
- Provide Garda/PSNI stations, doctors' surgeries, libraries, churches and other public areas with AA posters. Conference does not approve of personal or private telephone numbers being displayed in a public place (Conference 1983).
- Learn all they can about the PI literature.
- Share the lessons learned with other Groups in the area.
- Identify professional bodies, including schools and colleges that would benefit by learning more about AA.
- Provide information about AA to those who have contact with alcoholics through their profession such as health care professionals, educators, members of the clergy, lawyers, social workers as well as those working in the field of alcoholism.
- Helping PI committees in other Groups by supplying speakers for Open Meetings.
- The PI Committee should establish and maintain contact with local media and provide them with newsworthy information about AA and its activities.
- Take all reasonable care to protect member anonymity at media and public level.
- The PI Committee should not present itself as an authority on alcoholism. This should be left to the professionals in this field.

Open Meetings and Open Public Information Meetings

The main difference between an AA Open Meeting and an Open Public Information Meeting is that Open Meetings have AA speakers only. Open Public Information Meetings typically include an AI-Anon Speaker and a professional from a related field with relevant knowledge. A brief history of AA in Ireland may be given. (Refer to Guidelines for Public Information (PI Kit) Section 4, pages 27-35.)

Conducting Open Public Information Meetings

It is essential that alcoholics who are entrusted with organising and presenting AA Public Information Meeting are very clear in their minds what a PI Meeting is, what its general content should be and how PI meetings differ in content and format from the

AA Open meetings organised by the AA Groups.

PI meetings seek to reach the suffering alcoholic through third parties and may be attended by health care professionals, social workers, teachers, prison and probation services, police, print and broadcast media, etc. In their daily work these people are frequently in contact with the suffering alcoholic and by their presence at our meeting show their concern and willingness to help.

The purpose of the PI meeting is to continue to inform these professionals about AA and its meetings and services and their availability in the locality. It is recommended that two well-informed AA members represent the fellowship. Local meeting lists and other explanatory AA literature should be available.

An AI-Anon representative should also be invited to participate.

Format for an Open Public Meeting

An AA Chairperson will conduct the meeting. The meeting commences by welcoming everyone present, reading the Preamble and introducing the speakers. The speakers usually consist of two AA members, an AI-Anon member and, where possible, a speaker from a relevant profession, such as medical, Garda/PSNI, emergency services etc.

The Chairperson should explain that AA's public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion, always maintaining personal anonymity at the level of print and broadcast media, and that the anonymity of those present should be respected.

The guest professional is usually asked to speak first (refer to Guidelines for Public Information (PI Kit) Section 4, pages 27-35). This is usually followed by the Chairperson reading an excerpt from chapter 3, Big Book, page 30. The second speaker, an AA speaker, shares their experience of recovery through the AA programme. Then Chairperson introduces the AI-Anon speaker. Following this the Chairperson then reads part of chapter 5, page 58, including the 12 Steps. Then the second AA speaker is introduced, who relates their experience of sobriety through AA. A good balance between male and female speakers is recommended.

Questions are invited from attendees and 10-15 minutes may be given to this section.

Before closing the meeting, the Chairperson draws attention to the AA website and the contact numbers for our offices.

Thank the speakers and attendees and close the meeting. No serenity prayer required.

Format for AA Open Meetings

These meetings are open to all who may or may not have an alcohol problem and they are arranged and publicised by AA. The meeting is chaired by an AA member and it is usual to have two AA members speak of their experiences and recovery. The purpose of the meeting is to carry the AA message through its programme of recovery. (Refer to Guidelines for Public Information (PI Kit) Section 4, pages 27-35.)

Qualifications for speakers at Public Information Meetings and Open AA Meetings

First impressions are important, we may not get a second chance.

- A sound knowledge of AA's Steps and Traditions is a basic requirement.
- Speakers should confine their talks to their personal experience of AA and its programme of recovery.
- The AA platform must not be used to express the views of any outside agency.
- Only Conference approved literature and audio/visual media may be used.

Problems other than alcohol

Anyone may attend Open AA Meetings but only persons with a desire to stop drinking may attend closed AA meetings or become AA members. Dual or multiple-addicted people are eligible for AA membership where one of their addictions is to alcohol.

Our first duty, as a fellowship, is to ensure our own survival. Therefore, we must avoid distractions and multipurpose activity. An AA Group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message of sobriety.

Sobriety - freedom from alcohol - through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an AA Group. We must confine our membership to those with a desire to stop drinking, and we must confine our AA Groups to AA's singleness of purpose.

Telephone Service

Telephone services are operated by various committees throughout the AA structure. In some cases, it is the Intergroup which organises the service, in others it is the Area committee and sometimes a local area or Group has a telephone service.

It is important to have a pool of members to operate the phone service, enabling the phones to be rotated between participating Groups and avoiding reliance on one or two members.

Whichever form the telephone service takes, Intergroup, Area, or local, there are certain guidelines which ought to be adhered to. These are as follows:

- To participate in telephone service a member should have one year's continuous sobriety in AA and have a working knowledge of the 12 steps and 12 traditions.
- As the caller will usually be anxious or nervous, the response should be empathetic and positive. Remember, this might be the only opportunity to help the person in need.
- Members responding to AA calls should have up to date AA meeting information to hand as well as a list of other helping organisations such as AI-Anon, Samaritans, Aware, Rape Crisis Centre etc.
- Since the introduction of GDPR it is essential to obtain the caller's explicit permission to use his/her phone number to give to a 12th Step contact.
- Once the call is taken, the phone service member should, where appropriate, arrange for a member to contact the person in need.
- Phone Convenors should not disclose AA members phone numbers to other AA members or the public for any reason.
- All calls other than 12th Step calls should be redirected to GSO to be dealt with as appropriate.
- Phones should rotate regularly, preferably monthly, between Groups within the operating area (Intergroup, Area or local area).
- The area operating the phone service is responsible for all expenses incurred.

12th Step Work

Carrying the message to others. This is done by sharing our experience, strength and hope, reinforcing the spiritual principles of the twelve steps in the person being 12th stepped as well as the member doing the 12th step. If members do not do 12th Step work, AA will simply cease to exist.

- When answering a 12th Step request, members should never operate alone but always be accompanied by an experienced AA member. It is recommended that where a female seeks help, two female AA members should deal with such requests. Similarly, where a male seeks help the response should be handled by two male AA members.
- Members meeting for the first time with a person seeking help should carry a positive message, emphasising the benefits of sobriety to be found through active membership of AA.

- Groups should have a supply of 'starter wallet packs' which members can give to newcomers. These are available from the General Service Office/CSO for a small charge.
- It should be noted that 12th Step work is also carried out by taking up service positions in a home Group or at Area and intergroup.
- Putting posters in strategic public areas such as churches, surgeries, garda/police stations, colleges etc. is also vital 12th Step work.
- Also included in 12th Step service is the organisation of Open Public Meetings, school talks, talks to professionals and any other activity which brings an awareness of AA to the general public. Refer to AA's 'Guidelines for Public Information (PI Kit) for assistance with these activities.
- This is considered to be 12th Step voluntary service and as such is not eligible for remuneration.

GUIDELINES FOR CONVENTIONS AND ONE-DAY EVENTS

Conventions provide the opportunity for AA members from other areas to meet and share with one another their combined experience of the recovery programme of Alcoholics Anonymous and its legacies of Unity and Service. Organising a convention requires a lot of preparation on the part of the organising committee. Thorough and careful planning of the event will help to make the event a success. The following recommendations will help ensure the smooth and successful running of the convention.

Conventions

In Ireland two types of conventions are typical:

All Ireland Convention

This is held with the approval of the Conference. The All Ireland Convention moves annually between the provinces. The Provincial Intergroup in whose area the Convention is held is responsible for all aspects of the organisation of the Annual Convention on behalf of the General Service Conference.

All Ireland Convention Committee

The All Ireland Convention Committee comprises the Provincial Trustee from the host province, the four Provincial Intergroup Conference Delegates and the Intergroup Secretary.

The Committee is chaired by the Trustee and roles are allocated according to individual skills and knowledge. Positions requiring to be filled include, Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, and other such positions as the Committee may decide. The Committee may co-opt more members as required, ensuring that all roles are efficiently filled.

The Committee is collectively responsible for all aspects of the All Ireland Convention and ensuring its success.

Area Conventions and One-Day Events

The responsibility for the scheduling of Area Conventions and One-Day events lies with each Intergroup. A Group wishing to hold a Convention or other event must first seek Area approval. Area should liaise with the Intergroup to ensure that proposed events do not clash with other events within the province. Area Conventions and One-Day events may not be held within six weeks before the All Ireland Convention.

It is the responsibility of each Area Committee to ensure these Conventions are run according to the guidelines. The Conference Delegate for the Area should be a member of the Convention Committee to provide advice and guidance.

Committees for Area Conventions and One-Day Events should be appointed by the relevant Area or group of Areas to run the chosen event. Conference recommends that Area officers where possible, and the relevant Conference delegate (by virtue of his/her office) are automatically members of the committee.

The Area Convention committee usually consists of the officers of the relevant area. The Area Committee chooses the Chairperson and other officers according to their needs. The relevant Conference Delegate, by virtue of his/her position, is automatically a member of the Convention Committee. The following positions will need to be filled:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Public Information Officer and
- Any other role that Area may deem necessary

The Chairperson calls and chairs committee meetings. He/she corresponds with the venue when this has been decided upon. In general, the chairperson has overall responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the Convention, in collaboration with the committee.

The Secretary keeps all written records including minutes of Committee meetings and is responsible for ensuring that a full report, including a clear and accurate financial report, on all aspects of the Convention is given to their Area or in the case of the All-Ireland Convention, to the next annual Conference.

The Treasurer is responsible for the handling of Convention Funds, which are usually provided by way of a loan from Area, to be paid back once the Convention has taken place. He/she ensures all due accounts are paid on time and maintains proper and accurate records. The Treasurer also ensures that the convention is properly insured, including member-to-member liability.

An up-to-date report should be given at every Committee meeting. Cheques should have, as a safeguard, two signatories. After all convention bills are paid any surplus funds should be forwarded through the structure to the General Service Office. There is a standard Financial Report for Conventions available from GSO/CSO.

All major decisions regarding the running of an AA convention should be taken by the Committee while the carrying out of those decisions may then be delegated to an individual member.

The planning and running of a suitable AA Programme are at the heart of an AA Convention.

The organisation of ancillary functions normally included at an AA Convention, such as a Convention dinner, dance or disco, registration desks and literature sales ought to be prepared well in advance of the event.

The Committee decides the location and booking of a suitable Convention venue. This will include the negotiation of a written agreement with the proprietors of the venue, outlining the facilities and services they will provide for the Convention and the agreed cost of same.

Conference/General Service Board disclaim any possible liability in relation to the running of any events/conventions etc. being held against the Conference approved Guidelines and without having the approval of the relevant Area (Conference 1981). The Fellowship will not accept any money from unapproved conventions.

Conventions and One Day Events organised by a Group, approved by an Area and forwarded through the Intergroup Secretary may be included in the Road Back, News Sheet and official AA Website. (Conference 2012)

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous does not accept any monies from unapproved Conventions or Functions (Conference 1993)

Only Conference approved material should be on sale at Conventions. The running of raffles is not approved.

Convention Events

The Convention Programme normally consists of:

- Opening Meeting
- International Forum
- Main Speaker Meetings
- Saturday morning Speaker Meeting
- Saturday afternoon Speaker Meeting
- Ordinary closed AA Marathon Meetings
- Service Workshops on a variety of topics, for example Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, Prisons, Tradition meetings etc.
- AA approved audio/visual media
- Public AA Meeting or Public Information Meeting if one is run
- Meeting to formally close the Convention

As these areas will set the whole AA content and tone of the Convention, it is vital that we use all the experience available to the Committee in order to ensure that the **best possible** AA is available and enjoyed by those attending Conventions. It is unlikely that the programme would contain the widest spectrum of AA experience if these decisions were left to one or two individuals, no matter how well intentioned.

Planning and Running

Convention organisers must make provision for:

1. Suitable registration facilities.
2. AA Literature sales. Literature is supplied on a sale or return basis from General Service Office. The Committee is responsible for damaged literature which cannot be returned.
3. Convention dinner or dance.
4. Other entertainment facilities.

Speakers at Conventions

It is recommended that the opening meeting be an 'Open AA Meeting' at which only AA members speak. It is also recommended that Public representatives be invited to sit in the main body of the hall as guests of AA. If a public representative wished to welcome AA to the locality, he/she will be invited to do so prior to the start of the Opening Meeting. The closing meeting of a Convention can be an Open Public Meeting at which AI-Anon and other AA friends may speak.

Guarding against anonymity breaks

When AA Conventions are being covered by members of the media, it is customary to begin meetings by asking their co-operation in protecting members' anonymity. Such an announcement might go like this:

“Our anonymity, like our sobriety, is a treasured possession. We ask the help of our guests - especially those representing the press or broadcasting media - in protecting the anonymity of all alcoholics present or mentioned here today.

We hope you hear something at this meeting which you can take away with you and use.

We respectfully request, however, that you don't mention individual names in reference to members of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Use of cameras is not allowed in Convention Centres. Recording devices may be allowed with the permission of the Committee and of individual speakers.

AA and AI-Anon

AA may invite AI-Anon to run its own programme in conjunction with the AA Convention. It would not be in the best interests of either Fellowship to have one make cash contributions or afford financial assistance to the other. AI-Anon should pay its own expenses separately.

One-Day Events

All One-Day Events such as Days of Gratitude that are officially organised by an Area will be included on the Upcoming Events page on the AA Website.

Literature for Conventions

A standard literature pack for conventions is available from GSO on a strict sale or return basis. Damaged or defaced literature is the responsibility of the Convention Committee and must be paid for by them. Payment for Convention Literature must be made on return of literature, within two weeks of convention.

Use of official AA Logo

Intergroups should ensure that the correct AA Logo is used. This is available through the Intergroup Secretary from the Provincial Trustee. The relevant Provincial Trustee may grant permission to Provincial Intergroup for the use of the logo solely for approved Conventions and Days of Gratitude (Conference 2015).

Official AA Ireland Logo

Below is the official logo of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland. This logo is the property and copyright of General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG and may only be used with their permission. It differs in some technical respects from all other national and international AA logos. The reason for this is to differentiate between countries and to make our logo unique to Ireland.

Legitimate use of the logo is rarely, if ever, refused, but requesting permission for its use is the usual procedure for groups, areas and Intergroups whenever they wish to make use of it. Permission is usually sought through the Structure of AA – group to area to Intergroup Secretary to Provincial Trustee, who has the authority to grant permissions.



THE PROVINCIAL INTERGROUP COMMITTEE

Composition of Provincial Intergroup

The Provincial Intergroups ('Intergroup or IG') are based on the historic provinces of Leinster, Connaught, Munster and Ulster. Each Intergroup Committee consists of the following:

- four GSRs, preferably including Area officers, elected from each Area Committee (Area Representatives);
- the four IG General Service Conference Delegates (GSCDs);
- the Intergroup Secretary;
- the Intergroup Chairperson;
- the Intergroup Treasurer; and
- the Provincial Trustee who has been appointed as a Director of the General Services Board of Alcoholics Anonymous CLG.

As the Chairperson, IG Secretary, IG Treasurer, IG Conference delegates and Provincial Trustee are all drawn from the GSRs/Area Representatives their appointment will create vacancies for GSRs/Area Representatives once they become officers of the IG. Where a GSR/ Area Representative becomes an officer of Intergroup, his/her home Area may choose a replacement GSR for the remainder of his/her term.

All Officers of Intergroup must have previously served as Area Representatives for their respective areas.

Intergroups Committees should meet at least every three months.

Intergroup Committees should make every effort to encourage observers to attend Intergroup meetings.

Trustees and Conference Delegates have full voting powers at any meeting of Area Committees or Intergroups anywhere in Ireland at which they are in attendance (Conference 1981).

Election of Officers and Delegates

It is suggested that each Intergroup put considerable thought and care into the selection of its officers and GSCDs, as the ability of the Intergroup to function effectively is greatly influenced by the ability of its officers. It is vital that the best available, willing people are chosen. Where Intergroup considers it necessary Third Legacy procedures should be used.

Intergroup Representative

Qualifications

An Intergroup Representative elected to represent his/her area at IG level should have a period of three years' continuous sobriety as a member of AA and one years' experience as an active GSR in Area. The term of office for Intergroup Representative is two years. He/she should have a sound understanding of the Traditions and be able to convey this knowledge to others. He/she should be able to stimulate in others an interest in all AA services, from Group to Conference. He/she should attend all Area

Committee Meetings and visit as many Groups as possible in the area he/she represents. A member of an Intergroup Committee may vote at his/her Provincial Intergroup and at his/her local Area Meetings. Ideally, two representatives from each Area will step down and be replaced each year.

The Intergroup Representative is at the same time the Trusted Servant of his/her Area and Intergroup Committee. He/she will carry the views and feelings of the Area to Intergroup and report back to Area.

The Intergroup Representative is entrusted with the authority of his/her delegating Area to make decisions dictated by his conscience after having listened to and debated matters arising in his/her Area - thus the term "Trusted Servant".

The Intergroup Representative ought to bring an accurate report to Area concerning all the debates, decisions and activities of the Intergroup Committee. Through the reports from Conference delegates, the Area representative will be kept informed of what is happening throughout our AA structure. As his/her Area's representative, it is his/her responsibility to ensure that this information is passed to Area both by personal report and by ensuring that all Intergroup and Conference minutes are downloaded from the AA website and available to be read by the Area. The representative should carefully listen to and note the Area Committee's views and feelings on all matters arising from these reports, and report back to Intergroup. Intergroup Representatives should attend all Intergroup meetings and all meetings of his/her Area Committee.

Intergroup Officers

Qualifications

Leadership must come from the officers, who should have both knowledge and enthusiasm, and an ability to get things done. Intergroup Officers should have at least one year's experience as an active Intergroup Committee member.

An Officer's term of office is for two years. He/she is not eligible for re-election to that office. A nominee may be proposed by any Area for a position in Intergroup, but it would be preferable for the nomination to come from the nominee's own area.

Intergroup Chairperson

Qualifications

The Intergroup Chairperson should preferably have five years continuous sobriety in AA.

The Intergroup Chairperson is chosen in the manner decided by the relevant Intergroup. The term of office can be one or two years as decided by the Intergroup. He/she should have considerable AA experience at Group, Area and Intergroup level. He/she should have a sound understanding of the Traditions.

Duties and responsibilities

The Chairperson's role is to conduct the business of the meeting in an orderly and appropriate manner. The Chairperson does not vote at Intergroup meetings.

Intergroup Secretary

Qualifications

The Intergroup Secretary should preferably have five years continuous sobriety in AA.

The Intergroup Secretary is chosen from those eligible and may be rotating out of office or be a past member of Intergroup. Areas may propose suitable candidates from their respective areas.

The Intergroup Secretary is, by virtue of his/her role, a member of Conference and therefore should preferably have five years continuous sobriety in AA, be an active member and have served as GSR, Area Representative and Intergroup Committee member. He/she needs to be available to attend meetings of Conference and its Committees. The Intergroup Secretary's term of office is two years. On completion of their term of office, Intergroup Secretaries are eligible to serve a full term of four years as Conference Delegate at any time in the future, should he/she be chosen for this role.

Duties and responsibilities

The Intergroup Secretary ought to be able to sift through thousands of words at meetings to get to the kernel for inclusion in his/her minutes. He/she keeps Intergroup Committee informed of all correspondence received. He/she should ensure that no identifiable personal details, such as personal phone numbers or email addresses are contained in the Intergroup minutes. Minutes of Intergroup meetings should be emailed to AA Trustees, General Service Office (GSO), Conference Delegates, PI Convenor, Prison Convenor, Telephone Convenor, Area Secretaries and all AA Groups in the province. This must be done using the allocated internal AA mailboxes only. Minutes should be prepared and emailed as soon as possible after the Intergroup meeting. Where possible the Intergroup Secretary should send a list of the Conventions planned by the Provincial Intergroup to the General Service Office.

The Intergroup Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the Board Secretary receives all submissions, including Delegates Reports, 'Motions to Conference', GB observers' reports, All-Ireland Convention reports (where applicable) at least six weeks prior to Conference.

The Intergroup Secretary automatically becomes a member of the company 'The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland CLG' for the duration of their two year term.

Intergroup Treasurer

Qualifications

The Intergroup Treasurer should preferably have five years continuous sobriety in AA, be an active member and have served as GSR and Area Representative. He/she is chosen by the relevant Intergroup. Areas may propose suitable candidates for this role.

Duties and responsibilities

He/she must be a careful guardian of the AA funds in his/her care and give a written account of Intergroup's financial position to each Intergroup meeting. This account should be circulated with Intergroup minutes. Surplus funds should be promptly transferred to GSO. It is preferable that Intergroup funds are kept in a Bank Account

with two people required to transfer funds electronically or by cheque. The Treasurer also ensures that the Intergroup is properly insured inclusive of member-to-member liability.

General Service Conference Delegates (GSCDs)

Each Provincial Intergroup is represented at Conference by:

- The Provincial Trustee
- The IG Secretary
- Four members from the Province elected to represent his/her Intergroup at the General Service Conference. These four members are known as General Service Conference Delegates.

Conference recommends that nominations for this position come to Intergroup through the structure i.e. that candidates be nominated by their Groups and Areas for selection at Intergroup (Conference 2006).

Delegates to Conference are selected and appointed by the four provincial Intergroups in the manner chosen by them. Such Intergroups are entitled to select and appoint alternate delegates to substitute for the delegates at Conference Meetings.

The delegate's term of office is a period of four years, expiring at the end of the Annual Conference Meeting in the fourth year. However, to ensure continuity the appointment of delegates is arranged in such a manner that two of the delegates from each of the four provinces retire every two years.

Former GSCDs, having served their full term, ought to return to service at Group level. They may serve as officers in their home Group. They ought not to return to Service at Area or Intergroup (see pages 14-19).

Qualifications

To qualify for election as a GSCD, a member will have a minimum of five years current and continuous sobriety in AA and will have been actively engaged in service at Group, Area and Intergroup level. He/she will have acquired a working knowledge of his/her local Groups and an understanding of the issues that arise in their Area.

Candidates will have a good knowledge of the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Service Handbook for Ireland. A knowledge of the Twelve Concepts is desirable. He/she will have been chosen by their Area to serve as an Intergroup Representative and may be currently serving as such or have rotated from this position.

Candidates should have qualities of leadership and responsibility. He/she should have the time to travel to Areas, Intergroup and meetings of Conference and its sub-committees. Candidates for the position of GSCD are nominated by their home Group, then ratified by their Area and their names forwarded to the Intergroup, where an election takes place to select a GSCD from those nominated. The Third Legacy voting procedure is used for this purpose (see page 25). The most important qualities in a GSCD are sobriety, availability and effectiveness.

A delegate who is absent from two consecutive meetings of Conference without good and sufficient reason will be deemed to have resigned.

Alternate Delegates

Qualifications

Alternate Delegates are the same as those required for GSCDs. When a GSCD is unable to attend Conference for any reason whatsoever, his/her Alternate shall serve as Proxy Delegate and must have the signed Proxy Form from the GSCD being replaced. Upon receipt of notification directly from a sitting delegate, an Alternate Delegate may replace them at Conference. Should a GSCD resign from his/her position before completion of the full four-year term then the Intergroup shall elect a replacement GSCD in the manner described above. The Alternate Delegate is eligible for this role if elected.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous meets once per year with the four General Service Conference Delegates (GSCDs) from each Intergroup, to exchange views and discuss any issues relating to their Provincial Intergroup (Conference, 1988).

Frequency of Intergroup Meetings

Intergroup Committees should meet at least every three months.

Each Intergroup should hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) at which relevant officers would rotate and new officers be elected. A complete financial report for the year should be provided by the treasurer of Intergroup. Annual reports from committees of Intergroup should also be made at this time.

Funding of Intergroups

Intergroups are funded by the donations from the Areas and Groups within its province. Apart from a Prudent Reserve, all surplus funds should be transferred to GSBAA in a timely manner.

Any expenses incurred by a member of Intergroup in attending Committee meetings will, if requested, be borne by the Intergroup Committee.

Intergroup Sub-Committees

Intergroup Committees may form Public Information, Hospital, Prison or other sub-committees in their province. The Chairperson or Secretary of such committees will be required to attend Intergroup meetings to keep Intergroup Committees aware of their activities, needs and problems. Convenors of Intergroup Sub-Committee should be experienced active members of Intergroups and preferably have a minimum of four years sobriety.

These Sub-Committees should always be answerable to their Intergroup Committee and through the Intergroup Committee to the Groups (see Tradition 9). While under Concept 4 'Right of Participation' - the representative from the Sub-Committee should be allowed a voice at Intergroup meetings, it is suggested that where the number of such representatives is 25% less than the number of Intergroup Delegates, they should be allowed to vote. However, the decision on whether they have a vote or not should be decided by the Intergroup Committee Group Conscience.

General Service Office (GSO) and Central Service Office (CSO)

For the purpose of administration, distribution of literature and provision of services to groups throughout the island of Ireland, AA maintains two premises. These are the General Service office, AA's main office in Dublin and Central Service Office, a provincial office in Belfast.

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE OF IRELAND

The General Service Conference of Ireland is the group of members who meet annually, or as decided, to co-ordinate the affairs of the Fellowship, bringing together the opinions and problems of all the Groups in Ireland in order to arrive at a consensus and to decide on best practice for the fellowship.

Conference is the forum where matters of concern to AA in Ireland are discussed, and solutions are arrived at through the substantial unanimity of the delegates attending.

Conference is the official guardian of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts for World Service, and as such is the Group Conscience of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland. Conference derives its authority from the fellowship of AA as a whole in Ireland.

Why do we need a Conference?

Bernard B. Smith, former non-alcoholic Chairperson of our New York Board of Trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered the question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting:

'We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from his room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth which brought us back to life.

We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must insure can never invade AA. We need it to ensure AA against Government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect AA against disintegration while preventing over-integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and all of its services.

We need it to ensure that changes within AA come only as a response to the needs and wants of all AA and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of AA never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is".

THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The General Service Conference of Ireland comprises 30 members as follows:

- Four General Service Conference Delegates (GSCDs) or their Alternate proxies from each of the four provinces of Ireland (16 in total);
- Four Provincial Intergroup Secretaries.
- Four Alcoholic Trustees (Members of AA) – one from each Province (Provincial AA Trustees) who are directors of the General Service Board of AA CLG (GSBAA);
- Three other Trustees who are not AA Members who also are directors of GSBAA
- The Secretary to the Conference (who is also the Company Secretary of GSBAA)
- Two World Service Delegates

All members of Conference shall be entitled to participate and vote at meetings of Conference.

Observers may speak at Conference at the discretion of the Chairperson of Conference.

General Service Conference Delegates

Qualifications

GSCDs and the process for electing them are set out in the previous section dealing with Provincial Intergroups.

Intergroup Committees should strive to appoint delegates so that the widest possible coverage of the geographical area is obtained, but the suitability of a delegate is more important than his/her location.

Duties and responsibilities

GSCDs attend meetings of Conference where they are full participants in the business of Conference with full rights of participation and decision-making. They also attend Area Meetings, IG Meetings, and meetings of any sub-committees of which they are members. GSCDs give Conference reports from the Areas they attend. They regularly meet together with their Provincial Trustee to report and discuss matters that are ongoing or have arisen within their areas. GSCDs are also de facto members of the All Ireland Convention Committee when the Convention is held in their province.

GSCDs automatically become a member of the company 'The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG' for the duration of their four-year term.

Retiring Delegates

If, before completing his/her term of office, a GSCD retires, or is replaced by his/her Provincial Intergroup, the incoming Delegate will remain a delegate only for the unexpired portion of the term of the person he is replacing. A Delegate who is absent

from two consecutive Annual Meetings of Conference renders him/herself ineligible to continue as GSCD. He/she will be replaced by the relevant Intergroup.

- Former GSCDs, having served their full term, ought to return to service at group level. They may serve as officers in their home Group. They ought not to return to Service at Area or Intergroup (see pages 14 to 19). The exception to this is where a retired delegate is nominated as World Service Delegate or selected as a Provincial AA Trustee and Director of GSBAA.

A retiring Delegate is not eligible for re-election as a Delegate unless he/she has not completed a full four-year term, in which case he/she is eligible only for the unexpired portion of the term, up to a maximum of four years.

Intergroup Secretaries at Conference

Intergroup Secretaries, by virtue of their office, serve for a two-year period. During this two-year period the Intergroup Secretary is a full member of Conference, with full participatory rights.

Intergroup Secretaries submit to the Board/Company Secretary all Area reports, PI Reports, Motions to Conference, correspondence for Conference and any other items from their Intergroup that are relevant to Conference. These submissions should be emailed to the Board/Company Secretary using the allocated internal AA mailboxes only and emailed six weeks before Conference is due to be held.

AA Trustee/Director

Roles and responsibilities

These are members of AA and act as AA Trustees to the Fellowship. They are also Charity Trustees and Directors of the registered charity known as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland, Company Limited by Guarantee, (CLG). This role imposes legal and fiduciary obligations on each board member and these obligations take precedence over other duties and obligations. (See page 54 for further details about GSBAA CLG and its relationship with the Fellowship of AA.)

AA Trustees must have a comprehensive knowledge of the AA structure and be able to lead AA in his/her province with the co-operation of the GSCDs and other officers. He/she should consult regularly with his/her Provincial GSCDs in order to be well informed about AA matters in the province. He/she needs to be able to present the concerns and needs of his/her Province to the board and in turn to bring the board's responses back to the members. Attendance at regular board meetings and its sub-committees is an integral part of the AA Trustee/Director role. Being well-informed, AA Trustees/Directors will be able to fully participate in board deliberations and decisions.

AA Trustees/Directors also attend the regular meetings of their Provincial Intergroup, being available to participate and advise as required. They usually chair the All Ireland Convention Committee whenever this is held in their Province, usually once during their four-year term.

Qualifications

AA Trustees should have ten years current, continuous sobriety. He/she should be an active member of an AA Group, have served a full four-year term as a member of Conference, having previously served terms at Group, Area and Provincial Intergroup level. An AA Trustee/Director should be available to devote the necessary time to serving on the Board and to the service of AA in general, without this responsibility negatively impacting on his/her personal or professional life. He/she should bring to the Board extensive business or professional experience, be determined in the exercise of his/her own good judgement and objectivity and have the courage to express his/her views.

Appointment

Traditionally, AA Trustees to the Fellowship are chosen from a list of those eligible, by the retiring AA Trustee/Director. The retiring AA Trustee/Director shall consult with his/her provincial GSCDs. They should reach a consensus on a successor before he/she is presented to the Board for ratification. A unanimous consensus would be preferable, but not essential. The retiring AA Trustee/director presents his/her nomination for successor to the Board for ratification. Once ratified, the incoming AA Trustee is presented to the relevant Intergroup at the Intergroup meeting prior to Conference.

In the event that an Alcoholic Trustee/Director resigns or becomes unable to fulfil his/her duties, prior to the completion of his/her four-year term, the Board after due consultation with the provincial GSCDs, appoint a replacement AA Trustee/Director from the above list to hold office only for the unexpired portion of the retiring Trustees/Directors four-year term. Alcoholic Trustees are not eligible for re-appointment. In the interim the period before the next conference, the board shall act collectively as Provincial AA Trustees/Directors

Term of office

AA Trustee/Directors are not eligible for re-election upon completion of their four-year term.

Non-AA Member Trustees/Directors

There are three Non-AA Member Trustees/Directors who are not members of the fellowship of AA. These Trustees/Directors are first co-opted to the Board of GSBAA and subsequently presented to the General Service Conference. Their position as Conference members flows from their appointment as a Director of GSBAA CLG.

Non-AA Member Trustees/Directors bring individual skills and experience, for example in compliance and governance, to the Board and make their expertise available to the Fellowship as a whole.

Appointment

Non-AA Member Trustees/Directors are nominated and appointed by the General Service Board and presented to Conference.

Term of Office

The term of office is for a period of four years, at the end of which period they are then

eligible for re-election for an additional four years. He/she must indicate their willingness to the Board to serve for a second term. The Board shall then consider the request for a second term and decide whether to approve such a request.

A non-AA Member Trustee/Director may serve a maximum of two terms or eight years in total.

Board/Company Secretary

The holder of this office serves a dual role as Company Secretary of GSBAA CLG and Board Secretary of the General Service Conference. In this latter capacity the Secretary is a member of Conference.

Qualifications

A prospective Board/Company Secretary is required to have a minimum ten year's current, continuous sobriety, be available to fulfil his/her duties and have served a full four-year term at Conference as well as terms at Group, Area and Intergroup level.

Duties and responsibilities

The Board/Company Secretary must become familiar with and comply with current statutory regulations as they apply to his/her role. This is a role with significant duties and responsibilities and the Secretary needs to have the appropriate knowledge and skillsets to efficiently fulfil his/her role. The Board must ensure that appropriate training is provided to the Secretary to enable him/her to fulfil all duties.

Appointment

The Board/Company Secretary is appointed by the Directors on such terms as they agree in accordance with company law. Any Secretary so appointed may be removed by them at any stage. The Secretary will serve on a voluntary basis and without salary.

Term of Office

The term of office is set out in the Constitution of GSBAA and is currently set at four years.

Service in the role of Board/Company Secretary does not prohibit him/her from

service in the role of Board/Company Secretary does not prohibit him/her from subsequently serving as a director of GSBAA.

World Service Delegates (WSD)

A WSD is a member of Conference who represents the Fellowship at World Service Meetings and European Service Meetings.

The position of World Service Delegate (WSD) is for a term of four years from date of election. Only retired GSCDs who have served their full term are eligible to be elected as WSD. WSDs are chosen from nominations received from the Provincial Intergroups, ~~having been~~ through the structure in the usual manner. WSD is elected at March

Nominees should be acquainted with all aspects of AA in Ireland. He/she should have completed a four-year term as GSCD. Retired Trustee/Directors are eligible for this role. A minimum of ten years continuous, current sobriety is preferred, and nominees

Conference and takes up office the following January (Conference 2016)

should be active members of AA.

WSDs should become familiar with Groups throughout the country and should attend at least one Intergroup meeting in each Province on an annual basis.

A World Service Delegate should be available to fulfil the duties of the role and be capable of preparing and presenting a written report on AA in Ireland. WSDs must be available to travel overseas to World and European Service meetings.

He she must provide a written report to Conference on the World/European Service meetings.

A WSD report to the World Service Meeting or the European Service Meeting should be given to the Board Secretary no later than four months prior to such meetings. The Board Secretary may then place the WSD report before the General Service Board for editing before it may be presented at World or European Service meetings.

WSD Alternate Delegate

In the event of a WSD not being able to attend a meeting, a member of the Board, nominated by the Board, shall act as Alternate for such meeting.

Relationship between Fellowship of AA and GSBAA

Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland comprises two separate but closely connected organisations: 1) The Fellowship of AA comprising Groups, Areas, Provincial Intergroups and the General Service Conference (AA) and 2) the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG (GSBAA).

The Fellowship of AA is what is known as an unincorporated body and as such it is not subject to Company Law or Charity Law. The Fellowship of AA is run in accordance with this handbook and in accordance with custom and practice built up over decades with its constituent parts being guided by their Group Conscience.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG on the other hand is both a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital and a registered charity, so the company is subject to both Company Law and Charity Law. The Company operates in accordance with its Constitution and the seven Directors of the company are both Company Directors and Charity Trustees with specific legal responsibilities imposed on them by the Companies Act 2014 and Charities Act 2009 respectively.

The company provides a range of services to the Fellowship including:

- Publication of the Road Back Magazine
- Publication of the AA News Sheet
- Literature Publications
- Maintenance of AA's National Archives
- Management of national Public Information activities
- Management of the funds of the Fellowship that are not retained at Group, Area or Provincial Intergroup level for their own use
- Operation of the General Service Office (GSO)
- Management of the AA Website

Organisationally these two arms of AA are linked in the following ways:

1. The 30 members of the General Service Conference are also the 30 members of the company GSBAA.
2. The seven Directors of GSBAA are members of Conference and Trustees of the Fellowship. Taking 1 and 2 together this means that, although the Fellowship and GSBAA are separate organisations, the Directors of GSBAA are accountable to the members of the Company through the company AGM for their stewardship of GSBAA and the support provided to the Fellowship. The members of Conference/members of GSBAA can exercise this accountability at the AGM of the Company.

Board Meetings with GSCDs

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous meets once per year with the four General Service Conference Delegates (GSCDs) and Intergroup Secretary from each intergroup, to exchange views and discuss any issues relating to their Provincial Intergroup (Conference, 1988).

Attendance at other Meetings

Directors/Trustees and Conference Delegates may attend any meetings of Intergroups and Area Committees anywhere in Ireland and are entitled to vote at such meetings. (Conference 1981).

Annual Report

The GSBAA Annual Report will be sent to all Company Members for consideration at the AGM.

THE BUSINESS OF GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

Conference Charter

In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference of Ireland shall observe the spirit of AA Traditions, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve be its prudent principles, that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive, or an incitement to public controversy; that, though the Conference may act in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous and may traditionally direct its world services, it shall never enact laws and regulations binding on government, and that, like the Fellowship of AA which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

Articles

Article 1

The Name by which Conference is known is Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Conference of Ireland. Its authority is derived from the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole in Ireland, and it shall continue in existence so long as the Fellowship shall require it.

Article 2

Primary Object of General Service Conference

1. The primary object of Conference is Third Legacy within its functional area, and the operation in principle of the Twelve Traditions. Conference is the guardian of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
2. There is no authority in AA except that which expresses itself in the Group Conscience, which is then communicated by the Group to AA as whole. This is where the structure begins.
3. Conference is not a government of AA. It is responsible to those it serves. It provides a way in which AA in Ireland may act as a whole together.

Article 3

Functional Area

The functional area of Conference is the island of Ireland, comprising of the four provinces of Connaught, Leinster, Munster and Ulster.

Article 4

Headquarters

General Service Office Alcoholics Anonymous, Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9, DO9 H584

Article 5

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the AA General Service Conference of Ireland shall be held not less than eight weeks after the publishing and circulation to all AA Groups in Ireland of the Annual Statement of audited accounts, by the General Service Board and prior to the Annual All Ireland Convention.

The Conference agenda and letter of invitation to Conference will be sent to all Conference attendees four weeks in advance of the Annual General Service Conference (Conference 1993).

Article 6

Special Meetings of Conference

A Special Meeting of Conference may be called:

1. At any time by the General Service Board;
2. By the Board Secretary in consultation with the Board, having received a written request from not less than half of the Conference members, including four Alcoholic Trustees and at least one of the Non-Alcoholic Trustees.

The reason for the request shall be clearly stated.

The special meeting shall be called by the Secretary within four weeks from the date of the receipt of the written request.

The notice calling the special meeting of Conference shall state clearly the reason for such a meeting and no other business shall be transacted at that special meeting, saving for such items of urgency as may be unanimously approved by Conference. All decisions of special meetings shall only be binding on Conference until the following annual General Meeting, when they will be further debated and ratified or rescinded.

Article 7

Agenda for Conference Meetings

The General Service Board shall prepare and circulate to all members of Conference a Draft Agenda, together with the notice convening the meeting, at least 21 days prior to the date fixed for the Meeting.

The following items will be eligible for inclusion on the agenda for the Annual General Meeting.

- 1.1 Submissions, motions and items forwarded by Intergroups at least six weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
- 1.2 Election of Officers, World Service Delegates, Fraternal delegates, committees and other appointments.
- 1.3 Items from previous meetings which failed to receive unanimity, and which are required to be placed on the agenda in accordance with Article 14, para.1.3
- 1.4 Reports of delegates and committees.
- 1.5 Chairperson's and Secretary's business.

After the Opening of Conference and the Roll Call, the draft agenda shall be discussed, and Conference may alter, add to, or delete from the agenda any items which are decided unanimously. Any additions to the draft agenda at this point should be matters of urgency, and their inclusion should be supported by a majority of Conference.

In cases where Conference cannot complete its agenda within the allotted time it may decide to reconvene at a later date, as soon as practically possible. Conference may form sub-committees as required to gather information, form recommendations and prepare reports to be presented to Conference for further discussion and to arrive at its decision. Such sub-committees should, as far as possible, be comprised of a Trustee, an Intergroup Secretary and GSCDs as required. Each sub-committee shall appoint its own chairperson.

Article 8

Motions and Submissions to General Service Conference

Motions to Conference should be dealt with at the main sitting of Conference (usually held in March).

All motions and submissions including reports from All Ireland Conventions, World Service Reports, Observers' Reports, Conference Delegate and Public Information Reports ought to reach the Board/Company Secretary six weeks in advance of the Annual General Service Conference.

Where a motion is put before a full meeting of Conference, no delegate other than the proposer of the motion shall be permitted to speak more than once on the same motion. The proposer, however, may exercise his/her right of reply in winding up the debate but shall confine his/her reply to answering points raised by previous speakers.

Article 9

Decisions at Meetings of Conference

Right of Decision

Conference will act for AA in the perpetuation and guidance of its services. It will be the vehicle by which the Fellowship can express its views upon all matters of vital AA policy and all hazardous deviations from AA Traditions.

Conference Delegates are the servants of AA as a whole and must put aside their loyalty to their provincial Intergroups. Consequently, they should be entitled to cast their votes according to the best dictates of their own judgment and Conscience at the time. The "instructed" delegate who cannot act on his own Conscience in a final Conference vote is not a "trusted servant"; he is just a messenger. The right solution for this problem is to be found in the latter part of Tradition Two, which provides for "trusted servants". This really means that we ought to trust our responsible leaders to decide, within the understood framework of their duties, how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular problem or situation as it arises. This sort of leadership discretion should be the essence of the "Right of Decision".

Decisions of Conference

The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects:

All items or motions passed unanimously become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.

All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority are recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year.

All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference.

Article 10

Attendance and Quorum

The people entitled to attend are the members of Conference being the seven Trustees, sixteen GSCDs, two WSDs, four Intergroup secretaries and Board Secretary. The quorum required to enable Conference to commence is one half of all the members entitled to attend plus one.

Once Conference has commenced it cannot be suspended, postponed or otherwise cancelled, notwithstanding the withdrawal of any delegate thereafter (Conference decision, 2015).

Fraternal Delegates may attend the annual General Meeting of Conference by invitation of Conference or the General Service Board and may address Conference or sit on Committees at the request of the Conference Chairperson.

Conference may invite any person having specialist knowledge of skills to attend the Annual General Meetings and address the Conference and answer questions.

Conference may sanction the attendance of observers at the A.G.M. Applications for such attendance must be made in writing to the Conference Secretary at least four weeks prior to the annual General Meeting.

The Secretary, in consultation with the General Service Board, shall be authorised to approve or reject such applications or restrict the number of such observers. Any observer so approved shall be responsible for his/her own financial arrangements. Observers shall not have any right to vote or speak at Conference.

Article 11

Conference Officers

Chairperson

The Chairperson of Conference is selected from retiring Conference Delegates from the previous Conference. To enable him or her to do this job effectively he/she will receive a draft copy of the previous Conference minutes and draft agenda.

Chairperson is not a member of Conference and does not have voting rights (Conference 1987).

Alternate Conference Chairperson

The General Service Conference agrees the alternate Chairperson would be the runner up in the election of Chairperson from retiring Delegates. Should there be no second nominee for alternate Chairperson, a nomination for a reserve Chairperson would be elected from the floor of Conference from retiring Delegates (Conference 1993).

It was adopted unanimously that in the event of the unavailability of either the Chairperson or an alternate Chairperson, the General Service Conference will elect a replacement from the floor of Conference (Conference 1994).

Secretary and Treasurer to Conference

The Board of GSBAA shall be Secretary and Treasurer to Conference.

Article 12

Reports/Minutes of Conference Meetings

Reports and Minutes of Conference meetings will be circulated within six weeks of the conclusion of Conference (Conference 2018).

Articles 13

Financing of Conference

The General Service Board (GSBAA) is responsible for all expenses incurred by meetings of Conference. The GSBAA is financed solely by the voluntary contributions of all AA members.

Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland will always refrain from and prohibit the public solicitation of funds.

Conference has determined that no member should be prevented from attending Conference simply because he/she could not financially afford it. Therefore, reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed at an agreed rate, as provided for by the Charities Regulatory Authority.

Conference unanimously agreed that the maximum donation from either living or deceased members of AA shall be €5,000 (March 2013).

The Board should ensure that a Prudent Reserve is always available which is made up of estimated combined operating expenses for one year plus stock and debtors.

Article 14

All Ireland Convention

An Annual All Ireland Convention will be held with the approval of Conference.

The Convention is normally held in April.

The venue for the annual Convention will rotate between the four Provinces of Ireland. The hosting Province will choose a venue suitable to the requirements of the Convention. As far as practicable the date and venue for the following year's Convention will be available at each Convention.

Each Intergroup in turn is responsible for the arrangements and venue for the Annual Convention, in its own area, on behalf of the General Service Conference.

Article 15

Appointment of Delegates to Affiliated Conferences

The General Service Conference may, at the request of an affiliated Conference of AA, appoint a delegate or delegates to attend specified meetings either as an observer or as a participant. Each such delegate should:

- a. be an active member of an AA Group.
- b. have a minimum period of continuous sobriety in AA of seven years;
- c. have a thorough knowledge of AA General Service Conference in Ireland.

The authorised expenses of any such delegates shall be borne by the AA General Service Conference of Ireland. Any delegate so appointed shall render to the Conference not later than one month after attending such a meeting a report in writing of the proceedings of the meeting. A copy of such report shall be circulated to all members of the Conference.

Article 16

Amendment of these Articles

Conference is an unincorporated body and has the power to determine how Conference operates and to amend these Articles accordingly.

Any amendment of Article 3 – Principal Objects requires the approval of three quarters of AA Groups on the island of Ireland. The method and arrangements for any ballot to be conducted among the Groups shall be determined by Conference.

Any amendment to any other Article shall be approved by a two thirds majority of Conference members present and voting at Conference.

AA FINANCE

Alcoholics Anonymous is not about money but without money Alcoholics Anonymous cannot provide its services to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Alcoholics Anonymous does not accept contributions from outside the fellowship. This means that our only source of income is table-top contributions and literature sales. Therefore, we cannot skimp when the basket is passed at Group meetings.

Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Money contributed at AA meetings belongs to AA as a whole. These contributions pay for rent, heat, refreshments, literature, group insurance and any other relevant expenses approved by Group Conscience.

The Group Treasurer, strictly accountable, takes the money and pays all Group expenses and banks the remainder. Apart from a small prudent reserve, surplus funds should be forwarded, as soon as possible, to the Area Committee who will, in turn, forward surplus funds through the AA structure.

The AA Committees, which provide the services of the fellowship such as phone services, public information, prisons, hospitals, the hearing-impaired and so on, need funds to function. These funds come directly from individual member contributions.

Conference agreed unanimously that a standard accounting system be adopted by the fellowship as a whole, thereby ensuring accountability for AA funds at all levels. It was also agreed that where funds were NOT properly accounted for at Group level, the onus is on the Group, through its Group Conscience, to rectify the matter (Conference 1990).

For clarity and accurate record-keeping Groups should use the handbook "AA Financial Guidelines and Record Book." This booklet should be available to the Group at all Group Conscience meetings. The booklet is available, free of charge, from GSO.

GSR expenses in attending Area Meetings

Expenses incurred by a GSR or other Group officer in attending an Area Committee Meeting will, if required, be borne by the Area Committee.

Area Representative expenses attending IG Meetings

Prudent travel expenses may be incurred by Area Representatives and these may be reimbursed by the Area or Intergroup in their customary manner, as decided by them.

GSCDs' Intergroup expenses

Provincial Intergroups will reimburse Conference Delegates' expenses incurred in attending meetings of Intergroups or its Committees, and for travel to Area meetings.

Attendance at Conference

GSBAA will be responsible for all expenses incurred by the annual Conference. This includes travel, accommodation, meals, hire of conference facilities and any other expenses as necessary.

12th Step Service

Expenses will not be paid for volunteer 12th Step work such as PI, Prisons, Hospitals and Institutions, Telephone Service etc.

Bequests and Gifts

A maximum donation/bequest of €5,000 to the fellowship in any one year by a living or deceased member has been agreed by Conference (March 2013).

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE (GSO)

The General Service Office of AA in Ireland is situated at Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9, D09 H584.

The primary responsibilities of GSO include provision of general AA information, maintenance and updating of the AA website, sale of AA literature and provision of administrative support to the Fellowship duties as decided by the GSBAA.

The day to day running of GSO is the responsibility of the Operations Manager under the direct supervision of the General Service Board.

The management of AA's Official Website – www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie is the responsibility of the GSO in accordance with a Conference decision as follows:

The General Service Conference of Ireland endorses that the only official website, known as the AA Website, will be held by the GSBAA on behalf of the General Service Conference of Ireland (Conference 1999).

A DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to AA's future:

To place our common welfare first;

To keep our Fellowship united.

For on AA unity depend our lives;

And the lives of those to come.

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.

DECISIONS OF THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE (since 2020)

AA Groups

- Groups wishing to make GIS changes may send them directly to GSO.
(March 2020)

Literature

- **A Traditions Checklist** was approved by the General Service Conference. This checklist is to be placed on the National AA Website and hardcopies produced. (March 2020)
- **The Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA Members** (leaflet issued 2019) was unanimously adopted by the General Service Conference
(March 2020)
- **A GSR Introductory Pack** to be produced to include already approved leaflets (September 2021).

Area / Intergroup

- Area /Intergroup Inventory Meetings template approved for use. This will also be included in the General Service Handbook
(March 2020)
- A new role, A Young Persons Liaison Officer has the approval of conference to be introduced at Intergroup.
(September 2021)

General Service Conference

- All reports including Conference Delegates Area reports be taken as read, with the delegate highlighting any important points that requires Conferences specific attention.
(March 2020)

Service Handbook

- *The text under the title **Conference Delegates** which reads 'Former GSCDs, having served their full term, ought not return to service at Area or Intergroup level. They may serve as officers in their home Group.'* Should be modified to read: Former General Service Conference Delegates having served their full-term ought to return to Service at Group level. (Pages 14 to 19 of Service Handbook). They ought not return to Service at Area or Intergroup"

APPENDICES

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Suggested Group Conscience Agenda Template |
| Appendix 2 | Privacy Guidelines for the AA Fellowship |
| Appendix 3 | Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA Members |
| Appendix 4 | Media Guide |
| Appendix 5 | Guideline for Area Inventory Meetings |
| Appendix 6 | Guidelines for Intergroup Inventory Meetings |
| Appendix 7 | Online & Digital Meetings in Ireland |

Appendix 1 Suggested Group Conscience Meeting Agenda Template



Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland Suggested Group Conscience Meeting Agenda Template

Group Name: _____

1. Meeting agrees to elect a Chairperson
2. Open the meeting by reading Tradition Two –
'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. Group Secretaries Reports e.g. facilities, meeting room requirements, seating arrangements, refreshments etc.
4. Vacancies/elections
5. Correspondence
6. Finance
 - a) Treasurer's Report
 - b) Recommendations and decisions
7. Literature
8. Area
 - a) Report from Area – Group Service Representative (GSR)
 - b) Motions and information for Area
9. Other business
10. Date for next Group Conscience Meeting
11. Close the meeting with the 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.'*

This Agenda was agreed by Group Conscience on ____/____/____

Appendix 2 Privacy Guidelines for the Fellowship of AA in Ireland



Privacy Guidelines for the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland

Maintaining the privacy of our members is a key principle for Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland. This principle is underpinned by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which was enacted in 2018 to protect our personal information and, by extension, our privacy.

The General Services Board of AA Ireland (GSBAA) has adopted a comprehensive data protection policy to protect personal data that we hold centrally on members.

At local level you can contribute by taking the following actions:

- **Update Group information (GIS form) promptly when members start to engage or stop engaging in service.** This will enable us to update our records quickly which means that our information will be accurate, and privacy will be protected.
- **Directories:** we produce new directories with contact information for meetings approximately three to four times a year. Please encourage members to destroy old directories when new ones are issued as this also protects the privacy of people who have stopped engaging in service.
- **Minutes of meetings:** don't include any details other than the member's first name and initial of their surname in the minutes. It is not necessary or appropriate to include further details e.g. mobile phone number in minutes or personal email addresses.
- **Email:** use the official AA email address provided for Groups etc. rather than personal email addresses. Take care when emailing multiple people to blind copy (Bcc) recipients rather than showing recipients' details in the 'To' or 'c.c.' line. Double check who you're sending email to; using autofill can often result in email being sent to the wrong person.
- **Security:** Ensure that any paper or computer records of AA business are kept secure. Paper records should be locked away while computers should at minimum be password protected.
- **Retention of contact information:** please do not retain contact details for AA purposes after members stop engaging in service.

Appendix 3 Suggested Guidelines for Personal Conduct and Appropriate Behaviour for AA Members

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL CONDUCT AND APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR FOR AA MEMBERS



Many newcomers to AA are not aware of what behaviours are appropriate at meetings and what is not acceptable. Any behaviour that disrupts the ability of the Group to conduct its meetings appropriately is not acceptable. Such behaviour threatens the group's unity and therefore the chance for the members present to recover.

“Each member of AA is but a small part of a greater whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows closely afterwards.” (Long form of Tradition One).

Aggressive or coercive behaviour of any kind, including all forms of harassment whether ethnic, sexual, or personal whether at meetings or online, is inappropriate and completely unacceptable. Each member attending a meeting has the right to feel that they are in a secure, safe, protective and welcoming environment. This applies equally to any member who is going about AA business in a service role. It is the responsibility of individual Group committees, officers and members to ensure that no-one attending the Group's meetings or other activities is subjected to bullying in any form, to harassment or any offensive behaviour no matter what form this behaviour takes. Such behaviour is unacceptable to the AA traditions and is in conflict with the AA way of life in recovery.

Group officers must be reasonable and measured in their response to such disruptive behaviours. No member should place themselves in physical danger or allow themselves to get into situations that might leave them open to legal repercussions. Where a situation becomes serious and cannot be handled within the Group, then it is appropriate to seek advice and assistance from outside the Group, whether from Area, Intergroup or, if the situation is grave, from Conference. Appropriate authorities such as the Gardai or PSNI ought to be contacted where the situation is considered, by the Group Committee, to warrant this intervention. A member should not make such a decision alone but only in consultation with the Group's steering committee.

A properly convened and well-informed Group Conscience may consider it necessary to temporarily exclude a disruptive member from the Group. The decision to permit the offending member to return equally rests with such a Group Conscience decision. Should they wish, Groups may display a “clear and unambiguous statement” concerning behaviour at meetings. Group officers and members ought to be well informed about how to deal with different types of inappropriate behaviour and have the full support of the Group. It is the Group’s responsibility to care for newcomers and to ensure that they feel welcome and safe at all times.

Suggestions:

Members who engage in sexually explicit comments or regularly use offensive language may be taken aside after the meeting, where the committee can explain what is and what is not acceptable.

If disruption continues then the secretary should consult with colleagues to decide what action to take.

The common welfare of the Group must come before any individual. Meetings cannot revolve around one person.

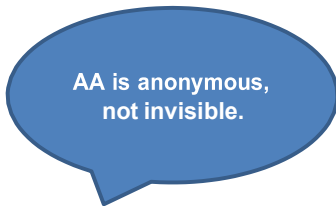
Media Guide

Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland

An introduction to AA for use by press, TV, internet and other media platforms

Alcoholics Anonymous, AA, has but one single purpose, one unique mission statement – to be available to help anyone, anywhere, when they are troubled by or suffering from the effects of their drinking. That's it, AA has no other purpose or agenda. It does not seek to recruit members. In fact, AA does not even keep any membership records. AA does not charge for membership; it is free of charge to those who seek help. AA does not solicit, or accept, funding from any outside source or organisation. It has no flag days, no funding drives, no church gate collections, no government or HSE support.

AA will not accept any outside funding and is entirely self-supporting through the voluntary contributions of its members. Bequests from grateful families of members are politely refused. Members themselves are strictly limited in the



amount they can give to AA. We believe that this policy permits us to pursue our singleness of purpose without the interference or influence of any outside agency. It has been working in Ireland and worldwide for over 70 years. Table-top



contributions, as they are referred to, have permitted AA to maintain a permanent General Service Office in Dublin, and a Central Service Office in Belfast. These offices are staffed by highly trained professional staff and are open during normal office hours. AA also maintains numerous after-hours helplines, available evenings and weekends. The General Service Office staff is available to handle any enquiries that may arise. AA's excellent intuitive and user friendly-website, www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie, is replete with useful information, whether one is merely curious, looking for information on one of the 2,000-plus weekly meetings in Ireland, or seeking help with their drinking. This website is recommended as the first point of contact for anyone seeking information on AA and, in addition to helping the troubled drinker, contains all relevant company information, including annual reports, accounts and company status. AA is an open and clearly visible organisation, adhering to the highest standards of mandatory reporting and account-keeping.

Why, then, if AA is so open and transparent, does it remain “anonymous?” The anonymity referred to throughout AA is the personal anonymity of its members. This tradition of anonymity at public level offers members the reassurance that their personal information will never become public or be discussed outside of AA. This guarantee of personal confidentiality is vital to members’ peace of mind and predates recent General Data Protection Regulations by about 70 years!! AA is, of course, fully GDPR compliant. AA has in the past been accused of secrecy, of being a secret society, even a cult. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although originally founded on Christian principles, AA does not require any religious affiliation whatsoever and welcomes people of all, or indeed no, religious tradition. Operating on spiritual principles, AA promotes acceptance of others regardless of race, creed or gender.



AA members are always willing to share their experience with the media, while remaining anonymous. Anyone who wants further information about AA and its programme for living a sober and contented life should call our General Service Office on 01 8420700, where our staff will be only too happy to answer any queries or put you in touch with someone who can be of assistance. AA is an open and transparent fellowship where the confidentiality of its members is protected. Nothing about the AA programme is hidden or secret. Should anyone wish to see for themselves how it works, there are many Open Public Meetings held around the country, which members of the public are welcome, and indeed encouraged, to attend.

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

AA does not seek publicity for itself but does want the public, especially those troubled by their drinking, to be aware that help is available. Those working in the media can greatly help in this regard simply by making the public aware of our existence.

When we say that our primary reason for existing is to help those who wish to stop drinking, we actually mean just that. AA does not even have an official opinion on alcohol or alcoholism. We are concerned only with the person who seeks help for their drinking.



General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

Tel: 01-8420700

Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Website: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Appendix 5 Guidelines for Area Inventory Meetings



GUIDELINES FOR AREA INVENTORY MEETINGS

1. What business should be conducted at an Area Meeting.
2. What more could Areas do to attract GSRs?
3. Considering the number of Groups in our Area, are we doing enough to reach them all?
4. What has the Area Committee done in the past year to inform groups about the need for and value of Service to groups and individuals?
5. Is the Area business being carried out in a manner which would attract members into Service?
6. Are new groups informed about their role within the Fellowship as a whole?
7. Has the Area taken steps to inform Groups Conscience Meetings about the need to fill service positions with members who meet the requirements as laid out in the Service Handbook for Ireland?
8. Are GSRs, when attending Area, being given the opportunity to express opinions and to ask questions?
9. Are Area Officers elected on merit and not by popularity votes?
10. Is the Area providing a Forum which affords all groups the opportunity to learn more about the AA Structure in Ireland?
11. Does the Area send 4 Representatives to Intergroup?
12. Is the role of Intergroup Representative explained and are they given the Area's permission to act as they deem correct at any votes which arise after debate at Intergroup thus fulfilling the role of TRUSTED SERVANT?

Available to download from www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Appendix 6 Guidelines for Intergroup Inventory Meetings



GUIDELINES FOR INTERGROUP INVENTORY MEETINGS

1. What is the function of a Provincial Intergroup within AA Structure?
2. How proactive should/can Intergroup be within the AA Structure?
3. What is the Intergroup relationship/responsibility to Area Committees?
4. Does this Intergroup encourage a transparent information flow down through Area Committees to Groups?
5. Are Sub-Committees of Intergroup made fully aware of the parameters within which they should work and are they made aware of their accountability?
6. What is the role of the Trustee within Intergroup?
7. What is the role of Conference Delegates within Intergroup?
8. What responsibility does Intergroup have for keeping Conference in Ireland appraised of various Service functions within their Province?
9. Should Provincial Intergroups share Information/Practices with other Provinces other than at Conference?
10. Does Intergroup encourage Area Representatives to openly talk about what happens at this level in Service?
11. Do Conference Delegates make regular visits to all Areas offering guidance and direction as per Conference in Ireland?
12. Do Conference Delegates stress in Area visits and at Conference the vital importance of the Green Service Handbook?

Available to download from www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Appendix 7 Online and Digital Meetings in Ireland

The following proposal was presented and was unanimously accepted at the September 2021 Meeting of Conference:

Recommendation from Sub-Committee on Online/Digital Meetings

Online & Digital Meetings in Ireland

The Sub-Committee was set up to look at a range of concerns relating to Online or Digital Meetings in Ireland. We heard at Conference many opinions on how Digital Meetings are here to stay. However, the question remained: are they within the Structure of AA in Ireland?

Are Digital/Online Meetings part of our Structure in AA?

We began with the Big Book, and the section **Forward to Fourth Edition** where it is quoted *“While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.’s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modern-to-modern or face-to-face, A.A.’s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity”*

As it is already stated that *“A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online”*, we decided we can simply accept this.

Do we need to bring Online or Digital Meetings into the Structure of AA in Ireland?

Traditionally, regular physical meetings have not been defined by Conference. We questioned if any Meetings were inside or outside the Structure of AA in Ireland. The Structure doesn't dictate how or where a meeting is held. Meetings are a function of a Group and how and where they are run is left to each group. Groups, however, are part of the Structure. Conference does not dictate that meetings should be in any particular format, venue, or platform. It does not define if meetings should be held in a Hotel or a Health Centre, or that they should be held indoors, outdoors or online, or indeed what length they are.

Groups throughout Ireland have embraced and adjusted incredibly well to Online Meetings.

We recommend to Conference that as Online Meetings are not outside the Structure, we don't need to bring them into the Structure. We further recommend that this clarification is communicated to all Groups.

To help compliment this, we feel that providing some guidance or suggestions on Online Meetings would be very useful. There are now many different features in different Online Platforms such as Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams etc. Below are some of the Terms and Suggestions that members found useful to consider.

Listing your group on www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

- Groups have found that meetings are less likely to have unwanted visitors when they are listed only on www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie. By listing your meeting details on the official website, *you as a group*, maintain your meeting Passwords, Links and Codes.
- Groups can set up an Email autoreply for anybody that contacts them looking for meeting details.
- You can register your Online Meeting using your official 'alcoholicsanonymous.ie' email address. If you do not have one, please contact our General Service Office at gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie. Online Meetings have successfully been listed on www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie since April 2020 helping thousands of alcoholics.

Online Meetings that are not affiliated with a previous Group or Area

- A number of groups were initiated in the last year or so who do not have an affiliation with a previous physical Group or an Area. How do these Groups represent themselves at Area and Intergroup? This is particularly important in relation to online donations. How do the donations from these Groups go through the Structure?
- Ideally, they align themselves with an Area as is normal at the moment. In this case, donations go through the normal process: donations come from Area, to Intergroup to GSO.

Groups with both Online and Physical meetings

- It is entirely up to the Group and its Group Conscience how they organise their meetings. Some groups are holding physical meetings at the same time but separately to their online meeting. Other groups have decided that online meetings work well during the day and physical meetings in the evenings.

Tradition 7

- Many Online Groups have started to use PayPal, Revolut or Sum-up for members to make contributions. The link is often circulated by chat during the meeting by the meeting Secretary. Contributions can then be forwarded to Areas in the same manner.
- Groups, when setting up such accounts, should use their official AA email address and not personal email addresses.
- Regular reports of the group's financial status should be reported at the Group Conscience, including any payments to Area/Intergroup or Direct to GSO.

Paying for Online Meetings

- The rent for physical meetings is paid for by the Group. An online room is no different.
It's the responsibility of the Group.

Sharing

- To protect our anonymity in line with our Traditions, members can change their onscreen name to their first name with an initial for their surname.
- Raise Hand: Some meetings use the feature "Raise Hand" which is a way that you can let the Secretary know that you wish to speak. This is often a button that you press on your device labelled "Raise Hand". When the meeting secretary sees that you have raised your hand, they can invite you to share.
- Mute/Unmute: Some groups allow members to unmute themselves to share, other meetings ask that participants use the 'Raise Hand' feature, or simply wave at the camera.
- Video On or Off: Some groups ask that participants turn on their video at the start of the meeting. This helps those not comfortable with online meetings to see all of the participants. Other groups welcome telephone participants, where it is not feasible to have video on.
- Waiting Room: When you enter a room, this is an area where participants can wait before the Secretary admits them to the room. If a participant is being disruptive, they can be moved to the waiting room, without being removed from the meeting.

Chat Function

Some groups close their Chat functions entirely for safety, others open it at the end of the meeting so that members can share their contacts, for instance to support newcomers.

A *Suggested Meeting Format Guide* was also presented which is available to download from www.alcolicsanonymous.ie

