

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**

A SERVICE HANDBOOK FOR IRELAND

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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; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other Alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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 Handbook is only intended as a guide to service and
is not intended to cover all eventualities.***

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
G.S.R.	General Service Representative
I.R.	Intergroup Representative
G.S.O.	General Service Office, Dublin
G.S.C.	General Service Conference
G.S.C.D.	General Service Conference Delegate
C.S.O.	Central Service Office, Belfast
W.S.D.	World Service Delegate
P.I.C.	Public Information Committee

DEFINITIONS

The Group

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

G.S.R. (General Service Representative)

An AA member elected by the Group to the Area Committee. He/she speaks for his/her Group at Area Committee meetings and reports back to the Group.

Area Committee

A Committee made up of two G.S.R.s from each Group. Should there be more than 20 groups the Area Committee may divide.

I.R. (Intergroup Representative)

A member elected by his/her Area Committee to represent that Committee at Intergroup.

Provincial Intergroup Committee

A Committee made up of four members elected from each Area Committee in that province.

G.S.C.D. (General Service Conference Delegate)

A member elected to represent his/her Intergroup at the General Service Conference of Ireland.

W.S.D. (World Service Delegate)

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

Conference

The General Service Conference of Ireland.

This can mean either the Structure involving Delegates and the General Service Board or the Annual General Meeting of the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Trustees

The usual term for a member of AA's General Service Board. Some trustees are AA's; some are non-alcoholic.

General Service Board

The chief service arm of Conference. It is responsible for the business affairs of the Fellowship and in particular for G.S.O. It consists of seven Trustees, four of whom are AA members and three non-alcoholic.

G.S.O. (General Service Office)

The Service Office of the General Service Conference of Ireland whose main function is to have AA literature available for Groups. It acts as a clearing house for inquiries from those seeking help or information about AA.

GSO is staffed by paid staff and is entirely dependent on the voluntary subscriptions of AA members and groups for its existence.

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.

INTRODUCTION TO A SERVICE HANDBOOK FOR 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 into operation the decisions agreed upon by Conference.

The General Service Conference of AA in Ireland 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 do its work effectively, it must operate according to acceptable and orderly procedures, the aim of which should be to involve the Fellowship as widely 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 and these are set out in this handbook.

Our AA Service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a phone call and a cup of coffee, and to AA’s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

This is a handbook, then, of suggestions drawn from AA experience all over the world to help group members keep informed, to look beyond ourselves and to other people in other groups and get a glimpse of what it can be like to be fully-fledged, grown-up member of the worldwide AA family, where all AA adults know they are responsible, not only for themselves, but also for their fellow members.

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

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 relation 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.”

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.

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

Big Book Study Movement is outside the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

The group conscience of AA seems to have agreed upon six points that define an AA group.

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, of course, are the chief activity of any AA group. Some degree of structure is needed to keep these meetings dependable and effective. So the members of the group usually elect officers and people are asked to volunteer to handle housekeeping tasks and refreshments.

Outside meeting hours, the group continues to exist, ready to offer help when needed. Other activities may include Twelve 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”, and 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 fairly regularly and 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 responsibility and try to sustain friendships. They do not meddle in the business or policy of groups which they visit but in which they would accept no service assignments.

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 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 groups conscience, AA experience has shown that these meetings, conducted by an appointed Chairperson, having an agreed agenda, 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.

A 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 it can handle day-to-day operations for the Group. Anywhere from three to five members may be the right sized Steering Committee for a small Group. For larger ones, twelve or so members provide a better cross-section and share the work load in a fairer way.

In many Groups, the officers are automatically the Steering Committee. Sometimes, former officers make good members because of their experience.

In some Groups, a rotating committee (members serve six months, a year, two years, with one member added, one dropped, each month or quarter) serves the same purpose as a Steering Committee.

GROUP OFFICERS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Individual groups may vary in the ways of making sure the necessary services are carried out.

Each group being autonomous, selects officers its members feel 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. The principle of rotation of officers is important in order that other willing members should be given an opportunity to serve. Each nominee is usually approached by other members of the group, and if the person agrees, the name is put forward at a groups conscience meeting, so letting the group conscience decide his/her election.

For example a group ought to have:

Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Literature Secretary, Two Group Service Representatives (G.S.R.'s), Refreshment Helpers etc.

Rotation Important

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 blessings of giving service are shared by more and more members.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR GROUP OFFICERS

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. The officers of a Group should preferably have a minimum period of 12 months continuous sobriety in AA.
3. An officer's term of office will be 3 - 6 months or 12 months at the end of which a Group Conscience meeting should be held and new officers elected.

CHAIRPERSON/GENERAL SECRETARY

In larger groups the Chairperson/General Secretary is the Chief Officer for a stated period of time. He/she should preferably have two years continuous sobriety in AA and have had other group service experience.

What does the Chairperson/General Secretary do?

1. Co-ordinates group activities, preventing confusions or other misunderstandings in group affairs.
2. Probably calls Group Conscience/Steering Committee meetings and presides at them.
3. Receives the groups correspondence including Area, Intergroup and Conference Minutes, and is responsible for reading them to the Group, also conveys any relevant information from G.S.O. to the Group.
4. Conference recommends that in order to provide accuracy of information for the directory, all groups should complete a Group Information Sheet at least once a year.

Some groups have no Chairperson because the Secretary serves as the Group's Chief Officer. In practice, it doesn't seem to matter which group officer does which job as long as they all get done without confusion or conflict. It is then important for everybody to understand who is to do what.

SECRETARY

What do Secretaries do?

1. Secretaries are generally responsible for maintaining good relations between the group and the landlord.
2. 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.
3. Encourage the meeting to start punctually and arrange for Speaker/Chairperson.
4. Usually make any AA announcements at the end of the meeting (i.e. news of conventions, new meetings, new literature, etc).
5. Try to stress the seventh and twelfth Traditions and asking the speaker or leader to close the meeting with the Serenity Prayer.
6. Should have a confidential list of those members willing to do Twelfth Step work, and pass on any calls for help.
7. Make sure, with the Treasurer's help, that the rent is paid.
8. Help the Treasurer to count and keep records of the group's collections.

9. Send to G.S.O., usually via Area and Intergroup, (and C.S.O., in Ulster) up-to-date names and telephone numbers of members willing to be included in the “AA Directory” as contacts for the Group. Sharing with the Group members all mail received.
10. Making sure the Area Committee and the General Service Office know of the changes of address, meeting places, new officers, etc.. (The General Service Representative may do this, but the Secretary can make sure it is being done.)
11. Providing safekeeping for group data.

The 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.

TREASURER

What do Treasurers do?

The Treasurer has overall responsibility for all Group monies. He/she pays the group's bill and transfers surplus funds to Area committee.

Treasurers usually keep good simple records and keep the group informed about how much is taken and how it is spent. AA Treasurers notebook is available from G.S.O. and C.S.O.

Treasurers ought to give a proper financial report to each Group Conscience meeting, supported by all relevant documentation, bank statements etc.

Problems can be avoided by keeping group funds in a separate bank account that requires two signatures on each cheque.

The Treasurer ensures that the necessary housekeeping requirements of the group are met by group funds.

The Treasurer also ensures that the group is properly insured inclusive of member to member liability. *The pamphlet “Memo to a Group Treasurer” is available from GSO/CSO.*

LITERATURE, FILMS, TAPES, AND OTHER SERVICE MATERIALS

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

The only official Website will be held by the Board, on behalf of Conference, and will be used for Public Information purposes only.

LITERATURE SECRETARY

What do Literature Secretaries do?

1. Make sure the group has its own copy of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
2. Order and keep the group supplied with copies of the Big Book, and approved AA literature.
3. Make sure these are on display and available to members at group meetings, encouraging members to buy them.

Note: Emphasise to the Fellowship that the handing out of free literature is the responsibility of the Sponsor, and not of the AA Group (as per Warranty 2, Concept XII).

4. Have the current edition of the AA Service Handbook for Ireland available, especially at Group Conscience and business meetings.
5. Pass any accounts for payment of literature to the Treasurer.

Directories

AA Directories are confidential for internal AA use only. This directory does not list Specialist Meetings which exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has the desire to stop drinking. Responsibility for ensuring all information in the Directory is up to date lies with individual groups.

An AA Directory with no 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.

GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (G.S.R.)

‘The strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the Group and with the General Service Representative (G.S.R.) that the Group elects, I cannot emphasise too strongly the G.S.R.’s importance’ ... Bill W.

How Chosen/Term of Office

Each G.S.R. is elected by his own group’s “Group Conscience”, two for each group, one being elected each year. The G.S.R.’s term of office is two years.

Qualifications

The G.S.R. must be an active member of his/her delegating group, preferably having at least two years continuous sobriety. The G.S.R. represents the voice of the Group Conscience reporting the group’s wishes to the Area. For this he/she

must enjoy the **Confidence and Trust of his or her Group**. He/she should familiarise himself/herself with the programme and Traditions of AA and the basic AA literature and be willing to place **Principles before Personalities**. Former Group Officers who have already displayed commitment and responsibility in AA service ought to make suitable G.S.R.'s. The G.S.R. should hold no office in any other Group.

Duties and Responsibilities

The G.S.R. is at the same time the Trusted Servant of both his/her Group and Area Committee. He/she will carry the view and feeling of his/her Group to Area and report back to his/her Group.

The G.S.R. is entrusted with the authority of his/her delegating group to make decisions dictated by his/her own conscience, after having listened to and debated matters arising in his/her own area, thus the term Trusted Servant.

He/she should report back to his/her Group as concisely and interestingly as possible all the debates, decisions and activities of his/her Area Committee, together with its needs and problems, including, of course, the activities and needs of any Area Service Committee. i.e. Public Information, Hospitals etc.

Through the reports at Area, of the Intergroup and Conference Delegates, the G.S.R. will be kept informed of what is happening throughout our AA structure. As his/her Group's General Service Representative, it is primarily his/her responsibility to ensure that this information is passed to his/her Group both by his/her (the G.S.R.'s) personal report and by ensuring that all Conference, Intergroup and Area minutes are available and read to his/her group.

He/she should carefully listen to and note his/her group's views and feelings on all matters arising from these reports and report back to his/her Area.

He/she should keep his/her group aware of our self-support Tradition and the need to pass on any surplus monies to support AA as a whole.

The G.S.R., when elected, automatically becomes a member of the group's Steering Committee where such a committee functions.

He/she should attend all Area meetings and all group conscience meetings (business meetings) of his/her group.

FINANCE OR AA MONEY

- (1) "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, insurance and any other relevant expense approved of - by the Group Conscience.

- (2) The Group Treasurer “strictly accountable takes the money, banks it, pays the rent and other bills”. The remainder, except for a small prudent reserve (where this is necessary), ought to be forwarded on through the Area Committee, the Intergroup and the General Service Office, which are the structures provided.

The Committees which do the work of AA need money to function. Examples are Phones, Public Information, Hospitals, Prisons, Hearing Impaired, and Finance, and to keep Irish AA in touch and in unity with European AA and World AA. The Annual Conference needs to be financed and the Board of Trustees need money to run the General Service Office and to perform their other services to the fellowship. Conference recommends that the Fellowship maintains our Self Support Traditions and refrains from running raffles at any AA Functions

- (3) “Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility, one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the Treasurer of our Group passes the hat. Our Group, our Area and as a whole, will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills paid.”
1. Tradition 7, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
 2. Tradition 1, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
 3. Bill W. AA Grapevine, Nov. 1957.

Next comes the question of whether as a whole should go in for what amounts to a money charity to individual newcomers and their sponsors - via selling of our books at cost or less. Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.

It is the responsibility of individual sponsors and not the groups to buy literature for new members.

GROUP AUTONOMY

“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 Services Board. On such issues, our common welfare is paramount.” (Tradition Four).

GROUP RESPONSIBILITY TO AS A WHOLE

The continuing survival and welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous, its three great legacies of Unity, Recovery and Service, is the **concern** of, 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.

RESPONSIBILITY OF A GROUP MEMBER

In AA individual freedom is of 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 pressure any of our members to believe or pay anything. Ours is indeed “a large charter of minority privileges and liberties”. Of course, this freedom brings responsibility and each member is responsible.

Sobriety - freedom from alcohol - through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of the AA group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics, and we have to 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.”

WHAT KIND OF MEETING CAN A GROUP HAVE?

Every AA Group is autonomous. Our Fourth Tradition says “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:-

Closed Meetings

Step and Tradition Meetings (Closed)

Group Conscience Meetings (Closed)

Open AA Meetings

Open Public Meetings

Public Information Meetings

CLOSED MEETINGS

For alcoholics only. 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

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

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.”

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 how their jobs are progressing and to get group guidance, (see the Second Tradition) to the future. Group business is transacted and new group officers are elected at such meetings. these meetings may take the form of a group inventory.

(See also Page 12 under Group Conscience - Sole Authority in)

A meeting where non alcoholics participate openly cannot be called a group.

OPEN MEETINGS

These meetings are open to ALL who may or may not have an alcoholic problem and they are arranged and publicised by AA

The meeting is chaired by an AA person 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

Primarily the same format as the Open Meeting, but AA may invite Al-Anon, Alateen, and/or medical specialists etc. to participate. An AA Chairperson conducts the meeting*.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

The meeting is arranged by AA to explain the AA Programme. At least two AA speakers would provide information on how the AA fellowship functions and the manner in which help can be provided. Lists of meetings and other explanatory AA approved literature can be made available. The speaker would also indicate what AA is NOT*.

*Chairperson - See section on Public Information Committees.

Conference agreed that the Big Book Study Closed Meetings which use unapproved literature or tapes are outside our structure in Ireland.

Conference does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking.

Members of the Fellowship should take care to preserve their anonymity and not use the name of in court cases.

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 weaknesses - and strengths.

The most popular form for taking a group inventory has been the set of questions which some groups have used effectively.

For groups that want to Tenth Step themselves, here is a recent version - suggestions for a programme that may bring the group new health and vitality.

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 physicians, judges, members of the clergy 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. Has enough effort been made to explain to all members the need and value of kitchen and housekeeping work and other services to the group?
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 officership is a great responsibility and opportunity for Twelfth Step work?
12. Does the group carry its fair share of the job of helping Area and Intergroup?
13. Do we give all members their fair chance of keeping informed about the whole of AA Recovery, Unity and Service?

THE AREA COMMITTEE

1. AIMS

The Area Committee - perhaps more than any group in AA - is responsible for the health of our Conference Structure and by that same token for **Growth and Harmony** in Our beloved Fellowship.

It is here through the group's elected G.S.R.'s (General Service Representatives) that the voice of the individual group is first heard in our structure. It is through these same G.S.R.'s that the message is relayed back to the AA Groups, thus providing the first vital link in our chain of communication.

The Area Committee also aid their constituent groups in their common purpose of carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic, by using their combined strength and unity to provide and maintain services that individual groups alone might not be able to offer.

STRUCTURE

An Area Committee consists of two representatives (G.S.R.'s) from each group in the area.

AREA

This is usually a geographic division decided by the Provincial Intergroup depending on local circumstances, (often a county or part of a county). Conference recommends that where the number of groups exceeds twenty, the Area may divide and form two areas.

2. MEMBERS OF THE AREA COMMITTEE - QUALIFICATIONS,FUNCTIONS, HOW CHOSEN ETC.

a) The General Service Representative

“The strength of our whole AA Service Structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative (G.S.R.) that the group elects. I cannot emphasise too strongly the G.S.R.’s importance” ... Bill W.

b) How Chosen

Each G.S.R. is elected by his/her own group’s “Group Conscience” two for each group, one being elected each year. The G.S.R.’s term of office is two years.

c) Qualifications

The G.S.R. must be an active member of his/her Delegating Group and have preferably two years continuous sobriety. The G.S.R. represents the Voice of the Group Conscience reporting the group’s wishes to the Area. For this he/she must enjoy the **Confidence and Trust of his/her Group**. He/she should familiarise themselves with the programme and Traditions of AA and the basic AA literature and be willing to place **Principles before Personalities**. Former Group Officers who have already displayed commitment and responsibility in AA service ought to make suitable G.S.R.’s. The G.S.R. should hold no office in any other Group.

d) Duties and Responsibilities

The G.S.R. is at the same time the Trusted Servant of both his/her Group and Area Committee. He/she will carry the views and feeling of his/her Group to Area and report back to his/her Group.

The G.S.R. is entrusted with the authority of his/her delegating group to make decisions dictated by his/her own conscience, after having listened to and debated matters arising in his/her own area., thus “the term Trusted Servant”.

He/she should report back to his Group as concisely and interestingly as possible all the debates, decisions and activities of his/her Area Committee, together with its needs and problems, including, of course, the activities and needs of any Area Service Committee. i.e. Public Information, Hospitals etc.

Through the reports at Area, of the Intergroup and Conference Delegates, the G.S.R. will be kept informed of what is happening throughout our AA structure. As his/her Group’s General Service Representative, it is primarily his/her responsibility to ensure that this information is passed to his/her Group both by his/her (the G.S.R.’s) personal report and by ensuring that all Conference, Intergroup and Area Minutes are available and read to his/her group.

He/she should carefully listen to and note his/her group’s views and feelings on all matters arising from these reports and report back to his/her Area.

He/she should keep his/her group aware of our self-support Tradition and the need to pass on any surplus monies to support AA as a whole.

The G.S.R., when elected, automatically becomes a member of the group's Steering Committee where such a committee functions.

He/she should attend all area meetings and all group conscience meetings, (business meetings) of his/her group.

3. OFFICERS OF AREA COMMITTEE

1) 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.

2) Qualifications

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

ELECTION, DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES ETC.

ELECTION

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, willing people are utilised.

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, the know-how gained by applying these guides to local problems. He/she should be able to motivate and lead and yet act as a servant rather than a dictator. He/she should be able to instill in others a keen interest in Conference Service and local services. He/she will keep in touch with local area sub-committees (Hospitals, P.I.C.'s etc.)

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. He/she keeps his/her Area Committee informed of all communications received from Intergroup, Conference, Board or General Service Office. He/she needs to keep

up-to-date mailing lists and get his/her minutes out on time to every group in area, representatives and delegates.

TREASURER

He/she must be careful guardian of the AA funds in his/her care and give a written account of financial position to each Area meeting. This account should be circulated with Area minutes to every group in area, G.S.R.'s and delegates. Surplus funds should be promptly transferred to AA as a whole through Intergroup. A good Treasurer will keep his/her committee aware of our self-support Tradition and their responsibilities to AA as a whole, as well as local need. **The Area Treasurer also ensures that the Area Committee is properly insured including member to member liability.**

It is preferable if Area funds are kept in a Bank Account with two people signing cheques for withdrawal.

FINANCE

Any expenses incurred by a G.S.R. or Officer in attending an Area Committee Meeting will, if required, be borne by the Area Committee. Area Committees should donate all surplus funds to Intergroup or G.S.O..

Conference recommends that the Fellowship maintains our Self Support Traditions and refrains from running Raffles at any AA Functions.

LITERATURE

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

Next comes the question of whether AA as a whole should go in for what amounts to a money charity to individual newcomers and their sponsors - via selling of our books at cost or less.

Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.

MEETINGS

Meetings should be held at least once every six weeks.

4. INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVES

Qualifications

Same as officers, sometimes they are officers. An Intergroup Representative should preferably have served for at least one year on an Area Committee, have a minimum period of continuous sobriety of at least three years in AA and should report back to his/her Area Committee and thence to the Groups in his/her area. An Intergroup Representative should attend all Area Committee meetings and also visit as many groups as possible in the area he/she represents.

His/her term of office will be two years, two representatives retiring each year. An Intergroup Representative has a voice and vote in the Area Committee he/she represents.

CONFERENCE DELEGATES AND TRUSTEES

Members of Conference 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 within the Conference Area.

Conference recommends that former Conference Delegates, having been elected to their full term ought not to return to service at Area level.

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 such people is 25% or less, than the number of G.S.R.'s they 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.

VOTING DECISIONS ETC.

Relatively few decisions in the AA Structure are taken by means of a formal vote. In most cases a "Sense of Meeting" decision is made after a discussion in the Item of Business. When the total experience available to the Area Committee is brought to bear on the subject at issue, a clear course of action is usually apparent. However, in some cases, a more formal vote will have to be taken.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO VOTE AT AREA MEETINGS

1. All the Group G.S.R.'s present.
2. The Officers of the Area Committee.
3. The Intergroup Representatives of the Area.
4. Any Members of Conference present at meeting.
5. Any sub-committee Representative that the Area Committee Group Conscience has previously decided should have a vote.

AREA SERVICE

The growth of the Fellowship in Ireland has led to our Area Committee being delegated responsibilities previously undertaken by groups, hospital committees, prison committees, etc.

Although the Group still bears responsibility for the service, it has found it to be more beneficial for the Area Committee to co-ordinate the functioning of these important services. Conference has suggested from experience that the following guidelines have proved the most effective in providing the services.

- a. Hospital Committee
- b. Public Information Committee
- c. Telephone Answering Service
- d. Open Meeting
- e. Prison Committee
- f. Mini Convention
- g. Hearing Impaired

Area can also provide services that help the Group to carry the message more effectively. The following have proved most helpful.

1. Literature Bank
2. Workshops
3. Archives Committee

Conference recommends that sub-committees and committees adhere to the same election process as per Election of Public Information Committee (see page 39)

THIRD LEGACY PROCEDURE IS AS FOLLOWS

By “Third Legacy Procedure,” we mean a special type of electoral procedure for the election of delegates. It is considered to be unique to AA

All members of the Area Committee are eligible for delegate; the Chairperson asks whether any are unable to serve, and withdraws those names. Remaining names are posted on a blackboard. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.) All G.S.R.’s and committee members of the Area who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted on the blackboard.

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.

HOSPITAL/TREATMENT CENTRES & OTHER RELATED FACILITIES

For the purpose of these suggested procedures hospital is taken to mean a hospital or treatment facility/centre where people are treated for alcoholism and where the purpose of the AA meeting is to carry the AA message to the people (patients) receiving such treatment.

THE HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

The AA Hospital Committee has one ultimate goal and it is the same as that of every group and every type of service work in AA, that is to try and carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. It tries to reach the alcoholic who is in hospital. It's sole aim is to try and help the still suffering alcoholic by making known to him or her our own experience as individuals and as a fellowship 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.

1. WHO FORMS A HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

The responsibility rests with the Area Committee for forming a Hospital Committee. The Hospital Committee is, in turn, responsible to the Area Committee and the fellowship as a whole.

The Principle Advantages of the Procedure are:

1. The total sum of the experience, strength and hope of AA groups in the locality becomes available to the Hospital Committee, and through it, to the suffering alcoholic.
2. The fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and its message is clearly seen as separate and distinct from any particular hospital treatment.
3. The message carried is solely the twelve-step recovery programme of AA
4. The meetings can be kept to the highest possible standard on an on-going basis, utilising the best available experience in the area by regular rotation of speakers and committee members.
5. Problems, if and when they arise, can be dealt with promptly by the Area Committee group conscience which has at its disposal the collective experience of groups in the area.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The main responsibilities of the committee are:

1. To the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.
2. To the patient who is in hospital.
3. To the hospital, by acceptance of and compliance with its rules.

The Committee serves at the invitation of the Hospital administration always remembering co-operation not affiliation. No Committee member may speak for Alcoholics Anonymous, however everyone who participates is automatically representative of AA. They visit the hospital superintendent and staff to outline what AA is and is not. They establish ground rules for visiting members. They are responsible for furnishing literature. The committee ensures that the meetings are conducted at the appointed time in conformity with the conditions they agree with the hospital authorities. No individual members of the committee should accept appointments with doctors or other staff members to discuss problems concerning patients or meetings. Any problems that arise should be referred through the proper channels.

Visiting hospitals is a privilege extended to AA. If any member, at any time, violates the rules or regulations of the hospital, this privilege may be withdrawn. Great care should be exercised when choosing speakers. Speakers should be chosen for their sobriety and their ability to carry only the AA message.

The following points should be borne in mind.

1. That anonymity of staff who are members of AA should be fully respected.
2. All rules and regulations as outlined by the hospital should be adhered to.
3. Intercession should not be made on anyone's behalf.
4. Promises should not be made to patients that are not intended to or cannot be kept.
5. Since we deal with alcoholism, we are not qualified to give opinions on medical or drug problems.
6. AA has no opinion on outside issues and members should avoid making comments regarding management, treatment of personnel or any other issue. We carry only the message of AA.
7. That AA Service Structure has no part to play in taking Residents/Patients out of Institutions or Centres to outside meetings.

QUALIFICATIONS

Sound sobriety is desirable for any AA service and is of particular importance for the Hospital Committee. It is suggested that committee members have a minimum of two years current continuous sobriety in AA. They should be familiar with the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and have an interest in this type of 12th Step work.

Once an AA commitment is made to any institution or organisation we go to any lengths to perform faithfully the services promised in the name of AA.

Here it is vital to understand that:

- a. AA's who are employed at the hospital,
- b. AA's who are involved in any way in group therapy sessions in the hospital,
- c. AA's who are involved in any social or fund raising activity connected in any way with the hospital, ought not participate in the running of meetings or serve on that Hospital Committee.

2. SECRETARY/CONVENOR

The Secretary/Convenor is appointed by the Area Committee. In some areas where there is more than one hospital, members of the committee may be given separate responsibility for each hospital.

Term

Preferably two years from date of appointment.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Secretary/Convenor will brief all visitors to the hospital regarding rules, regulations and privileges of the hospital. He/she will be responsible for obtaining an appropriate meeting place to conduct the meeting. He/she is also responsible for reporting back to the Area Committee.

3. FORMAT FOR MEETINGS

The Hospital Committee Secretary/Convenor is responsible for the detailed arrangement of AA meetings. This will include:

1. Organising the meeting on an Open Meeting basis.
2. Arranging to have a suitable Chairperson and two or three responsible AA speakers present, at least ten minutes before the Meeting is due to start.
3. Ensuring that, as AA directories are confidential, they are not available.

The Chairperson commences as follows:

1. This is an Open Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.
2. Introduces self briefly and outlines what AA and the programme is, including reading the Preamble.
3. Reads How It Works.
4. Introduces the speakers who should take about 15 minutes each.
5. Meetings to last approx. one hour.

Chairperson in closing remarks should stress the following:

1. Some AA Pamphlets are available.
2. How to contact AA on release through local groups and service office.
3. To avoid misconceptions, state what AA is not, i.e. AA is not a religious or social organisation. It has no paid social worker movement, or professional field workers. It is not a cure for all, an employment or housing agency. It is not a loan office.
4. AA does not accept outside funds, run hospitals, prescribe treatment or pay for hospitalisation of alcoholics.

It is recommended that:

- a) AA speakers at hospital meetings ought to have preferably two years continuous current sobriety in AA
- b) Patients should not be asked to share, but should be encouraged to ask questions.

4. 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 diagnosis or prognosis.
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 domestic counselling.
10. Accept money for its service or any money from non-AA sources.

PRISON COMMITTEE

The only purpose of a Prison Committee is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the alcoholic who is confined. The activities of the Committee are based on, and governed by, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Members Qualifications

It is suggested that all members of the Prison Committee have a minimum of two years continuous sobriety. If this requirement cannot at any stage be met, the member automatically resigns and will be re-appointed only when he/she has again attained the minimum sobriety requirements. These suggestions are based on "that which experience has taught us". It is the intention through these suggestions, to simplify the procedure for those who are interested, and participating, in this type of "Twelfth Step" work.

Responsibilities

The Prison Committee's main responsibilities are:

- a. To the Alcoholic inmate.
- b. To the prison - courteous acceptance and compliance with its wishes.
- c. To the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, conducting ourselves in a manner above reproach to ensure that we will not say or do anything that will reflect unfavourably upon AA as a whole.

Since our programme is one of attraction rather than promotion, we serve these prisoners at the invitation of the Prison Governor, always remembering that we **"co-operate not affiliate"**.

Members of the Prison Committee must remind themselves that they cannot and do not speak for AA. However, each Committee member is automatically representative of AA. We maintain our sobriety through adherence to the principles embodied in the Twelve Suggested Steps of Recovery and try to practice these principles in all our affairs.

In conducting a meeting in prison, the following suggestions have helped keep relations between ourselves and staff co-operative and helpful:-

1. Abide carefully by all the rules of the prison. We are guests of the prison.
2. Make sure all AA meetings commence on time.
3. Do not intercede on behalf of any individual or group.
4. Do not engage in any controversy over management, or treatment of inmates, being ever mindful of the single purpose of AA.

5. You may not be permitted to give anything to, or receive anything from a prisoner (check with Prison Authorities).
6. You are permitted to speak only with the inmates who attend the AA meetings.
7. Since we deal with alcohol abuse only we are not qualified to give opinions on medical or drug problems.
8. Remember that you are AA to people in prison. Your language, appearance, manners and mood all effect other peoples opinions of our fellowship. Your behaviour can make sure that AA is always welcome.
9. Members should avoid any promises, expressed or implied, that they do not intend to, or cannot keep. Inmates often approach visitors for support for opinions of staff or policy. **This is not our business.** We have no basis for criticism and should not express an opinion of treatment being given, or not being given nor should we voice any criticism of staff.
10. No member of the Committee should get involved in any other activity at any prison his/her committee is serving, thus avoiding possible conflict and resulting damage to:
 - a. The inmate, or
 - b. the working ability of the Committee to carry the message inside the prison. Thus, probation/prison officers or police officers who visit the prison in the course of their duties, should not also visit as members of AA Prison Committee.

No member should interfere or use any influence in any prison, court, nor with any doctor, probation officer or police officer. Nor should he/she make any comments or promises regarding employment, parole, probation or medical problems to the inmate.

We carry only the message of AA

SECRETARY

The Prison Committee Secretary is elected by the Committee.

Term Two or three years.

Qualifications

Two years continuous sobriety in AA He/she should have a good knowledge of the Traditions and should have a thorough knowledge of the rules governing Prison Visits by AA.

Responsibilities

1. Ensure that AA meetings are conducted at the appointed time by the appointed members.
2. Furnish free AA literature for the appointed prisons.
3. Make sure there is no collection at these meetings.
4. He/she will brief AA visitors to Prisons regarding rules, regulations and privileges.
5. 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 Secretary. The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the Prison governor and staff are familiar with what AA does not do:

1. Solicit members to try to persuade anyone to join AA who do not want to.
2. Keep membership records or case histories.
3. Engage in or sponsor research.
4. Join Councils or Social Agencies, although AA members frequently co-operate with them.
5. Make medical or psychological diagnosis or prognoses.
6. Provide drying out or nursing services, hospitalisation, drugs, or any medical and psychiatric treatment.
7. Offer spiritual or religious services.
8. Engage in education or propaganda about alcohol.
9. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money or other welfare of social services.
10. Provide domestic counselling.
11. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-AA sources.

FORMAT FOR MEETINGS

Whenever possible, it is suggested that two members of the Committee attend together. The first to explain the programme of AA and the second to relate his story and recovery and how the AA programme worked for him/her. The first can act as Chairperson. It is suggested that where young offenders are detained a young Committee member be accompanied by an older experienced member.

Chairperson - Commence as follows:

1. This is the regular meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.
2. Introduce self briefly and the name of the group he/she belongs to and relate briefly own story. (no more than ten minutes).
3. Read "How It Works". Get a regular attender from the inside to read if possible.
4. Introduce the speaker. (twenty minutes at most).
5. Throw the meeting open.

The Chairperson in closing remarks may stress the following:

- a Literature available.
- b How to contact AA on release.
- c Misconceptions about AA - AA is not a religious, temperance or social service organisation. (It has no paid social worker movement or professional field workers), a cure all, an employment agency, a loan office.
- d AA does not accept outside funds, run hospitals, prescribe treatment for alcoholics or pay for hospitalisation of alcoholics.
- e In case of disturbance at a meeting and if the Chairperson is unable to maintain order he/she should refer the matter to the Prison Officer present. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety.

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

POLICY

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

The AA Programme works when an active alcoholic wants help and an AA is available to give that help. Somewhere in the background there has probably been the help of a doctor, an alcoholism agency or facility, a relative or an employer. Someone who knew about AA and how to find us.

From the beginning has depended on good community relations to keep those “helping hands” informed and ready. These guidelines suggest some steps that can take to keep the public working with us.

The General Service Board will deal with national bodies only i.e. National newspapers, media, tourist boards etc.. The Intergroup, Area and Group P.I. Committees will deal with all the provincial/local newspapers, independent radios, etc.

KEEPING OTHER AAs INFORMED

Most AA members are interested in what their Public Information Committee is doing. Public Information Committees report regularly to their Area and G.S.R.’s then carry the report back to their groups - a written report is preferable to ensure accuracy. When a Public Information Committee finds itself in trouble it is usually because of:

- a) Anonymity breaks
- b) Too close affiliations with organisations outside
- c) Assuming authority in the field of Alcoholism

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 P.I. Committee members.

WHAT DOES A PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE DO AND NOT DO?

1. The Committee establish useful contact with the newspapers, radio and T.V., and provide them with newsworthy information about AA and its activities.
2. Takes all reasonable steps to protect anonymity at the public media level.
3. They should meet every month - or at least every two months and work on specific projects.
4. Do not undertake to be an authority on alcoholics - leave that to the professionals in the field.

WAYS TO PROCEED: P.I. MEETING FORMAT

It is essential that alcoholics who are entrusted with organising and presenting AA Public Information Meetings, are very clear in their minds as to what a P.I. Meeting is, what its general content should be and how most P.I. meetings differ in content and format from the AA Open meetings organised by the AA Groups.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

These meetings seek to reach the suffering alcoholic through a **third party** and will very often be attended by a group of doctors, nurses, clergy, social workers, teachers, prison officers, police, public media etc. These people in their daily work are frequently in contact with the suffering alcoholic and by their **very presence** at our meeting have shown their **concern and willingness to help**.

From the earliest beginnings of , when Henrietta Sieberling introduced Dr. Bob to Bill W., many thousands of alcoholics who found sobriety in AA were first put in contact with AA by a non-alcoholic **third party**, be it a concerned doctor, policeman, social worker, etc. These good friends of AA knew AA existed, where it could be found and what help AA offered to the problem drinker.

The whole thrust of the P.I. meeting is to continue to make available to these good friends of ours, basic information about AA that will enable them to continue to provide the vital link between the Fellowship and the suffering alcoholic as they have so often done in the past.

The meeting is arranged by AA to explain the AA programme. Two AA speakers would provide information on how the Fellowship functions and the manner in

which help can be provided. Lists of meetings and other explanatory AA approved literature can be made available. The speakers would also indicate what AA is NOT.

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 our sponsor research.
4. Join counselling or social agencies, although AA members frequently co-operate with them
5. Make medical or psychological diagnosis or prognosis.
6. Provide drying out 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 welfare/social services.
9. Provide domestic counselling.
10. Accept money for its service, or any money from non-AA sources.
11. Offer Religious Services.
12. Follow up or control members.

THE MEETING ITSELF

It would be impossible to outline a format for a meeting that would cover every possible situation. However, the following points should be borne in mind.

CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson shall have solid and continuous sobriety, be a regular attender at meetings, be acquainted with the service structure of AA and understand the Twelve Traditions of AA

- a) Chairperson should chair the meeting **not share**.
- b) Preamble - Explain.
- c) Basic **factual** information i.e. that AA exists, formed in 1935, has helped countless thousands of alcoholics from all over the world and from every possible creed and back ground to solve their drinking problem.

- d) Came to Ireland in 1946. Groups in nearly every town in Ireland - **available in locality - how to contact.**
- e) Traditions - anonymity - for the newcomer - in the public media - only requirement for membership - singular purpose of AA has enabled AA to reach across all barriers. We have been invited to carry our meetings into most hospitals and prisons. Express no opinions on **any outside issue**. Do not make any false or exaggerated claims.
- f) **Do not** criticize the work of doctors, hospitals, or other self help groups. Remember has no opinions on outside issues including other addiction.
- g) Total talk duration 30-40 minutes. Give time for questions. If AA video is used, talks should be much more brief. Do not go over the same ground twice.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR AA SPEAKERS AT P.I. MEETINGS?

1. **Use responsible people.** This is vital. AA meeting is not the place for an ego trip. Only those with an overall sound knowledge of AA, especially in the area of Traditions, should be asked to share, and even these should be properly briefed about what is expected of them. This is especially important when speaking to a new group that has not been previously addressed by . First impressions of good or bad, **last for years.**
2. We carry only the message of AA. Only AA speakers, and AA approved videos and literature to be used at AA information meetings.
3. All AA speakers should confine their talks strictly to the subject matter of Alcoholics Anonymous and the AA recovery programme and their personal experiences of alcoholism.
4. We should not use the AA podium to express the views or statistics of any outside agency. Confine the talk to the AA message. "Shoemaker stick to thy last."

NOTE: Sponsorship into service and working with other P.I.'s at Committee level provide the experience for this type of service.

CO-OPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY (C.P.C.)

Many Areas and Intergroups consider co-operating with professionals and industrial liaison activities separate from public information or prison or hospital work. Accepting that there is a good deal of overlap they consider it is an advantage to have two separate Committees or Sub-Committees, liaising when necessary. Others prefer one overall P.I. Committee to co-ordinate the various activities of public information, professional information, hospitals, industry and

any other specific area of service, believing this will help to avoid duplication of activity and confusion. The decision will be influenced by local conditions, but it is intended that this handbook should be helpful whatever the structure chosen.

Professional people often meet the alcoholic in places where AA is not present. Through professional people, we reach alcoholics who might otherwise never find the programme, or reach them years earlier with the help of an informed non-AA

Co-operation with professionals means informing them about AA, what we are, what we can do, and what we cannot do.

P.I. work can begin when the individual AA's reveal their membership to their doctors, or drop a quiet word in the ear of a clergyman that AA members are available to help anyone seeking help. Committees at Intergroup level or local level actively seek ways to make contact with professional people and set up programmes to increase knowledge and understanding of AA

What your Committee decides to do will be dictated by your own needs and experience. The suggestions here are just that - suggestions. It is hoped they will spark your thinking and give you leads on new ways to approach professional people where you are.

A look at our history shows clearly that co-operation with professionals has been an integral part of the Fellowship since our beginnings. In fact, some AA's think it is ironic that a movement that might never have got off the ground without the help of non-alcoholics (Dr. Silkworth, Sister Ignatia, The Rev. Sam Shoemaker) should only now be setting up Committees to do formally what AA members have been doing informally all along.

Sometimes, it seems that even in these "enlightened years", understanding of alcoholism and of AA is the exception rather than the rule. As more and more alcoholism programmes and agencies come into the field, AA's who for years have worked quietly - whether on AA Committees or as individually concerned citizens - rejoice that they have contributed to public awareness.

Inevitably though, problems accompany success. Sometimes, professionals who are eager to use AA as a resource do not understand our Traditions, and unwittingly cause problems for groups. New members, referred to AA from units, hostels etc. or by courts, expect from us services we cannot or should not provide.

Experienced P.I. workers learn quickly the importance of understanding the Traditions and explaining them to non-AA's. They discover too, that the Traditions are **our** Traditions, and there is no reason non-AA's should be expected to understand them unless we take the initiative. Most P.I. Committees find that one of their first and most important functions is finding ways to clarify the Traditions for professionals. One of the aims of P.I. work is to let non-AA's

know that we can be effective and helpful to them when we operate within our own vital Traditions.

IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

Identify ourselves as AA members to the doctor who knew us as practising alcoholics. Thank the doctor for helping us with our alcoholic problem or that of a friend we brought to him/her. Show appreciation to the hospital staff by writing a letter of thanks and make it easier for other alcoholic patients to be admitted.

MEMBERS REFERRED BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES

We cannot discriminate against any prospective AA members referred to AA by the courts, an employer or any other agency. Although the strength of our programme lies in the voluntary nature of membership of AA, many of us first attended meetings because we were forced to, either by someone else or by our inner discomfort. But continual exposure to AA educated us to the true nature of our illness... who made referral to AA is not what AA is interested in. It is the problem drinker who is our concern, we cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

PROBLEMS OTHER THAN ALCOHOLISM

Many treatment centres today combine alcohol and other drug addiction under “substance abuse” or “chemical dependence”. Patients (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic) are introduced to AA and encouraged to attend AA on the “outside” when they leave. As stated earlier, anyone may attend Open AA Meetings but only persons with a desire to stop drinking may attend Closed meetings or become AA members. **Dual or multiple addicted people are eligible for AA membership only if one of their addictions is to alcohol.**

Now there are certain things that AA cannot do for anybody, regardless of what our several desires or sympathies may be.

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

Sobriety - freedom from alcohol - through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an AA group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities, and they have always failed. It has also been learned that *there is no possible way to make non alcoholics into AA members*. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics, and we have to 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.

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR TELEPHONE SERVICE

Telephone services can be of benefit provided that they are:

- a) Operated within the local Intergroup service structure.
- b) Confined to the areas where it was felt that the need and ability to meet the need would be greatest. The value of these recommendations have been borne out by experience.

LOCAL INTERGROUP STRUCTURE

Where telephone services have operated within the local Intergroup structure, they have generally been successful, but where they have operated outside these service structures there have frequently been problems of personality, finance and disunity.

FINANCIALLY SELF-SUPPORTING

The normal operation of our Traditions of Autonomy and self-support render detailed recommendations on finance unnecessary, but it is a fact that, almost without exception, contributions to the General Service Office from Intergroups are appreciably lower from areas where local telephone services are opened. This is justifiable where the need for such services exist, but members should be reminded of their responsibility also to maintain their financial commitment for the central services of the Fellowship.

Experience has shown that it is important to have a separate telephone account (perhaps only a “paper” account along with the local Intergroup account) to show the true cost of the service on a regular basis. Growth brought about by the local telephone service should ultimately restore financial balance.

GETTING STARTED

Setting up or changing a system.

Our primary purpose of carrying the message can be greatly enhanced by the use of the modern communications equipment now available.

Great care should be exercised in defining the needs and capabilities of an Intergroup. When considering a telephone service a working committee could save time, expense and inconvenience by the sharing of experience with the General Service Office, as well as neighbouring Intergroups and Groups by finding out what services are offered by different service providers etc.

TELEPHONE SERVICE AND TWELFTH STEP WORK

Our growing experience is that successful telephone services concentrate on putting the suffering alcoholic in touch with an individual contact or local AA Group. It is the responsibility of the members of the local group to carry out the necessary, twelfth step work, to provide a welcome to the new members and to share their experience, strength and hope with them and to set them on the road to recovery.

A telephone service requires support and participation by the Groups in its area, not only in a financial sense, but in every aspect of its existence. Where it is felt that the need exists and its members can meet this need, without jeopardising general or other local services, this support is generally forthcoming. It is important to ensure that this support is maintained.

Common sense with a regard to AA principles is of much more help in maintaining a successful telephone service than is the establishment of administrative procedure. However, certain points can be taken from our experience of telephone services to date:

- * Members participating in telephone service should have a period of continuous sobriety of approximately two years. Experience suggests that there ought to be two members present on duty, at all times.
- * The member answering the call should remember the first time caller is nervous, so the response should be positive and sympathetic.
- * Details of phone numbers of AA members ready and willing to carry out Twelfth Step work should be to hand and generally listed on an area basis for speed of reference. A list of up to date Group meetings should be available for immediate reference. Intergroup phone numbers, together with the G.S.O./C.S.O. phone number, should also be readily available so that calls from the media or other agencies can be referred to the current source. Al-Anon contact numbers should also be available.
- * Experience has shown that a large number of calls have been received from employers, doctors, social workers, newspapers, radio and TV. as well as alcoholics and their families.
- * Great care should be taken regarding the **confidentiality of member's phone numbers**. The information as to how an enquirer can be contacted is taken and passed on to the member. It then becomes the responsibility of that member to take whatever action is appropriate.

It is important to have a large number of members to share the considerable time and effort required to maintain a telephone service. Some members may be able to devote a lot of their time to this service and this is very useful in providing

continuity and a link of information for other members' participation. However, as in other AA services, it is unfair and unwise to depend too much or for too long on the availability and dedication of one individual.

PI/PC

Telephone Services offer a tremendous advantage to the Fellowship in providing a better link between ourselves and the professional community by providing a daytime telephone number. Every volunteer or responder on telephone duty should be aware of how to handle or refer to G.S.O./C.S.O. calls of this nature.

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR CONVENTIONS

All Conventions provide the opportunity for a large gathering of AA's to share with one another their combined experience of our Recovery Programme and other legacies of Unity and Service. A good AA Convention is one with spirit and feeling and really brings the word Fellowship to the forefront and makes us realise what we belong to.

Running conventions requires a lot of thought, planning, finance and responsibility. The following suggested recommendations will hopefully be of assistance to those involved.

TYPES OF CONVENTIONS

In Ireland presently there are two types of conventions:

1. The All Ireland Convention

This is held with the approval of Conference. The Intergroup in whose area the Convention is held is responsible for the arrangements and venue of the Annual Convention on behalf of the General Service Conference.

2. Mini Convention

The relevant Intergroup decides where and when these Conventions will be held from applications submitted.

COMMITTEES

A responsible Committee should be appointed by the relevant Intergroup, Area or group of Areas to run a Convention. Conference recommends that Area officers where possible, and the relevant Conference delegate (by virtue of his office) are automatically members of the Committee.

1. The Chairperson - has the overall responsibility of running the Convention and calling the Committee meetings on same.
2. The Secretary - keeps all written records including minutes of Committee meetings and is responsible for all correspondence, and for ensuring that a full report on all aspects of the Convention is given to their area or in the case of All-Ireland, a report to Conference
3. The Treasurer - is responsible for the handling of AA monies, paying all bills and maintaining proper records. **The Area 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. A full statement of accounts should be issued after the Convention and presented to Intergroup through Area. In the case of All Ireland - to Conference. There is a standard Financial Report for Mini Conventions available from G.S.O./C.S.O.

4. All Major Decisions - regarding the running of an AA convention should be taken by the Committee as a whole while the carrying out of those decisions may be delegated to an individual member, who will not make them himself.
5. The main responsibilities of a Convention Committee are:
 - a) The planning and running of a suitable AA Programme the heart and centerpiece of an AA Convention.
 - b) The planning and running of ancillary functions, normally included at an AA Convention, i.e. Convention dinner, dance or disco, registration desks and literature sales.
 - c) The location of and securing of a suitable Convention Centre capable of housing the main Convention activities in “a and b” above in an area where there is enough suitable accommodation for those attending the Convention. This will include the negotiation of a written agreement with the proprietors of the Convention Centre, outlining the facilities and services they will provide for the Convention and the agreed cost of same.
 - d) Conference/General Service Board disclaim any possible liability in relation to the running of any functions/Mini Conventions etc., being held against Conference approved Guidelines and without seeking approval of the respective Intergroup/Area as per Conference minutes March 1981, nor will the Fellowship accept any money from unapproved conventions.
 - e) To ensure that only **Conference approved material** should be on sale at Conventions.
 - f) To refrain from running raffles at conventions.
 - g) To forward any surplus funds from the Convention through the structure to G.S.O.

A. THE AA PROGRAMME

The Convention Programme normally consists of:

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| (i) | Opening Meeting |) | |
| | Closed Public Meetings |) | |
| | International Forum |) | Main Speaker Meetings |
| | Saturday Morning Speaker Meeting |) | |
| | Saturday Afternoon Speaker Meeting |) | |

The International Forum, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon speaker meetings are closed meetings.

- (ii) Ordinary closed AA meeting and marathon meeting.
- (iii) “Service Workshops” on various subjects i.e. Public Information, Co-operation with the Professional Community, Hospitals, Prisons, Structures, Traditions, etc. or ‘*Ask it Basket*’ type sessions.
- (iv) AA Film Show.
- (v) Public AA Meeting or Public Information Meeting if one is run.

With regard to Section A the Committee as a Whole make the final decision on the following:

- 1) The Chairperson and Speakers of all Main Speaker Meetings.
- 2) The subject format and panels of any Service Workshops.
- 3) The general running of any themes of closed meetings.
- 4) The contents of any press release.

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.

B. PLANNING AND RUNNING

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

LOCATION - CONVENTION CENTRE

- 1. Facilities, services and accommodation of AA’s attending.
- 2. Negotiation of suitable agreement with proprietor of centre etc..
- 3. Tea, coffee points, price of same.

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 open meetings. The closing meeting of a Convention can be an Open Public Meeting at which Al-Anon, Al-Ateen and other AA friends may speak with us.

GUARDING AGAINST ANONYMITY BREAKS

When AA Conventions are being covered by members of the press, it is customary to begin meetings by asking their co-operation in protecting member's 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 eliminate any mention of names in references 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 all of the speakers.

AA AND AL-ANON

In accordance with the principle of non-affiliation, a Convention is either AA or Al-Anon, not both. However, AA may invite Al-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.

ONE DAY EVENTS

All One Day Events such as "Days of Gratitude" that are officially organised by an Area and approved by the relevant Intergroup may be included in the Road Back, News Sheet and Website.

One Day Events organised by a Group, approved by an Area and forwarded to GSO through the Structure may be included in the Road Back, News Sheet, and Website.

THE INTERGROUP COMMITTEE

STRUCTURE

The functional area of the Intergroup Committee shall be based on the historic provinces of Leinster, Connaught, Munster and Ulster. An Intergroup Committee consists of four representatives (preferably including officers) elected from each Area Committee.

Intergroup Representative Qualifications

He/she should have considerable AA experience at Group and Area level. He/she should have a sound understanding of the Traditions. He/she should be able to instill in others a keen interest in and sound understanding of the Traditions. He/she should be able to instill in others a keen interest in Conference services and local services. He/she should attend all Area Committee Meetings and visit as many groups as possible in the area he/she represents.

Intergroup Representatives should preferably have a period of three years continuous sobriety in AA and have one years experience as an active G.S.R. His/her term of office will be two years. Two delegates are rotated each year. An Intergroup Representative has a voice and vote in the Area Committee he/she represents.

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 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 Representative ought to report back to Area as concisely and interestingly as possible at all the debates, decisions and activities of the Intergroup Committee. Through the reports of Conference and fellow delegates, the Intergroup 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 his/her Area both by personal report and by ensuring that all Intergroup and Conference minutes, are available at and read by the Area. The representative should carefully listen to and note the 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. 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. All Intergroup Officers should preferable have five years continuous sobriety in AA and have at least one year experience as an active Intergroup Representative.

An Officers term of office is for two years from date of election. He/she is not eligible for re-election to that office. Where a nominee may be proposed by any Area for a position of officership in Intergroup it would be preferable for the nomination to come through ones own Area.

Intergroup Secretary

The Intergroup Secretary being a member of Conference should preferably have five years continuous sobriety in AA, be an active member and have served as G.S.R. and an Intergroup Representative. He/she should have a record of dedicated service to AA and have developed qualities of tolerance, humility patience and forbearance. The Secretary should be familiar with the problems and peculiarities of the groups in his/her province, be ready and willing to help find solutions within AA Traditions, and must, therefore, have sufficient time available not only to help when called upon but regularly attend meetings of Conference and its Committees.

Familiarity with the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts and with the Service Manual is of great importance as is the ability to stimulate action and make suggestions for the good of AA in general. Qualities of leadership and responsibility are desirable and since a Secretary will be required to chair meetings, he/she should be experienced in this respect.

Duties of Intergroup 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. He/she keeps his/her Committee informed of all communications received from Intergroup, Conference, Board or General Service Office. He/she needs to keep up-to-date mailing lists and get his/her minutes out on time to every group in area,

representatives and delegates. Where possible the Intergroup Secretary would send a list of the Provinces Mini Conventions to the Secretary to the Board by 1st January each year.

Send Motions to Conference to the Secretary to the Board at least four weeks prior to Conference.

Chairperson

He/she should have considerable AA experience at group, Area and Intergroup level. He/she should have a sound understanding of the Traditions and better still, the know how gained by applying these guidelines to local problems. He/she should be able to motivate and lead and yet act as a servant rather than a dictator. He/she should be able to instill in others a keen interest in Conference Service and local services.

Treasurer

He/she must be a careful guardian of the AA funds in his/her care and give a written account of financial position to each Intergroup meeting. This account should be circulated with Intergroup minutes to every group in the area, and I.R.'s. Surplus funds should be promptly transferred to AA as a whole through Intergroup. A good Treasurer will keep his/her Committee aware of our self-support Tradition and their responsibilities to AA as a whole, as well as local needs. It is preferable if Intergroup funds are kept in a Bank Account with two people signing cheques for withdrawals. **The Treasurer also ensures that the Intergroup is properly insured inclusive of member to member liability.**

DELEGATES TO CONFERENCE

Appointment

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.

Terms of Office

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.

Retiring Delegates

If during his/her term a delegate wishes to retire, or is replaced by his/her Provincial Intergroup, the incoming delegate will remain a delegate only for the term of the one he/she is replacing. A delegate who is absent from two consecutive annual meetings of Conference or who, for any reason, renders himself ineligible, automatically retires from Conference, and is replaced by his/her provincial Intergroup. A retiring delegate is not eligible for re-election unless, having served as an alternate, there remains an unexpired portion of the four years when he/she can be elected for such period only.

QUALIFICATIONS OF DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

The main qualifications for a delegate are:

a) sobriety b) availability and c) effectiveness

A Delegate will have a minimum period of five years continuous sobriety in AA and will have been actively engaged in service at Group and Intergroup level. He/she will have acquired a thorough knowledge of the groups in his/her area, their problems and feelings, and his/her provincial Intergroup's feelings too. Conference has determined that no member should be prevented from attending Conference simply because he/she could not financially afford it.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND DELEGATES

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

MEETINGS

Intergroup Committees should meet at least every three months.

FINANCE

All expenses incurred by an Intergroup shall be defrayed by the groups in the province. Any funds surplus to a prudent reserve should be transferred to General Service Office. Any expenses incurred by a member of Intergroup in attending Committee meetings will, if requested, be borne by the Intergroup Committee.

LITERATURE

Only literature approved by the General Service Conference of Ireland should be stocked by Intergroups. No magazine or publication should be published without the prior written consent of the General Service Conference.

CENTRAL SERVICE OFFICE (C.S.O.)

For the purpose of administration, distribution of literature and provision of services to the Groups in the province, an Intergroup may provide a Central Service office.

MINI CONVENTIONS

The responsibility for the allocation of Mini Conventions lies with each Intergroup. It is the responsibility of Intergroup to ensure these Conventions are run according to the guidelines. Conference Delegates should be a member of all Mini Conventions Committees to ensure that the guidelines are adhered to.

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 Committee aware of their activities, needs and problems. Convenor of Intergroup Sub-Committee should be an experienced active member of Intergroup 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 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 Intergroup meetings, it is suggested that where the number of such people is 25% or 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

THIRD LEGACY PROCEDURE IS AS FOLLOWS:

By "Third Legacy procedure," we mean a special type of electoral procedure for the election of Delegates. It is considered to be unique with AA. All members of the Intergroup Committee are eligible for Delegate; the Chairperson asks whether any are unable to serve, and withdraws those names. Remaining names

are posted on a blackboard. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.)

All I.R.'s and Committee members of the Intergroup who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted on the blackboard.

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

After the second ballot (assuming no candidate received the necessary two on the first ballot), and 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 no, 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 by lot (from the hat). At this point, balloting usually involves only the top two or three candidates. Lots are then drawn by teller, and the first one "out of the hat" becomes Delegate.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS CONSTITUTION FOR CONFERENCE IN IRELAND

ARTICLE 1 - TITLE

The name by which Conference is known is Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Conference of Ireland. It's 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 - HEADQUARTERS

The headquarters is General Service Office for Ireland or such other location as Conference in its wisdom and discretion may decide.

ARTICLE 3 - FUNCTIONAL AREA

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

ARTICLE 4 - PRIMARY OBJECT

1. The primary object of Conference is Third Legacy Service - 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 a whole. This is where the whole idea of 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 and together.

COMPOSITION OF CONFERENCE

ARTICLE 5 - MEMBERS OF CONFERENCE

1. Conference is composed of the following:

Four Delegates, or their Alternates, and one Trustee from each of the four provinces of Ireland.

The four provincial Intergroup Secretaries.

Three trustees who are not members of the fellowship (called non-alcoholic Trustees).

The Secretary of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland.

The Manager of the General Service Office.

The World Service Delegates.

2. All members of Conference have voting rights.
3. All members of Conference shall be entitled to participate in the business of a meeting of Conference. Fraternal Delegates and invitees may address Conference on the invitation of the Chairperson.

ARTICLE 6 - DELEGATES TO CONFERENCE

A Delegate should preferably have five years continuous sobriety, be an active AA member and have served as a G.S.R. and an Intergroup representative. He should have a record of dedicated service to AA and have developed qualities of tolerance, humility, patience and forbearance.

The delegate should be familiar with the problems and peculiarities of the groups in his/her province, be ready and willing to help to find solutions within AA Traditions and must, therefore, have sufficient time available not only to help when called upon but to regularly attend meetings of Area and Intergroup Committees and meetings of Conference and its committees. Familiarity with the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts and with the Service Manual is of great importance as is the ability to stimulate action and make suggestions for the good of AA in general.

Qualities of leadership and responsibility are desirable and, since a Delegate will be required to chair meetings, he should be experienced in this respect.

Intergroup Committees should attempt 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.

1. APPOINTMENT

1.1 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.

1.2 Conference recommends that nominations come to Intergroup through the Structure i.e. that candidates be nominated by their Groups and their Area for selection at Intergroup.

2. TERM OF OFFICE

2.1 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.

3. RETIRING DELEGATES

3.1 If during his term a Delegate wishes to retire, or is replaced by his/her Provincial Intergroup, the incoming Delegate will remain a delegate only for the term of the one he is replacing. A Delegate who is absent from two consecutive Annual Meetings of Conference or who, for any other reason, renders him/her self ineligible, automatically retires from Conference, and is replaced by his/her provincial Intergroup.

3.2 A retiring Delegate is not eligible for re-election unless, having served as an alternate, there remains an unexpired portion of the four years when he can be elected for such period only.

3.3 Former Conference Delegates having served their full term ought not to return to Service at Area level.

4. QUALIFICATIONS OF DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

4.1 The main qualifications for a delegate are:

a) sobriety b) availability, and c) effectiveness

A Delegate will have a minimum period of five years continuous sobriety in AA and will have been actively engaged in Service at Group and Intergroup level. He will have acquired a thorough knowledge of the groups in his/her Area, their problems and feelings, and his/her provincial Intergroup's feelings too. Conference has determined that no member should be prevented from attending Conference simply because he/she could not financially afford it.

ARTICLE 7 - TRUSTEES

The AA Trustee should have preferably have 10 years of continuous sobriety, be an active member of an AA group, have served as a member of Conference and have a wide experience of AA at Group, Area, Provincial Intergroup and Conference level. A Trustee should be able to devote the necessary time to serving on the Board and to the service of AA in general without hurting either his/her family or his/her career. He/she should bring to the Board an extensive business or professional experience, be resolute in the exercise of his/her own good judgement and objectivity and have the courage to express himself.

A Trustee should have a thorough grasp of AA structure and history and have qualities of leadership which will enable him/her to help AA to grow in his/her own area with minimum of friction and a maximum of goodwill. He/she should command the love and respect of AA's in his/her Province and be able to communicate the feelings and trends of the Groups, Area Committees and Intergroup Committees to the Board and interpret the Board's actions back to the Groups. There are seven Trustees, of whom four are members of the Fellowship, called alcoholic trustees, and three are non-members, called Non-Alcoholic Trustees.

Their primary purpose is to maintain the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland, in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association of that body, as approved by Conference. No person other than a trustee, ratified by Conference may be a member of the Board, and no change or alteration may be made in the memorandum, or Articles of Association, without prior approval of Conference.

1. Alcoholic Trustees

1.1 Qualifications

The qualifications of a Trustee are that he shall have a minimum of ten years continuous sobriety in AA, is available to perform his/her duties and is or has been a member of Conference preferably for four years.

1.2 Term of Office

The term of office is for a period of four years. In the case of the first trustees, this term will be from the date of incorporation of the Board and, thereafter, four years from the date of appointment. Any trustee may retire or be replaced by Conference, but the replacing trustee will hold office, only for the remainder of the term of the replaced trustee. Alcoholic Trustees are not eligible for re-election on the expiry of their term.

1.3 Appointment

The General Service Board usually through the retiring Trustee will nominate his/her successor before the expiry of his/her term. After due

consultation with the four General Service Conference Delegates and the Intergroup Secretary this nomination is submitted to his/her appropriate Intergroup for ratification and is then sent to Conference for approval. In any other eventuality, the General Service Board, after due consultation with the four General Service Conference Delegates and the Intergroup Secretary will nominate the Trustee and then this nomination will be put before his/her appropriate Intergroup for ratification and then sent to Conference for approval.

2. Non-Alcoholic Trustees

2.1 Appointment

The non-alcoholic trustee is nominated and appointed by the General Service Board, subject to the approval of Conference.

2.2 Term of Office

The term of office is for a period of four years, and he is eligible for re-election at the end of his/her term at all times.

ARTICLE 8 - WORLD SERVICE DELEGATES

The World Service Delegate is elected by Conference at the Reconvened September Conference in accordance with the requirements of the World Service Meeting. Nominations for this position to come through the structure preferably.

It is particularly important that the World Service Delegates be acquainted with all aspects of in Ireland. He/She should, accordingly have served as a Conference Delegate or a member of the General Service Board. He/she must have at least ten years continuous sobriety in and be an active group member of since the World and European Service Meetings of pertains to the whole country of Ireland.

They should make themselves familiar with the groups throughout the country and should attend at least one Intergroup meeting of each province yearly and make a conscientious and diligent effort to understand the efforts of the Fellowship countrywide.

The delegate's report to the World and European Service Meeting should be with the Secretary of the General Service Board not later than four months before the meeting taking place. The Secretary may then, if necessary, place it before the Board for editing prior to its presentation at the World and European Service Meetings.

1. Qualification

1.1 A World Service Delegate will have a minimum period of ten years continuous sobriety in and will be or have been a member of Conference for at least four years. He/she will be available to perform his/her duties and be capable of preparing a written report on the state of in Ireland. They must be capable of presenting this report at the World and European Service Meetings and available to travel to the meetings. He/she must report back to Conference on the European and World Service Meetings.

2. Term of Office

2.1 The term of office shall be for four years expiring on the 31st December of the fourth year. Conference recommends that due regard be paid to rotation.

3 Alternate

3.1 In the event of a World Service Delegate not being available to attend a meeting a member of the Board, nominated by the Board, will act as an Alternate Delegate for such meeting.

ARTICLE 9 - OFFICERS OF CONFERENCE

1. Chairperson

1.1 The Chairperson to Conference shall be elected from outgoing members of the preceding Conference. The elected Chairperson will not be deemed a member of Conference and will not have voting rights.

1.2 The Alternative Chairperson shall be elected at the same time as Chairperson from the outgoing members of the Conference.

2. Secretary

2.1 The General Service Board is the Secretary to Conference.

3. Treasurer

3.1 The General Service Board is the Treasurer to Conference. The Prudent Reserve is the combined operating expenses for one year plus stock and debtors.

INSURANCE

The Treasurer also ensures that Conference is properly insured inclusive of member to member liability.

MEETINGS OF CONFERENCE

ARTICLE 10 - 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 Account, by the General Service Board and prior to the Annual Irish convention.

ARTICLE 11 - SPECIAL MEETINGS OF CONFERENCE

1. A Special Meeting of Conference may be called:

- a) At any time by the General Service Board;
- b) By the Conference Secretary, on receiving a written request by not less than half of the delegates which should include the names of the four Alcoholic Trustees or at least one of the Non-Alcoholic Trustees.

The reason for the request shall be clearly stated.

2. The special meeting shall be called by the Secretary within four weeks from the date of the receipt of the written request.
3. The notice calling the special meetings 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 12 - AGENDA FOR CONFERENCE MEETINGS

1. 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.
2. The following items will be eligible for inclusion on the agenda for the Annual General Meeting.
 - 2.1 Submissions, motions and items forwarded by Intergroups at least four weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
 - 2.2 Election of Officers, World Service Delegates, European Service Delegates, Fraternal delegates, committees and other appointments.

- 2.3 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
- 2.4 Reports of delegates and committees.
- 2.5 Chairperson's and Secretary's business.
- 3. After the Opening of Conference and the Roll Call, the draft agenda shall be as 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.

ARTICLE 13 - REPORTS OF CONFERENCE MEETINGS

Reports of Conference meetings will be circulated within ninety days after the meeting.

ARTICLE 14 - VOTING AT MEETINGS

- 1. The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall be:
 - 1.1 All items or motions passed unanimously become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.
 - 1.2 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.
 - 1.3 All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE 15 - QUORUM

One half of all the members entitled to attend, plus one, shall form a quorum entitling meeting to proceed, but no meeting shall proceed unless at least two delegates (or alternates) from each province are present.

ARTICLE 16 - FINANCING OF CONFERENCE

Financing of Conference and General Service Office for effecting its primary objectives, activities and commitments, through the General Service Board, will

be through voluntary contributions from within the fellowship. However, Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland will always:

- a) refrain from and prohibit the public solicitation of funds;
- b) decline all large gifts from within the fellowship.

Conference agreed unanimously that the limit for both living and deceased members of AA is €2000.

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 17- GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

General Service Board will maintain in an easily accessible location, a General Service Office for Ireland (hereinafter referred to as G.S.O.).

The primary objectives of G.S.O. are:

Communication

Service

Information

Provision of Literature

The day to day running of G.S.O. is the responsibility of the General Service Board.

Members' telephone numbers will not be given out by the General Service Office.

ARTICLE 18 - ANNUAL CONVENTION

1. An Annual Irish Convention will be held with the approval of Conference.
2. The Convention is normally held in April.
3. The venue for the annual Convention rotates each year in the following order:
 - Connaught;
 - Munster;
 - Ulster;
 - Leinster.
4. As far as practicable the date and venue for the next Convention is announced at the closing of the current Convention.

5. 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.
6. Each Intergroup appoints a Committee who is responsible for the detailed arrangements for the Convention, and its day to day running. This Committee has power to co-opt members with special skills and abilities.
7. The proceeds of each annual Convention, after deducting all authorised expenditure, is donated to the General Service Board.

ARTICLE 19 - STATUS, AMENDMENT AND REPEAL OF CONSTITUTION

1. Conference is not incorporated and this constitution is not a legal instrument.
2. This Constitution may be repealed, replaced, amended or added to.
 - 2.1 The consent of three-quarters of the groups in the functional area of Conference is required in the case of amendment or repeal of the primary objects of Conference and the primary objectives of the General Service Board, but not in the case of addition along traditional services lines.
 - 2.1.1 The method and arrangement for any vote referred to in para. 2.1 will be decided by Conference.
 - 2.2 Any amendments, repeals or additions as may be made by Conference will be reported to all groups in the functional area as soon as possible after the meeting of Conference at which the decision was taken.

DELEGATES TO AFFILIATED CONFERENCES

The AA General Service Conference of Ireland 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.

All representatives and delegates should attend their respective meetings with the firm conviction that they are there for the primary purpose of making it

easier to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic and to help the sober alcoholic to retain his/her sobriety.

CONDUCT OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEETING

The Chairperson shall preside at all plenary sessions of Conference. Where the size of the agenda appears to warrant or in order more expeditiously to deal with the matters requiring debate, Conference may be divided into two or more Committees. For example, one Committee shall debate motions pertaining to the Structure of AA in Ireland, the working of AA in institutions, alterations and amendments to Guidelines and Constitution and any related matters and shall be known as the “Structure and Service Committee”.

Another Committee shall debate motions pertaining to the finances of the Fellowship in Ireland and the approval of literature, pamphlets and all public relations material including radio, press and television and shall be known as the “Finance and Literature Committee”.

Other Committees may be appointed if Conference so requires. The committees shall be appointed following the agreement of the agenda by Conference and each Committee shall be allocated items for debate by Conference. Each committee shall have as far as possible equal proportions of Delegates, Trustees and Intergroup Secretaries and shall appoint its own chairperson. All Committee members will be afforded the opportunity to express their views on the matter under consideration and the Committee will produce a recommendation for Conference on the subject. The recommendations of Committees shall be laid before a plenary session of Conference by the Committee Secretary or Chairperson and the matter resolved by a vote of Conference if necessary. Agreed special subjects may be debated by the committee and reports submitted to Conference.

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.

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.

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.

It ought to be clearly understood and agreed that Conference Delegates are primarily the servants of AA as a whole and only in a secondary sense do they represent their provincial Intergroups. Consequently, they should on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference 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” at all; 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”.

ARTICLE 12 OF THE 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.

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 insure our own recovery. We do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from his room. We need it to insure 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 insure 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 insure 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 insure 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 insure 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”.

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.