



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
General Service Conference of Ireland
8th – 10th March 2024
Draft Minutes

DRAFT

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Decisions agreed at Conference meeting 2024

- A. John T was elected as the new World Service Delegate
- B. Charity/Company Report agreed.
- C. "Motions to Conference recommendations" to be sent out to the Fellowship for discussion
- D. GSR packs to be produced
- E. First 164 pages of the Big Book, along with Bob's story to be translated into Irish and made available in pdf format.
- F. 1989 motion was rescinded by two thirds majority, meaning it becomes policy after the expiry of 1 year unless rescinded by notice of motion.
- G. Multiple copies of the Road Back to be made available to groups, by subscription.
- H. New Public Information posters were agreed.

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General Service Conference of AA in Ireland

Friday 8th March to Sunday 10th March 2024

Draft Agenda

FRIDAY 8th MARCH 2024 7.45PM – 10.00PM

1	Opening of Conference by Chairperson	7.45pm
2	Roll Call	
3.	Adoption of Agenda and other urgent business in accordance with Article 7, page 57 of 2023 Edition Service Handbook	
4.	Adoption of 2023 Conference Minutes and matters arising	
5.	Introduction of new Trustees/Retiring Trustees	
6.	Election of World Service Delegate	
7.	Motions to Conference (Drawing of Tables)	
	Close	10.00pm

SATURDAY 9th MARCH 2024 9.30AM – 5.00PM

7. (a)	Motions to Conference (Breakout into Discussion Tables)	9.30am – 11.15am
	Tea/Coffee Break	11.15am – 11.30am
7. (b)	Motions to Conference (Each Table writes reports to present to the full meeting of Conference)	11.30am – 12.15pm
7. (c)	Motions to Conference (Decisions on Motions)	12.15pm – 1.00pm
	Lunch	1.00am – 2.00pm
7. (c).	Motions to Conference (Decisions on Motions)	2.00pm – 3.30pm

	Tea/Coffee Break	3.30pm – 3.45pm
8.	Finalising Items from Previous Conference Meetings 1. Motions 7 & 13 (2023) 2. Review of Conference Motions Process Literature (GSR Packs & Big Book in Irish)	
8.	National Public Information Report	3.45pm – 4.15pm
9.	Conference Delegates' Report – (report taken as read)	
10.	World Service Delegates' Report (reports taken as read)	
11.	All Ireland Convention 2023 Report (Report taken as read)	
12.	All Ireland 2024 Update	
13.	Invitation to AAGB to attend General Service Conference	
14.	Election of Observer to GB Conference 12 th to 14 th April 2024	
15.	Election of Chairperson & Alternate Chairperson to Conference 2025	

SUNDAY 10TH MARCH 2024 10.00AM

16.	Conclusion of Conference (If required)	10.00am
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Opening of Conference by Chairperson

Introduction

Philip McG. (Chairperson) opened Conference by welcoming everybody and asked for a moments silence to consider why we were here. Conference recited the Serenity Prayer and Tradition Two was read. Philip read from page 49 of the General Service Handbook 'Why Do We Need a Conference?'

Service Handbook for Ireland (2023 edition) Article 9, Decisions of Conference (Page 58)

Decisions of Conference The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects: All items or motions passed unanimously become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board. All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority are recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year. All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference

Roll Call

Connaught		Munster	
Trustee	James O'S	Trustee	Tony O'C
Delegate	John G	Delegate	Linda D
Delegate	Sean C	Delegate	Michael D
Delegate	Joe B	Delegate	Thomas K
Delegate	Hubert J	Delegate	Audrey M
		I/G Secretary	Benny G
Leinster		Ulster	
Trustee	Emmet O'H	Trustee	Kenny P
Delegate	Deirdre S	Delegate	Billy I
Delegate	Robbie McM		
Delegate	Jenny K	Delegate	Brian D
		Delegate	James Mck
I/G Secretary	Anya S	I/G Secretary	Joanne M

Other		Observers	
Board Secretary	Anthony McN	Barbara O	GB Observer
		Tony S	GB Observer
WSD	John T	Lorna O	Observer
WSD	Tom D	Mallory M	YPLO Observer
Non AA Member Director/Trustee	Maire McGrath	Martin C	Outgoing Trustee
GSO	Michael Gibson		
Chairperson	Philip McG		
Apologies			
Non AA Member Director/Trustee	Diarmuid McKeown		
Connaught I/G Secretary	Michael C.		
Observer	Martine M		

Adoption of Agenda and other urgent business in accordance with Article 7 of the Conference Charter, page 57, 2023 edition Service Handbook

Before the agenda was adopted, there was a query from a Munster delegate regarding the eligibility of a Leinster Delegate to serve at Conference. He felt that she did not possess the requirements outlined in the Service Handbook. He also questioned whether she had been nominated properly, through the Structure. The Leinster Trustee clarified that the nomination in question had come properly through the Structure and that the delegate in question had satisfied the suggested guidelines..

The Agenda was proposed by Benny G, seconded by Emmet O'H.

Adoption of 2023 Conference Minutes and Matters Arising

The Board Secretary read out a number of minor items.

- A. There were a couple of typos in the minutes which had been brought to his attention, which he agreed to change.

- B. He advised Conference that a motion from the previous year, from the Dungannon group, had now become policy. 12 months had elapsed since the motion was passed by a two thirds majority and there was no motion before the meeting today to rescind that decision. The motion was in relation to special meetings of Conference and it stated that '*All decisions of Conference which has the consensus of Conference should become effective immediately.*'
- C. He had completed a lot of research into abstentions and their effect on a unanimous vote. This has caused confusion in the past. It seems that Conference has always used a system known as 'Robert's Rules of Order' for conducting Conference meetings. Most organisations tend to use this system. Under Robert's Rules, an abstention should be counted as a non-vote and should not count towards any voting at Conference. He added that unless there were objections to this we should carry on using this system.
- D. He also added that he was aware that Hubert J. wished to propose an amendment to the minutes.

Hubert then read out his proposed amendment to page 5 of the 2023 draft minutes. His proposal was seconded by Joe B. There were no objections.

Benny G. said that last year's meeting agreed to hold an Inventory meeting of Conference but that this has not happened. Emmet said that it would be preferable to hold such a meeting in person rather than online. Benny suggested that it be held on the Sunday morning of Conference in 2025. This was agreed by consensus.

Joe B. questioned the need for the Code of Conduct for GSCDs. He felt that it would make it more difficult to attract members of the Fellowship to serve at Conference. He was informed that the Code of Conduct was previously agreed by Conference and it would necessitate a motion from a group to now remove it.

Billy I. informed the meeting that we use the "Service Handbook" not the "Green Handbook".

The minutes were proposed by James McK and seconded by Joe B.

Introduction of new Trustees/Retiring Trustees

The Chair of GSBAA, Emmet O'H introduced the retiring Munster Trustee, Martin C. Emmet thanked Martin for his years of Service. Emmet also thanked Cindy O'Shea, former Non Alcoholic Trustee (NAT) for her invaluable input into the Fellowship over the last 4 years.

Emmet introduced Kenny P. as the incoming Ulster Trustee, Tony O'C. as the incoming Munster Trustee and Maire McGrath as a new NAT.

Election of World Service Delegate

There was one nomination for the position of World Service Delegate, John T. from Munster.

Emmet O'H seconded the nomination and John was elected by consensus.

Emmet also wished to thank Moira S, outgoing WSD, for her tremendous efforts over the last 4 years.

(Nomination for John T. included at Appendix A)

Motions to Conference (Drawing of Tables)

It was suggested prior to Conference and agreed by the adoption of the agenda that Conference would again use breakout tables to discuss motions to Conference this year. The breakout tables would bring a recommendation back to the full meeting of Conference who would then make the final decision on the individual motions.

The tables are as follows;

Table A

Connaught Delegate 1	John G
Leinster Delegate 1	Deirdre S
Munster Delegate 1	Linda D
Ulster Delegate 1	Billy I
Munster Intergroup Secretary	Benny G
GB Observer	Barbara O
Ulster Trustee	Kenny P

Table B

Connaught Delegate 2	Sean C
Leinster Delegate 2	Robbie McM
Munster Delegate 2	Michael D
Ulster Delegate 2	John McC
Ulster Intergroup Secretary	Joanne M
GB Observer	Tony S
Connaught Trustee	James O'S

Table C

Connaught Delegate 3	Joe B
Munster Delegate 3	Thomas K
Ulster Delegate 3	Brian D
Leinster Intergroup Secretary	Anya S
NAT	Maire McGrath
WSD 2	John T.
Munster Trustee	Tony O'C

Table D

Connaught Delegate 4	Hubert J
Leinster Delegate 4	Jenny K
Munster Delegate 4	Audrey MacD
Ulster Delegate 4	James McK
WSD 1	Tom D.
Leinster Trustee	Emmet O'H

Motions 1-12 are all in relation to specialist/special interest meetings. While all 12 motions are very similar, there are slight differences. It was agreed that all 4 tables would debate motions 1- 12 and return with 4 recommendations.

It was further agreed that the remaining 8 motions would be allocated to the various tables by drawing from a hat.

This process was carried out by Martin C., former Trustee.

Table A:	Motions 13 & 15
Table B:	Motions 19 & 20
Table C:	Motions 14 & 17
Table D: Motions	Motions 16 & 18

Tom K felt that people with no business experience should not be on a table which was discussing business related motions. He felt that such matters should be left to the Board to decide. The Chair told Tom that he was free to abstain from any motion if he did not feel qualified to vote on the matter in question.

Emmet said that business decisions may become easier to debate on following Item 8 on the agenda.

Benny felt that the motions and the breakout tables should have been discussed more in advance of the Conference meeting.

It was agreed that the breakout tables would begin to consider the motions submitted at 9.30am on Saturday morning and that the meeting should proceed immediately to Item * on the agenda.

Finalising Items from Previous Conference Meetings

A. Motions 7 & 13 (2023)

The subcommittee felt that the current structure we have in place (as a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee) was the appropriate structure for Alcoholics Anonymous to have.

The subcommittee further felt that we should compile 2 reports outlining our reasons for making this decision.

- a) A short abbreviated version of the full report, which is easy to read and which gives the reasons for this recommendation.
- b) A full report which goes into far greater detail and contains a lot of legal information.

(Both of these reports are available at Appendix B)

Brian D presented the abbreviated report on behalf of the subcommittee.

Following this, James McK. presented the fuller, more detailed report to Conference on behalf of the subcommittee.

Following the presentation of these reports, there were a number of questions/comments;

Benny had a slight update – the Office of Corporate Enforcement had now become the Corporate Enforcement Authority.

Tom D. praised the subcommittee for the tremendous work done on this report.

Mick D. felt that we were in breach of the Traditions, that the Fellowship should be a spiritual entity and not a company. He said that it is frightening that the Board can be outvoted by Conference in a legal setting. We have let ourselves down badly by not convincing the CRA that we are honest and transparent and should not have to adhere to the CRA rules. We should be trusting the Board to make these decisions and let Conference remain as a spiritual entity.

At this point, Mick was called to order by the Chair, saying that he had drifted off topic and he was talking about matters other than those contained in the report.

Mick expressed his disappointment at being called to order.

Joe B. congratulated the subcommittee on a tremendous job.

Sean C. said that we have to comply with the law at all times. We are doing things well at the moment which is the right way to do it.

Tony O'C. commended the subcommittee. He questioned if legal advice had been sought as the report was so comprehensive. He was advised that a number of subcommittee members had prior business and governance experience. The sources of information were referenced in the report.

Hubert proposed distributing the report to the whole Fellowship, which was seconded by Tony.

Robbie asked if we could claim tax relief on contributions. Benny clarified that while this might be possible in the USA, it was not an option for us.

Tony added that he had been part of the delegation who met with the CRA in 2017. There is a long history to our dealings with the CRA. While it has never been fully clear in the past where we stood, this report alleviates any 'grey areas' which existed.

Mick D. again questioned how we are not in breach of Tradition 9. Benny clarified that the law of the land always takes precedence.

Maire (NAT) spoke about her background in governance. She said that this report answered every question that needs to be answered. She added that anyone is free to contact the CRA themselves and ask them if they are not clear on our responsibilities. She said that one word that nobody has mentioned is "protection". We need to be both a charity and a company limited by guarantee in order to protect employees, the Board members and the Fellowship as a whole.

Emmet proposed that the report be accepted. Maire seconded the proposal. There were no objections and the report was accepted by consensus.

B. Review of Conference Motions Process.

Deirdre presented the report on behalf of the subcommittee.

(Full Report available at Appendix C)

Following the presentation, there were a number of questions/comments;

Billy I asked why we are listening to a report already distributed in advance of the meeting. He later apologised and thanked the subcommittee for their work.

Hubert said that he didn't mind listening to it as this was an important topic. He was very much in favour of the proposed changes as it would prevent confusion and repetition of some motions on an almost annual basis. He asked if it was possible to have composite motions. This would help to avoid repetitive motions. But he stressed that groups are entitled to be heard.

Kenny congratulated the committee. This was a progressive report. However, he questioned the proposal to include the motions in the Road Back. Was there an alternative?

Tom K. thanked the subcommittee but said that he disagreed with some aspects of the report and previous comments. He felt that setting aside motions for 3 years could prove problematic. He added that he felt that Conference Delegates were not doing enough to inform the Fellowship about the motions being put to Conference meetings. He said that we are trying to fix a problem we don't have. He also felt that an August deadline for motions to be submitted might not work.

Benny said that he had some concerns about how motions would come from groups under the proposed system. He felt that this should be put out to the Fellowship to get their views.

Emmet proposed that we accept the report. This was seconded by Anya.

Benny counter proposed that we send the report out to the groups to get their views.

This was seconded by Tom K.

The counter proposal was voted on first.

16 members voted in favour of the counter proposal

6 members voted against.

2 members abstained

Therefore, the report is to be sent out to the Fellowship for discussion and debate. It will be further discussed at the 2025 Conference meeting.

C. Literature (GSR packs & Big Book in Irish)

GSR Pack

Emmet spoke about the challenges faced while trying to produce the agreed GSR pack. While we had obtained permission from World Services to reprint the documents/pamphlets which would be going into the GSR pack, we did not have permission to alter these documents, which we would need to do as some came in different font styles and sizes. It could take a considerable amount of time to get permission to make the necessary changes.

Alternatively, Emmet said that we could put the agreed pamphlets individually into a little folder which would be similar to the starter pack. He had one example of a pack which was passed around the room. He said that GSO felt that this matter should be brought back to Conference for guidance.

Kenny queried the cost of the pack in the current form. He was told that it would cost around €2.

Mick D proposed that we go ahead with the individual pamphlets in a small folder. This was seconded by Jenny. There were no objections and this was agreed by consensus.

Big Book in Irish

The Board Secretary gave a breakdown of quotations received since the last Conference meeting to translate and print copies of the Big Book in Irish. Depending

on the number of copies required it would cost between €58.90 and €136 per copy to print, as we were only talking about getting a few hundred copies rather than the thousands which we currently buy at a time of the English version. The Board Secretary said that he had an approximate figure of about €6,000 to translate the Big Book into Irish. But that also depended on the dialect used.

There were a number of questions/comments;

Kenny – could we get a pdf version and make it available on the website?

Tom K. – it would be financial malpractice to spend this sort of money on such a project.

Audrey – there are a lot of native Irish speakers. This should be about the need for it rather than the cost of it.

Linda – not happy that we are not already providing it particularly when we can give money to the World Literature Fund to translate literature into other languages. We need to respect the Irish language and culture.

Hubert – had mixed feelings. He was an Irish speaker but he balked at the cost

The Board Secretary asked if a compromise was possible, if it would be acceptable to the meeting that the first 164 pages were translated into Irish and were made available to download from the website.

Joe proposed that we don't proceed with producing a physical Irish copy of the Big Book. This was seconded by Tom K.

This was voted on.

19 members voted in favour of Joe's proposal.

3 voted against

3 members abstained

Linda then proposed that we translate the first 164 pages of the Big Book, and Bob's story into Connemara Irish. This would then be made available to download from the website. Hubert seconded this proposal.

Tom K counter proposed that we don't proceed with this for cost reasons. The counter proposal did not receive a seconder.

Linda's proposal was carried by consensus.

Hubert suggested that we get Irish speaking members to translate the Big Book for us. The Board Secretary said that that could be problematic as he felt that it should be translated professionally.

Following this, the meeting adjourned for the evening.

Motions to Conference (Breakout into discussion tables)

The meeting continued at 9.30am on Saturday 9th March.

The Chair asked for guidance from the meeting regarding observers. We had a number of observers present. Should they be allowed to sit at the breakout tables to observe?

There were mixed feelings about this so the Chair called for a vote.

22 members voted in favour of observers being allowed to observe at the breakout tables.

1 member voted against.

There were 2 abstentions.

Following this, the Leinster Trustee asked to be allowed to address the meeting. He had serious concerns about what had occurred at the meeting on the previous evening. He felt that there had been a personal and unwarranted attack on a Conference Delegate.

Benny said that while he felt that some of the behaviour was out of order, he didn't feel that the behaviour in question had been a personal attack.

There was a long discussion about this. Following this, a member of Conference issued an unreserved apology to both the meeting and to the person he was alleged to have 'attacked'. He stressed that any comments he made were never intended to be personal.

The Conference members then broke out into their discussion tables.

Following a number of hours of discussion, the breakout tables returned with their findings to the full meeting of Conference, for decision.

Motions 1 – 12

As already mentioned, each of the 4 breakout tables discussed these 12 motions and each table presented their findings to the full meeting. These motions were all related to rescinding a previous 1989 motion which prevented specialist/special interest meetings from having their details listed on the AA website.

(Copies of all of the Motions are at Appendix D)

Table A;

Benny presented the findings of the table. He said that they could not reach a consensus. Meetings should be listed with the proviso that they do not exclude any members. They should meet the criteria listed in the Service Handbook regarding what constitutes a group. He added that these groups already exist but they are not considered to be part of the Structure. At the end of the day, a group conscience should decide what type of meeting a group holds, not Conference.

The minority view was that women felt that they were 'different', as did other groups. The rest of the world already has specialist meetings. That doesn't mean that we should too.

Table B;

Joanne presented the findings of the table. She said that they had a general consensus that we needed to change and support these motions. Motion 7 (and possibly 8) accurately reflect the feelings of the table.

Table C;

Maire presented the findings of the table. While there wasn't unanimous agreement, there was a strong feeling that the 1989 motion should be rescinded. She asked what type of meetings would be allowed, for example would there be millionaires meetings? There needed to be guidelines for groups. The message of AA should not be diluted but members should have a safe place where they can attend meetings. These groups already exist. They should be allowed to be listed on the website. She questioned if it was possible to trial this for a period of time.

Table D;

Audrey presented the findings of the table. There was a very open and interesting discussion at the table. 4 were in favour of the change, 1 was against, 1 offered no opinion. She asked if specialist meetings would affect our unity as a whole. Members might feel excluded. Currently, some young people and members of the travelling community don't feel welcome at some meetings. Ireland and Russia are currently the only countries which don't allow for specialist meetings. In Russia, that is because of the law. Domestic violence victims should have a meeting they can go to. There was a fear at the table that this motion may change the Fellowship in Ireland. There was also a general sadness at the table that members might feel excluded.

The floor was then opened for further discussions on the matter. The general feeling was that this matter had now been discussed extensively all around the country. The Chair then called for a vote.

17 members voted in favour of rescinding the 1989 motion

6 members voted against.

There was 1 abstention.

In accordance with Article 9 of the Conference Charter, *"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"*. **This motion was carried by a two thirds majority and therefore will become Conference policy after the expiry of one year unless rescinded by notice of a motion in the meantime.**

Motion No. 13

Motion to Conference from Mallow Mercy AA Group (Group No. M77)

“That the minutes of the GSBAA’s Annual General Meeting be issued to all members of the company and all who sit at that meeting who are also members of Conference and that this be done in a timely manner-(as with minutes of Conference)”.

Additional Information

All members of our company are members “only” by virtue of the fact that they are “firstly” members of Conference, the minutes of the company AGM could be attached to the Conference minutes.

Reason for Motion

To assist the conference structure in carrying out its primary object, to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic (this includes all members in service) the conference structure being an important part of governance of AA “the charity”

Additional Comments

With the 2022 changes to charity law the board must delegate its operational responsibilities to a committee of those in the service of carrying out the primary object of the charity, of which the board has custodial oversight (as in our 12 Concepts of Service).

The publication of the AGM minutes is supported by the constitution’s main objects in tradition 9, which states the board must be responsible to those it serves. This is also supported by the companies act section 1183(3)-it remains the duty of the directors to observe any limitations on their powers flowing from the C.L.G.’s objects

This motion was discussed by Table A. The findings of the table were presented by Benny.

Recommendation:

The Table recommends that Conference reject the motion.

Reasoning:

The current situation is as follows:

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the General Services Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG (the Company) are prepared in compliance with Section 199 of the Companies Act 2014 and entered in the Minute Book.

A member of the Company may request a copy of the Minutes of the AGM of the Company, and these must be sent to them within 10 days of receipt of the request and payment of the prescribed fee (Section 216 Companies Act 2014).

In addition, the Minutes are circulated to the members of the Company when they are sent Notice of the next AGM. We believe this is in line with good practice although it is not a requirement in law.

We see no need or benefit in going beyond what is already being done.

After a brief discussion, the Chair called for a vote.

22 members voted in favour of rejecting the motion.

0 members voted against.

There were 3 abstentions.

The motion was defeated.

Motion No. 14

Motion to Conference from Mallow Mercy AA Group (Group No. M77)

“To reverse the decision to incorporate our Conference”.

Reason

Conference delegates do not need legal powers, they have all the powers they need from our Traditions and Concepts for Service and from the General Warranties of the Conference (Concept 12)

Example (1):

Concept 7 states - 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 A.A. purse for its final effectiveness. One such very important example is that the conference must ensure that the company never becomes self-supporting by way of going into Business and that it abides by the "Corporate Poverty" element of Tradition 7 as outlined in the 12x12 book (page 165).

Example (2):

We are all "Trusted Servants" as in Tradition 2, this tradition died on the day that our conference became incorporated. A servant cannot serve two masters. As members of the Company, they must favour the Company to the detriment of the Conference, we cannot be structured by two conflicting constitutions.

Additional Information:

Our conference structure was set up in 1970 in accordance with the U.S.A service handbook.

The U.S.A had its first conference in 1951 and in 1955 "a resolution" was passed at that conference making conference the successor to the founders of the fellowship- this was agreed by the trustees who would now have the appointment of trustees ratified by conference and would be directed by conference, this gives conference a legal status.

The 1955 resolution gave conference all the power they needed without incorporating the conference.

The 2017 resolution to incorporate the Irish conference was not needed.

In Ireland the structure is the same. In 1968 A.A held its first conference and put in place the trustees and in 1978 they incorporated the trustees under the 1973 companies act, in which the conference and the trustees were recognised as separate entities, because conference could ratify the selection of the trustees, this is why at that time we had to have "group accounts".

Nothing has changed, conference (unincorporated) with its sitting trustees will always be superior to any company it may put in place, (company law).

This motion was discussed by Table C. The findings of the table were presented by Maire.

The table had a full discussion of this motion and concluded that it should be rejected on the following grounds:

- Conference is not incorporated.
- Conference Members have no legal powers in relation to Conference
- The request underlying this motion was based on a lack of understanding of the structure of GSBAA and Conference, and how they are separate. This topic was covered in great detail in the report from Motion 7 of the previous year

We add the following clarifying items which should help in understanding the confusion that is the likely cause of the confusion:

- The AGM is about the business of the General Service Board AA charity
- Conference is about the spiritual service of the representatives of the fellowship

The following points were also raised, which may help people in understanding the relationship between the Members of the AA company and the Conference attendees.

- D. Conference can request that the board take up discussions related to the company/charity and engage the necessary supports to make a full recommendation to conference. This work can then be passed to conference to allow a spiritual discussion of the topic with the possession of the full details of the situation
- E. The board serves the fellowship, and the structure of the company is intended to increase the oversight of the board by the members of conference

Following this presentation, the meeting voted to unanimously reject the motion.

The motion was defeated

Motion No. 15

Motion to Conference from Patrick's Hill Cork First Group (Group No. M50)

"That when a member commits to a term of office as an officer at any level in A. A., they should finish out that term before they go forward for another position".

This motion was discussed by Table A. The findings of the table were presented by Benny.

Recommendation:

The Table recommends that Conference reject the motion.

Reasoning:

The Table were of the view that this was a matter for individual Groups, Areas and Intergroups.

We should respect Group Autonomy and these decisions should be made at Group Conscience Meetings at individual Group, Area and Intergroup level (Traditions 2 & 4)

A discussion followed. Hubert spoke of his experience of having various roles in different groups. This motion was not something that Conference should be deciding on.

The motion was unanimously defeated.

Motion No. 16

Motion to Conference from Passage West Group (Group No. M82)

“Any recommendations from a subcommittee to Conference should not be passed. The recommendations should go to the groups”.

Background

As stated in the October minutes of Cork City Area the Trustee’s Report to Munster Intergroup outlined that 2 subcommittees were formed at Conference 2023. These committees are to report back to Conference in March 2024.

1. A subcommittee to examine the current structural relationship between Conference and the GSBAA subsequent to motions to Conference in 2023 regarding this matter.
2. A subcommittee to examine the current method by which motions are brought to Conference. This subcommittee was formed arising from the observations of observers from Ireland’s Conference who attended the recent GB Conference. Concerns were raised over the possible implementation of such recommendations at Conference 2024 with the express hope that any recommendations brought to Conference are brought back to the groups before being voted on at Conference.

This motion was discussed by Table D. The findings of the table were presented by Jenny.

If this motion was to happen, why are we here?

The timing should be considered in how long it would take to make decisions.

We need to be mindful of Concept 3 (right of decision) and Concept 10 (well defined scope of authority and responsibility).

Trust & Communication – Trust in our trusted servants but also recognising the need for Delegates to report and communicate with our Areas and our Groups effectively

The motion is incomplete – the recommendations should go to the groups. But then what?

We are recommending that the motion be rejected.

A discussion followed.

Tom K – In certain circumstances a motion could be sent back to groups for guidance.

Mick D – This came up at Cork City Area. Conference has the authority to set up a subcommittee who would report back to Conference. We can change some things without going back to the groups.

Jenny – felt that this exception is already covered. It can go back to groups but doesn't have to.

Kenny – we are not closing anything off to groups.

The Chair called for a vote.

21 members voted to reject the motion.

2 members voted against

There were 2 abstentions.

The motion was defeated.

Motion No. 17

Motion to Conference from Passage West Group (Group No. M82)

“That Conference cannot set up a subcommittee unless it is in response to a motion from a group”.

Background

As stated in the October minutes of Cork City Area the Trustee's Report to Munster Intergroup outlined that 2 subcommittees were formed at Conference 2023. These committees are to report back to Conference in March 2024.

1. A subcommittee to examine the current structural relationship between Conference and the GSBAA subsequent to motions to Conference in 2023 regarding this matter.
2. A subcommittee to examine the current method by which motions are brought to Conference. This subcommittee was formed arising from the observations of observers from Ireland's Conference who attended the recent GB Conference. Concerns were raised over the possible implementation of such recommendations at Conference 2024 with the express hope that any recommendations brought to Conference are brought back to the groups before being voted on at Conference.

This motion was discussed by Table C. The findings of the table were presented by Maire.

The group had a discussion on the motion, and recommended rejecting this motion for a few reasons:

- Conference is acting as trusted servants and is empowered to form subcommittees, and is allowed to make decisions with the authority granted to them by the fellowship
- Conference can make the decision, or can recommend returning the output of a subcommittee or motion back to the groups should it determine that further discussion is warranted
- Restricting the setting up of committees in this manner would prevent conference from acting on reports presented at conference

A few points were raised, which would warrant further analysis:

- Members seem to have a perception that conference and groups are separate things, and seem to miss that each conference member is attempting to represent the various groups that are part of their intergroup and areas.
- Sometimes there appears to be a lack of reporting of the full discussions from conference, which leads to the belief that conference is not responding to the will of the fellowship

The Chair called for a vote.

24 members voted to reject the motion.

There was one abstention.

The motion was defeated

Motion No. 18

Motion Title: Charity Number.

At the Group Conscience of the Salthill Zoomers Group (Group C199, listed by GSO as Galway City Good Morning Salthill) held online on 29 August 2023, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion:

That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland and its member groups be allowed to use the GSBAA charity number when opening bank accounts.

Reason:

To improve the capacity of each individual group to collect the Seventh Tradition and to increase the percentage of funds collected that is actually available to support the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous and the service structure of AA in Ireland, and to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

In the current financial environment, electronic banking and electronic funds transfers have become a requirement for everyone, including the groups of Alcoholic Anonymous. This is particularly true of on-line meetings, where the Seventh Tradition must be collected virtually.

More than ever before, individual groups must engage with commercial financial institutions and open accounts that will facilitate funds transfers, meaning that every group in Ireland has to face the pressure of bank fees in an effort to collect the Seventh Tradition. If the group were able to use the charity number, they would be able to set up these necessary accounts and perform those functions as a charity.

The Salthill Zoomers Group alone has paid more than four-hundred euros (€400) in bank fees over the past four years, just to maintain a basic account. The account for this group does not have a bank card, nor does it allow on-line banking, because that would cost an additional two-hundred-fifty euros (€250) per year in fees, more than the cost of our annual on-line hosting fees.

Most banks offer preferential banking fees to holders of a Charity number, with some offering a 50% reduction in banking fees. In our group alone, that would have resulted in an additional two-hundred-fifty euros (€250) sent forward to Area and through the structure to GSO over the past four years. If all the individual groups in Ireland were all able to use the charity number, it might result in an additional €24,000 per year (800 groups x €30 / year) that would be available to carry the message.

Finally, over the past four years the Salthill Zoomers Group has sent forward over €3,000 in Seventh Tradition funds to GSO through the service structure, meaning that we are a member of the organization and have been acknowledged by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous as such. Since we are recognized as a part of the charity, we should be entitled to utilize the number.

This motion was discussed by Table D. The findings of the table were presented by Jenny.

In light of the report last night (8th March) by the subcommittee on the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous pertaining to the company and the Fellowship particularly including the Charity Regulator and legislation. Groups are prohibited by legislation and the Charities Regulator from using the Charity number.

We are recommending that this motion be rejected.

This motion was unanimously rejected.

The motion was defeated.

Motion No. 19

Motion Title: Change the wording in the Service Handbook regarding the Official AA Website.

At the Group Conscience of the Salthill Zoomers Group (Group C199, listed by GSO as Galway City Good Morning Salthill) held online on 29 August 2023, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion:

That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland, remove the word "only" from the statement:

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

- Page 22 of the Service Handbook, also referenced on page 64.

Reason:

The word, "only," is restrictive and limits the capacity of the General Service Conference of AA in Ireland to serve the greater membership of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout Ireland.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a diverse fellowship and is geographically widespread throughout Ireland, and has found many ways to utilize the internet to improve connectivity and to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

There are many excellent on-line resources available in Ireland for newcomers seeking help, beyond the Official Website maintained by the GSBAA, but there is no reference to any of them on that official site, because of the restrictions imposed by that single word: "only."

By deleting this word, we encourage unity and inclusivity and we acknowledge the reality of our current world, where local groups, Areas, and Intergroups are already utilizing the reach of the web to provide information, support new members, and in many ways to extend the hand of AA. This action will permit the GSBAA to include on the Official Website links to other sites and to the wider fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

We live in an age where many problem drinkers begin their search for our message of hope on electronic devices, notice boards, social media, and a wide range of worldwide websites. The function of those platforms is to carry the message of AA to the problem drinker, as well as to the wider public, including professionals engaged with problem drinkers. The purpose of this motion is to authorize the General Service Conference of AA in Ireland to extend a hand to everyone seeking help or information, through acknowledgement of the existence of other sites that may be helpful - without any expectation that the GSBAA will necessarily approve or endorse them.

As a Reference:

In 2013, 10 years ago the GSO New York produced a detailed document of guidelines on the internet, from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada).

https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/mg-18_internet.pdf

This motion was discussed by Table B. The findings of the table were presented by Joanne.

After great debate, we reached a consensus that this motion not be accepted as it doesn't add o what already happens in the Fellowship. And by removing the word 'only' and allowing links to other websites, etc., we may have GDPR challenges as we cannot regulate what is published on a third party website. We cannot police information and may infer affiliation/endorsement of a third party organisation. Therefore, we are recommending to leave "as is" and not accept this motion.

A good debate followed this report. It was the consensus of the meeting that other websites existed and regardless of the decision made at Conference, nothing will change.

The Chair called for a vote.

23 members voted in favour of rejecting the motion.

1 member voted against.

There was 1 abstention.

The motion was defeated.

Motion No. 20

At a group conscience meeting held on 8th September 2023 of the Summerhill Group in Drum community, Athlone, the following motion was agreed by all present concerning the Road Back magazine.

That the Road Back Magazine and Newsletters to be sent out to groups again in print form. "Multiple copies through a subscription".

As a group we have identified some reasons why the Road Back Magazine and Newsletters should be readily available in print again:

The group feel that moving the Road Back Magazine and Newsletter online is a disadvantage for members who may be unable to use technology. There are a diverse range of people and age profiles within the Association, some may be very confident using the internet and online publications while others do not have any knowledge or access to the internet, email or smart phones.

Also, people in facilities such as Prisons, Garda Stations, Hospitals etc would not have access to the internet to access the Magazine.

We also note the reduction of the number of publications from bi-monthly to quarterly, why did this happen? If it was due to the lack of stories being submitted, using online platforms only will not aid this as some members will neither be aware or information of this request if they do not view the Magazine online.

We feel the Road Back Magazine and the Newsletter are fantastic publications, we used to provide any new members or people in the local prisons/hospitals with books when facilitating there.

We understand the need towards more sustainability and less paper-based information but for the large demographic of people we propose that the booklets are printed and supplied to groups again. A suggestion could be for each group to submit an application for the required number of books in advance of the printing to guide the printing numbers and to reduce waste.

Another suggestion from the group is to advertise the new publications using other accessible formats such as posters to each group with QR codes, telephone number for the head office to cater for those who may have difficulties with both technology and or read/writing/speaking etc. It is important to have an easily accessible service for member, at the end of the day the members of each local group donate at each

meeting and this money is used for the Road Back Magazine and newsletter publications.

The road back has been the 2nd longest running book in the world after 'the grape wine' in the USA, it seems such a pity to let it be lost in realm of technology.

We ask that this motion is considered for all members but especially those who may have issues accessing the online publication.

This motion was discussed by Table B. The findings of the table were presented by Joanne.

Table B considered the motion and they were in agreement that the Road back should be available in print again. We recognise the need for a subscription, we pay for other literature, we should pay for this. We unanimously agree that we support the motion.

There were a number of questions/comments from the floor.

Anya – sought clarity about the Newsheet, was advised that it was now called Service News and was included in the Road Back.

Benny – The magazine is already available to individual members in hard copy. Going back to the previous format would be a backward step.

Anthony – clarified that 57 members currently receive a hard copy of each publication from GSO.

Tom – The magazine should be freely available by subscription.

Emmet – There are a number of issues here. This has already been discussed by the Office Management Committee. If groups want multiple copies, can we do that? The current guidance we have is that only one copy can be sent to an individual or group. If there was a small charge, he would not have any difficulty with multiple copies being sent.

Hubert – Can we refer this matter to the Board to deal with?

Tony – seconded Hubert's proposal.

Joe – It's important that these magazines are available in print again.

Kenny – his role as the Trustee responsible for the Road Back was to get stories and try to improve content. The responsibility for printing and distribution rested with the Office Management Committee.

It was agreed by consensus that this matter be referred to the OMC with the understanding that they find a way to make multiple copies of the Road Back available by subscription.

National Public Information Report

Maire presented the Public Information Report on behalf of the subcommittee, with contributions from Tony and Brian. Maire gave a quick overview of the work they have already undertaken and said that this is just the beginning of what they wish to do. The media and social media will be very important going forward. How can we appeal to different people in various communities. The next 3 year Strategic Plan was currently being developed and PI will be a big part of that plan.

Brian said that PI was a very important subject in Alcoholics Anonymous. He said that the subcommittee were looking for guidance and direction from Conference. They felt that there was a need to reinvigorate the posters for PI. There will be a new power point presentation to be unveiled at the upcoming All-Ireland convention. It is hoped to have these presentations available to download from the website. They hoped to have both internal and external presentations available.

Tony thanked the members of the subcommittee. They had worked extremely hard on this for 8/9 months. The subcommittee had brought forward new posters for approval. They had also produced new business cards, primarily for first responders such as the ambulance service, Gardai, etc. There is also a new National PI email address – nationalpi@alcoholicsanonymous.ie.

Maire said that PI can be subjective. It is a co-design process, they were looking for input. She also spoke about the power of personal stories in the Road Back.

Brian said that the QR code on the posters brought you to the AA website.

(A copy of the full report is available at Appendix E)

Emmet thanked the subcommittee. There was a lot happening in PI, a lot more will happen. He proposed that we accept the posters subject to possible minor changes. Joanne seconded this. **It was unanimously agreed to accept the new PI posters.**

Billy questioned the age profile of the people in the posters, they all seemed to be young people.

Jenny said that a massive thanks was owed to the subcommittee for the posters, they were brilliant. Although she agreed with Billy's point that they may be too focused towards young people. She also questioned one person touching another in one of the posters.

Audrey reiterated what others had said, and agreed that we could have more variety with demographics.

Robbie asked if the subcommittee had considered using billboards for PI purposes. Tony replied that that was the reason for the new PI mailbox, they would welcome suggestions from members.

Maire said that some of what they do is going to be experimental, not everything will work but some will.

James wholeheartedly agreed with everything said about this. He asked the Board to ensure that enough money was made available for all of this work to be completed. He questioned why schools couldn't currently request PI talks. Emmet responded that there aren't any PI Convenors in place in any of the 4 Intergroups at the moment. As soon as there were we would accept PI requests again.

Tony said that it's up to every Area and Intergroup to decide how they do PI work. We need to spread our wings beyond schools. He added that the Board had been very supportive and have provided a substantial budget for the subcommittee.

Kenny congratulated everyone involved and said that schools were the responsibility of Intergroups not Conference.

The report was agreed unanimously.

Conference Delegates Reports

These reports were taken as read. *(Reports available at Appendix F)*

There was a brief discussion on how Delegates reports could be completed, particularly in relation to new Delegates only being in place in an Area for a matter of weeks before a report is due for Conference. It was suggested that an outgoing Conference Delegate might assist a new Delegate in writing the report.

The reports were proposed by Emmet and seconded by Tony.

World Service Delegate Report

This report was taken as read. *(Report available at Appendix G)*

Tom D thanked Moira for the great work that she had done as a WSD. She had been elected as the Chair of the 2025 European Service meeting to be held in York. Tom also looked for feedback from members in relation to possible topics for future European Service meetings.

He added that the General Secretary of the ESM spoke about discrimination in AA. It is something that we need to be mindful of.

All-Ireland Convention 2023

Since the convention, Kenny has replaced Seamus as the Ulster Trustee. Kenny said that the convention seemed to have a very vibrant atmosphere. There was great representation from across Ireland, UK and further abroad. It was a fantastic weekend.

(Full report available at Appendix H)

The report was proposed by Emmet and seconded by Joanne.

All-Ireland 2024 (Update)

Anya said that the committee were working hard at making preparations, while trying to do things a little differently this year. The theme of the convention is "Service with a smile". There will be some interesting themes for some of the marathon meetings. There will be plenty of workshops – PI, Meet the Board, etc. There will be a sing song on the Friday night.

Invitation to GB observers to attend Conference

Deirdre proposed inviting GB observers to attend Conference in 2025. This was seconded by Audrey. At this point, the Chair invited the GB observers if they wished to say a few words about their experience at our Conference this year.

Barbara thanked everyone for their hospitality. She really enjoyed coming to Dublin, to our Conference. She will shortly be rotating out as a Trustee.

Tony is an incoming Trustee and he has a 3 month induction process. He said that he was delighted to come to our Conference and that he has learnt a lot. He said that the Structures in Ireland and GB are similar but different.

Election of observer to attend GB Conference 2024

The Board Secretary said that while we usually receive invitations for 2 observers to attend the GB Conference, this year we had received an invitation for one observer.

Tom K was proposed by Tony, seconded by Hubert.

Anya was proposed by Emmet, seconded by Joanne.

Following a vote, Tom K was elected to attend the GB Conference meeting in April.

Election of Chairperson for Conference 2025

There were 3 eligible candidates – Billy, Hubert and Sean.

Both Billy and Hubert did not wish to be considered for the role. Therefore Sean was deemed to be elected following his agreement to take on the role.

Hubert agreed to act as alternate Chair.

The meeting closed.

DRAFT

Appendix A - Nomination to Conference 2024 from Munster Intergroup Position of World Service Delegate

Munster Intergroup nominate John T. for the position of World Service Delegate.

Note:

Nomination was unanimously approved at the Munster Intergroup Meeting of 1st October 2023 having been proposed by North & East Cork Area. Nomination had previously been approved at North & East Cork Area having been proposed by Carrigtwohill Big Book & Step Group.

Benny G

Munster Intergroup Secretary

DRAFT

Appendix B – Company/Charity Report

Abbreviated Report for Conference

CURRENT STRUCTURE

The structure of Alcoholics Anonymous within Ireland is comprised between two separate organisations:

The fellowship of AA being an unincorporated body comprising groups, areas, provincial intergroups and the General Service Conference (the Fellowship).

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland, being a company limited by guarantee without a share capital and also a charity registered with the Charities Regulator in the Republic of Ireland (GSBAA).

Why are we a Charity?

Members often question why we are a registered charity. Do we really need to be? Do we have a choice in that? Surely we aren't a charity when we only collect contributions from members. We don't fundraise or collect money from the general public.

There are 3 main reasons why we are a registered charity;

- A. We are legally obliged to be.
- B. In order to hold Tradition 7 collections, we need to be a charity
- C. For taxation reasons.

Why are we a Company?

Some people may think that Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland recently became a company because of changes in legislation which may have required us to be. This is not the case. The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous have been a limited company, or a company limited by guarantee, since 1978.

Registered Charities do not have to be companies. In fact, they have 3 options open to them. They can be;

- A. A Charitable Trust
- B. A Corporate Body
- C. An Unincorporated Association

Having given each of these options due consideration, the only suitable entity for Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland to be is a corporate body (Company Limited by Guarantee)

A more in-depth explanation of this is given in the full report.

Why are the members of Conference also members of the Company?

In 2017, the Charities Regulator (CRA) began to implement changes to how charities were run in Ireland, in compliance with the Charities Act 2009. The CRA insisted that the membership of the Company be substantially increased and that the Board be answerable to them. In essence, the CRA was looking for greater transparency in how finances were handled. A number of meetings were held between the CRA, the Board and the members of Conference. A number of suggestions were put forward on how to increase the membership of the Company. It was agreed that the members of Conference could become members of the Company.

If we wished to change our current structure what challenges would we face?

- Risk of reputational damage – coming out of a charity. This may not be legal
- Would an unincorporated Conference still not (subject to its Charter) meet the definition of a charity under the laws of Ireland?
- Administrative, legal and accountancy costs associated with setting up any new structure.
- Governance – protection of having Board Secretary who has had training
- Management of donations from the Fellowship
- Operational impact upon GSBAA Service delivery
- Risk of personal liability to the individuals.
- Challenges around recruiting suitably qualified and motivated company Trustees prepared to accept the risks who can operate with good governance.
- Loss of openness and transparency in having accounts filed at CRO
- Difficulties with taking out contracts or employing staff.

Full Report for Conference

CURRENT STRUCTURE

The structure of Alcoholics Anonymous within Ireland is comprised between two separate organisations:

The fellowship of AA being an unincorporated body comprising groups, areas, provincial intergroups and the General Service Conference (the Fellowship).

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland, being a company limited by guarantee without a share capital (Registered Company Number 64287) and also a charity registered with the Charities Regulator in the Republic of Ireland (Charity Number CHY 6014 – RCN 20010010) (GSBAA);

1. Why are we a Charity?

Members often question why we are a registered charity. Do we really need to be? Do we have a choice in that? Surely we aren't a charity when we only collect contributions from members. We don't fundraise or collect money from the general public.

There are 3 main reasons why we are a registered charity;

- a. We are legally obliged to be.
- b. In order to hold Tradition 7 collections, we need to be a charity.
- c. For taxation reasons.

A. We are legally obliged to be

The Charities Act 2009 clearly defines what a charity is and isn't. It sets out 6 registration requirements for charities

- (i) Operates in the Republic of Ireland
- (ii) Exists for a charitable purpose(s)
- (iii) Promotes this charitable purpose only
- (iv) Carries out all activities to further this charitable purpose(s)
- (v) Exists to benefit the public or a section of the public in Ireland, or elsewhere, through its charitable purpose(s)
- (vi) Is not an excluded body

It is clearly evident that we fulfil most of these criteria without going into any detailed explanations. Any organisation which promotes health (in any form) is deemed to have a charitable purpose.

Point (vi) refers to excluded bodies. Examples of these would be political parties and most amateur sports organisations. Alcoholics Anonymous does not fall into the category of "excluded body".

Therefore, having satisfied all 6 criteria for a charity as defined under legislation, we do not have any choice other than to register as a charity with the Charities Regulatory Authority.

It is worth noting that the ability, or need, to fundraise or collect monies is not a criterium for having to register as a charity. Even if we didn't hold Tradition 7 collections, and somehow managed to run the Fellowship without incurring any costs, we would still be legally obliged to register as a charity as we meet all of the criteria laid out in legislation.

(The above information is sourced from "What is a Charity?", issued by the Charities Regulator)

B. In order to hold Tradition 7 collections

"The Street and House to House Collections Act 1962" is the main legislation dealing with fundraising. Once money is put into a collection at an AA meeting, it is deemed under legislation to be "public money". Under the terms of the above Act, it provides that anyone wishing to hold a cash collection must apply to the local Garda Chief Superintendent to do so (for each individual collection). The Charities Regulator has waived this requirement for Alcoholics Anonymous, as they are entitled to do under the Charities Act 2009. The Regulator did this following a meeting in late 2017 between the Regulator and the members of Conference. If we were not a registered Charity, we would not have this waiver. What this means in reality is that if we were not a registered charity, each group across the country would need to apply for an individual permit for each individual meeting in order that they could hold a Tradition 7 collection at that particular meeting. This would entail having to make tens of thousands of individual applications every year to local Chief Superintendents across the country. Each application usually takes about 6 weeks. And there is no guarantee that each application would be granted.

C. For taxation reasons

At present, we do not pay any income tax or Corporation tax on monies we receive through Tradition 7 collections, simply because we are a registered charity. That situation would change if we ever ceased to be a Charity.

2. Why are we a Company?

Some people may think that Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland recently became a company because of changes in legislation which may have required us to be. This is not the case. The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous have been a limited company, or a company limited by guarantee, since 1978.

Registered Charities do not have to be companies. In fact, they have 3 options open to them. They can be;

- a. A Charitable Trust
- b. A Corporate Body
- c. An Unincorporated Association

The following is an excerpt from "Relate", a publication issued by the Citizens Information Bureau (May 2018), which explains the advantages and disadvantages of the 3 different entities;

Charitable trusts

A charitable trust is established under a deed of trust that requires the trustees of the trust to apply all of the property (both real and personal) of the trust in the advancement of that purpose, except for moneys expended in the management of the trust. The advantages of a charitable trust include:

- It is well-adapted to the management of assets held for charitable purposes, either as a grant-making trust or as a trust supporting a charitable service constituted in another form*
- The efficient management of substantial assets and the distribution of cash grants and where the administration of the trust will be undertaken by a small body of experienced trustees*
- Relative speed, simplicity and lack of cost involved* The disadvantages of a trust include:
 - They can be quite cumbersome and undemocratic in that, once the trustees are appointed, they are difficult to remove and therefore the group or charitable association only has indirect control over its own property*
 - It is not a suitable form for a charity which is a member organisation, or for one likely to engage in providing services, or to employ substantial numbers of staff*
 - Trustees have no limited liability and can be sued in their personal capacity for breach of trust and can be held personally liable for third-party debts*
 - There are far greater restrictions placed on the trustees of a trust than on directors of a company*
 - The alteration or change of trustees is complex. The trustees have no power to alter or amend the trust deed unless the trust deed specifically gives authority*

Bodies corporate

Charities are often established as companies. These are usually companies limited by guarantee and governed by a constitution (formerly known as a memorandum and articles of association). Companies are subject to company law and are required to

meet various rules in relation to keeping accounts and records. Company law is enforced by the Companies Registration Office (CRO) and the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement. It may be appropriate to establish a company where some or all of the following apply:

- *An unincorporated association has grown in size and level of organisational activity*
- *An organisation will be quite large*
- *It will employ staff*
- *It will deliver charitable services under contractual agreements*
- *It will regularly enter into contracts*
- *It will be an owner of freehold or leasehold land or other property*

Unincorporated associations

Some smaller charitable organisations may be established as unincorporated associations governed by a constitution or set of rules. These organisations are like clubs, consisting of people bound together by mutual agreement, who meet on a regular basis to pursue a common interest. An unincorporated association is not a separate legal entity from its members, nor does it have limited liability or a legal personality of its own. This means that it cannot enter into contracts or own property. The constitution is binding among members of the organisation, but it has no legal effect in regard to non-members. Therefore, anything done by the organisation is done by all the members of the organisation, who are responsible for all the activities of the organisation. Individual members are personally liable for any debts or obligations

Whichever model is chosen, Alcoholics Anonymous would still have many compulsory obligations, such as needing a Board of Trustees, having to file accounts, etc.

The Charities Regulator has defined 2 different types of charity.

- (i) A Complex Charity
- (ii) A Non Complex Charity.

Due to a number of reasons, including our annual turnover, number of members, the fact that we employ staff, Alcoholics Anonymous has been categorised as a Complex Charity by the Charities Regulator. This means that we are considered to be a relatively large Charity and are subject to more stringent rules and reporting requirements than a Non Complex Charity would be.

(i) Charitable Trust

As you can see from above, this would not be a suitable model for Alcoholics Anonymous.

When a Trustee's term of office has expired, he/she could just decide themselves that they are staying on and it would be very difficult to remove them.

It is not suitable for a Complex Charity to be a Charitable Trust.

It is not suitable for a Charity providing services, which we do.

There is no limited liability for Trustees, making the Trustees personally liable.

(ii) Bodies Corporate

This is the model that we currently use, and have used successfully since 1978.

Any new Complex Charity registering with the Charities Regulator has to register as a Corporate body (Charities Act 2009)

We can enter into contracts as a Corporate body.

We can have employees as a corporate body

There is limited liability for Trustees.

We can lease property as a company, which we do (General Service Office)

We are subject to Company Law.

As a company, GSBAA has the power to construct, equip, manage, hold, lease property and to employ staff under its constitution.

One of the services GSBAA currently provides is the operation of the General Service Office in Dublin.

(iii) Unincorporated Association

Unsuitable for a Complex Charity

The Board of Trustees could not be an employer. An individual Trustee would need to be registered as the employer

Lack of ability to enter contracts (including leases)

Individual members and Trustees are personally liable

(The above information has been sourced from the Citizen's Information Bureau)

3. Why are the members of Conference also the members of the Company?

In 2017, the Charities Regulator (CRA) begin to implement changes to how charities were run in Ireland, in compliance with the Charities Act 2009. The CRA were not entirely happy that the General Service Board were not answerable to the Fellowship. The Board could more or less do as they pleased, if they wanted to. The CRA insisted

that the membership of the Company be substantially increased and that the Board be answerable to them. In essence, the CRA was looking for greater transparency in how finances were handled. A number of meetings were held between the CRA, the Board and the members of Conference. A number of suggestions were put forward on how to increase the membership of the Company. It was suggested to the CRA by GSBAA that the members of Conference could become members of the Company. The CRA agreed to this proposal and in late 2017, a representative of the CRA met with members of Conference to explain why this was necessary.

If we wished to change this, we would need to seek approval from the CRA to implement such a change.

4. General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous

It is important to note that the Directors of GSBAA are both company Directors and charity Trustees, with such roles attracting specific legal and fiduciary obligations under both company and charity law. The legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the Directors of GSBAA shall take precedence over any other duties or obligations of the Fellowship.

Further consideration of the current structure is required to identify any risks from a liability and governance perspective, which would need covered in any alternative options proposed.

GSBAA

The Memorandum of Association of GSBAA sets out that the main object of the company is:

to help alcoholics on the island of Ireland achieve and maintain sobriety and, with a view thereto, to act as custodian of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous ("AA") as set out in the Service Handbook for Ireland prepared by the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Conference ("Conference") as amended and adopted from time to time by decisions of Conference.

Thus, a link between the two organisations is established within GSBAA's main charitable objective. There are further links between the two organisations as set out in GSBAA's constitution, such as:

- the subsidiary object to publish, distribute and sell books, materials, film and so forth to the Fellowship (4(1) Memorandum of Association);
- the power to raise money within the Fellowship (5.4 Memorandum of Association);
- the fact that the membership of GSBAA shall be those persons who are members of the Conference (Article 5 of the Articles of Association). The GSBAA members (being the members of the Conference) can exercise rights and vote at the AGM of GSBAA and on major decisions of the Company such as changing the Articles of Association; and

□ the Directors (and charity Trustees) of GSBAA shall also be the same as the Trustees of the Conference with the number of Directors/charity Trustees of GSBAA being at all times equal to the number of Trustees of the Conference (Articles 36-37 of the Articles of Association).

GSBAA is a company and as a result is a legal entity in its own right separate to the Trustees, which provides protection to its Trustees for any debts arising or liabilities on the part of the company, which shall be limited to €1. However, the Conference is not incorporated and so when said individuals are acting in their capacity as Trustees of the Conference, they do not have the benefit of limited liability and are exposed to a greater degree of personal liability and risk. As such, eschewing obligations on the part of GSBAA may not have the intended effect as it will expose the Trustees of the Conference to greater risk personally, being the same group of individuals. It is anticipated that the Company was incorporated to take advantage of the benefits of limited liability;

The links between GSBAA and the Conference and the wider Fellowship shall be of relevance when considering the alternative options in respect of structure from a governance perspective, particularly given that the Directors and charity Trustees of GSBAA are obliged to fulfil the company's object and purpose.

The Conference Handbook further describes services that GSBAA provides to the Fellowship, including:

- publication of the Road Back Magazine, the AA News Sheet and other literature, being in line with GSBAA's subsidiary object described above;
- management of the funds of the Fellowship that are not retained at Group, Area or Provincial Intergroup level for their own use;
- operation of the General Service Office; and
- management of the AA website (together the GSBAA Services).

Again, the GSBAA Services shall be of relevance when considering any alternative arrangements in respect of structure from a governance perspective, particularly given the services GSBAA is supposed to provide to the Fellowship.

5. Any New Structure – Challenges

If the Fellowship wished to change from its current structure, it could face the following challenges;

- Risk of reputational damage – coming out of a charity.
- Would an unincorporated Conference still not (subject to its Charter) meet the definition of a charity under the laws of Ireland?
- Administrative, legal and accountancy costs associated with setting up any new structure.
- Governance – protection of having Board Secretary who has had training

- Management of donations from the Fellowship
- Operational impact upon GSBAA Service delivery
- Risk of personal liability to the individuals
- Challenges around recruiting suitably qualified and motivated company Trustees prepared to accept the risks who can operate with good governance.
- Loss of openness and transparency in having accounts filed at CRO

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Appendix C -Review the motions to Conference Process

Subcommittee Report and Recommendations

This subcommittee were tasked with evaluating what improvements could be made to the process for creating motions that can go through the structure for consideration at Conference. We met several times with the goal of evaluating and simplifying the **Motions to Conference Process**.

Several members of our subcommittee have attended AAGB Conferences and were very impressed and inspired by it. We looked extensively at their process but recognised that AA Ireland is smaller with our own unique structure, and accordingly needs a process reflecting this.

Areas that we identified for improvement are:

- Motions sometimes come to Conference that are unclear or more suitable for Group Conscience level discussion
- Groups would benefit from guidance on writing motions so that they can be clearly understood and considered
- Areas and Intergroups would benefit from guidance in how motions move through the structure
- Groups do not always receive sufficient feedback on why their motions were unsuccessful at Conference
- Circular discussions about motions at Conference were time consuming, repetitive and generally not conducive to reaching a consensus
- The fellowship could be better informed of upcoming motions or subsequent decisions made at conference.
- On occasion, members can be prejudiced for or against motions from particular groups/provinces.
- Sometimes there are many similar motions that could be grouped together and discussed as one motion.

The subcommittee acknowledged the process adopted for the 2023 Conference. The large numbers of motions submitted – some of which were similar – were broken down into manageable numbers for discussion within four sub groups to Conference. When each sub group concluded their discussions, they brought their recommendations back to Conference to be voted on. We recognised that this allowed Conference members the opportunity to discuss their sub groups' motions fully and furthermore that they provided an opportunity for the minority voice to be heard, should it arise.

Based on both the areas identified for improvement and the 2023 Conference process detailed above, we recommend that:

Conference continue to use the 2023 format and formalise it as follows:

- Each subgroup to Conference is balanced with at least one representative from each province and one trustee.

- WSD's, NAT's and Observers will be evenly distributed between subgroups where reasonably possible

The adoption of the following improvements for the Motions to Conference Process:

- Groups, Areas and Intergroups are given clear guidance on their role in the Motions to Conference Process
- All motions, once submitted to the Board Secretary in the normal way, are anonymised. In this way, the identity of the group is removed from the motion and this will allow the motion to be discussed without prejudice.
- Similar motions are grouped together and discussed as one motion.
- Motions that have been previously brought to Conference and been unsuccessful have a cooling off period of three years before they or very similar motions are resubmitted.
- A Conference Motions Subcommittee is formed. Its primary role is to review and assess motions and their suitability for Conference. The subcommittee will consist of a Conference member from each province, a board member/trustee and the Board Secretary. The role of this subcommittee is to:
 - Group similar motions together.
 - Evaluate if there is sufficient information for Conference to discuss a motion, and if not, be in a position to request additional information to assist in the resubmittal of the motion from the group.
 - Consider if a motion is suitable for Conference, and if not, provide the group with a written explanation on the reasons why not.
 - Publish all motions for Conference in the Winter (Nov/Dec) edition of *The Road Back*. This will allow the fellowship to be aware of and discuss motions in advance of Conference.
 - Allocate motions to Conference groups.

To facilitate these improvements we suggest the following changes:

- Motions for discussion at the General Service Conference be submitted by 31st August each year to the Board secretary in the normal manner, through the structure.
- The Board Secretary anonymise the motions and submit all motions to the Conference Motions Subcommittee before 21st September.
- The Conference Motions Subcommittee meet and review all motions.
- All suitable motions are published in advance of Conference in *The Road Back* (Nov/Dec) to ensure the widest transparency across the fellowship. This will also have the benefit of encouraging members to submit motions through their groups.
- If a motion is considered unsuitable for Conference, full details are provided to the group before the year end.
- The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects: All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board. All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are

recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference. The General Service Board should take any necessary action.

- The Service Handbook be updated to reflect the agreed changes.

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Appendix D - Motions to Conference 2024

Motion No. 1

MOTION FROM FOXROCK TUESDAY 1PM GROUP (AREA11) TO CONFERENCE

That a previous motion from September 1989, which was approved by Conference in March 1990, be rescinded. This motion stated the following:

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

Motion proposed by:

Foxrock Group L434 Area 11. Proposal agreed at a specially convened Foxrock Group Conscience on 24 March 2023.

Motion No. 2

Motion area 5 - Naas group

At the April group conscience of the Naas group there was a decision to send forward a motion to rescind the 1989 conference decision regarding specialist meetings.

Motion No. 3

Leixlip Area 5 Group

With Ref to the proposed changes to the 1989 Conference decision of Alcoholics Anonymous which did not allow specialist meetings by Conference decision of Alcoholics Anonymous 2023. The Leixlip group favours such a change and to recede that point of view because we believe such a change would and is the general norms position and would enhance the quality of sobriety generally speaking.

Motion No. 4

The L276 Group (Outhouse LGBT Centre, Capel Street) had a discussion around the information which had been returned from Conference in relation to the attempted introduction of a women's labeled meeting being placed in the directory, and it's

subsequent denial on the grounds that it could only proceed with the rescinding of the 1989 decision prohibiting what is referred to as specialist meetings.

It is this group's opinion that the 1989 conference decision to prohibit specialist meetings should be rescinded for a few reasons.

Among the reasons that were discussed at our meeting it falls as follows:

It has been interpreted to only allow a very small set of meeting types, preventing the designation of meetings that fall into the following categories:

- Meditation Meetings (Step 11)
- Agnostics Meetings (Chapter 4)
- Non-english speaking meetings
- Youth oriented meetings
- Men oriented meetings
- Women oriented meetings
- LGBTQ+ oriented meetings
-

Regardless of the position of conference in relation to the 1989 decision, these meetings are still taking place, it's just that they are even more difficult to find because they are not listed in the directory.

It is an injustice to the suffering alcoholic that they are unable to find them in the directory – any meeting listed in the directory must follow tradition 3 and must be available to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking.

It has been laterally interpreted as a prohibition on **groups** with specific naming associated with them, for example:

- Women's groups
- Men's groups
- Alternate language groups
- Youth groups
- LGBTQ+ groups

The interpretation of the 1989 decision in relation to group naming is an overreach of the original decision, which clearly talks about meetings, and not about groups.

Meetings with specific orientations have always been a part of AA – allowing members to share honestly and openly on specific topics without fear of being judged, demeaned, or assaulted either verbally or physically.

Motion No. 5

Motion from area 8

At the group conscience of the Phoenix group on 6th April 2023, there was a decision to send forward a motion to conference. The motion is as follows. That Conference rescinds the decision of 1989 regarding specialist meetings

Motion No. 6

Motion from Area 14

The Wexford online meeting brought the motion below to Area 14 & asked that it be sent on to LIG. Motion That the 1989 conference decision be rescinded. That specialist meetings are allowed to be listed on AA website.

Motion No. 7

Motion to Conference from Corbally Group, Limerick (Group No. M120)

“That the 1989 Conference decision that “The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking” be rescinded”.

Worldwide: Some A.A.s come together as specialized A.A. groups — for men, women, young people, doctors, gays, and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender, or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group.

(Extract from “The AA Group- where it all begins” - Copyright AA USA, updated June 2019).

In Ireland: Some AA Groups hold specialised meetings with a focus on women, LGBTQ, Young People, etc. These meetings, although having a particular focus, open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender, or other distinction.

The Conference decision of 1989 prevents the listing of these Groups and Meetings outlined above on the AA Ireland website and AA Ireland directory. These Groups exist, these Meetings are taking place, and all the 1989 Conference decision does is make it more difficult for the suffering alcoholic to locate such Groups and Meeting if travelling within Ireland or visiting from abroad.

Motion No. 8

Motion to Conference from Salesians Group, Limerick (Group No. M133)

“That the 1989 Conference decision that “The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking” be rescinded”.

Worldwide: Some A.A.s come together as specialized A.A. groups — for men, women, young people, doctors, gays, and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender, or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group.

(Extract from “The AA Group- where it all begins” - Copyright AA USA, updated June 2019).

In Ireland: Some AA Groups hold specialised meetings with a focus on women, LGBTQ, Young People, etc. These meetings, although having a particular focus, open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender, or other distinction.

The Conference decision of 1989 prevents the listing of these Groups and Meetings outlined above on the AA Ireland website and AA Ireland directory. These Groups exist, these Meetings are taking place, and all the 1989 Conference decision does is make it more difficult for the suffering alcoholic to locate such Groups and Meeting if travelling within Ireland or visiting from abroad.

Motion No. 9

Motion to Conference from the Carrigtwohill Big Book & Step Group
(Group No. M261)

“To allow Groups to use a designator for their meetings, such as “young people”, “women”, “men”, “LGBTQIA+”, etc when listing their meetings in the directory”

Background

Groups using designators have existed for many decades, all over the world. For example, multiple examples of such designators can be seen in the official AA directors of the UK, Continental Europe, New York and San Francisco.

Motion No. 10

Motion Title: Specialist Meetings

On 2nd September 2023, Westport Social Service Centre AA Group Conscience (Group C75) would like the following motion brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion:

That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland remove mention of the term “specialist” meetings from the service handbook and adhere to Tradition 3, Concept 12 and Warranty 6.

Reason:

We understand the reason for its inclusion, but believe that it breaches Tradition 3, Concept 12, Warranty 6.

The Alcoholics Anonymous preamble states that “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking”.

The long form of Tradition Three states, “Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depends upon money or **conformity**. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

The Twelve Concepts for World Service, Concept Twelve, Warranty Six:

- no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles;
- each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes — it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally
- that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.

Some A.A.s come together as specialised A.A. groups — for men, women, young people, doctors, LGBT and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group.

The statement regarding “specialist” meetings adds an extra layer of requirements for

membership. We must **trust** in our sober members that NO alcoholic will ever be denied access to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Motion No. 11

***Tír na nÓg* YP Group – C189**

No. 4 St Augustine st,
Galway city, Galway co.

Motion Title – Revoke Wording on Page 22 of “A Service Handbook For Ireland”

Following Group conscience meeting held on 30/10/2023 *Tír na nÓg* YP Group (C189) wish the below motion to be delivered to the General Service conference 2024:

Group Motion:

That the general service conference remove wording contained on Page 22 of “A Service Handbook For Ireland,” commonly known as the green handbook, that reads “*Specialist Meetings..... The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking (Conference 1989).*”

Reasoning Behind Motion:

Tír na nÓg YP Group believe that the above-mentioned wording is in direct conflict of *Tradition 3* (Long Form) that expresses, AA forgoes rules of the privilege for membership, for members and groups alike, to be “inclusive...never exclusive.”

”

Furthermore that “These “special interest” groups offer only one instance of the diverse and inclusive membership within our Fellowship. Our Traditions allow unparalleled freedom, not only to every A.A. member, but to every A.A. group.” Contrary to the language used on page 22 of the green Handbook

Motion No. 12

MOTION FROM BOYLE THURSDAY MIDAY GROUP OF AA

“That Conference rescinds the 1989 decision in relation to specialist meetings and include all entities of membership in the AA Directory of Ireland “

Proposed by:

Boyle Thursday Miday Group at Group Conscience meeting on 16th November 2023.

Motion No. 13

Motion to Conference from Mallow Mercy AA Group (Group No. M77)

“That the minutes of the GSBAA’s Annual General Meeting be issued to all members of the company and all who sit at that meeting who are also members of Conference and that this be done in a timely manner-(as with minutes of Conference)”.

Additional Information

All members of our company are members “only” by virtue of the fact that they are “firstly” members of Conference., the minutes of the company AGM could be attached to the Conference minutes.

Reason for Motion

To assist the conference structure in carrying out its primary object, to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic (this includes all members in service) the conference structure being an important part of governance of AA “the charity”

Additional Comments

With the 2022 changes to charity law the board must delegate its operational responsibilities to a committee of those in the service of carrying out the primary object of the charity, of which the board has custodial oversight (as in our 12 Concepts of Service).

The publication of the AGM minutes is supported by the constitution’s main objects in tradition 9, which states the board must be responsible to those it serves. This is also supported by the companies act section 1183(3)-it remains the duty of the directors to observe any limitations on their powers flowing from the C.L.G.’s objects

Motion No. 14

Motion to Conference from Mallow Mercy AA Group (Group No. M77)

“To reverse the decision to incorporate our Conference”.

Reason

Conference delegates do not need legal powers, they have all the powers they need from our Traditions and Concepts for Service and from the General Warranties of the Conference (Concept 12)

Example (1):

Concept 7 states - 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 A.A. purse for its final effectiveness. One such very important example is that the conference must ensure that the company never becomes self-supporting by way of going into Business and that it abides by the "Corporate Poverty" element of Tradition 7 as outlined in the 12x12 book (page 165).

Example (2):

We are all "Trusted Servants" as in Tradition 2, this tradition died on the day that our conference became incorporated. A servant cannot serve two masters. As members of the Company, they must favour the Company to the detriment of the Conference, we cannot be structured by two conflicting constitutions.

Additional Information:

Our conference structure was set up in 1970 in accordance with the U.S.A service handbook.

The U.S.A had its first conference in 1951 and in 1955 "a resolution" was passed at that conference making conference the successor to the founders of the fellowship- this was agreed by the trustees who would now have the appointment of trustees ratified by conference and would be directed by conference, this gives conference a legal status.

The 1955 resolution gave conference all the power they needed without incorporating the conference.

The 2017 resolution to incorporate the Irish conference was not needed.

In Ireland the structure is the same. In 1968 A.A held its first conference and put in place the trustees and in 1978 they incorporated the trustees under the 1973 companies act, in which the conference and the trustees were recognised as separate entities, because conference could ratify the selection of the trustees, this is why at that time we had to have "group accounts".

Nothing has changed, conference (unincorporated) with its sitting trustees will always be superior to any company it may put in place, (company law).

Motion No. 15

Motion to Conference from Patrick's Hill Cork First Group (Group No. M50)

“That when a member commits to a term of office as an officer at any level in A. A., they should finish out that term before they go forward for another position”.

Motion No. 16

Motion to Conference from Passage West Group (Group No. M82)

“Any recommendations from a subcommittee to Conference should not be passed. The recommendations should go to the groups”.

Background

As stated in the October minutes of Cork City Area the Trustee’s Report to Munster Intergroup outlined that 2 subcommittees were formed at Conference 2023. These committees are to report back to Conference in March 2024.

3. A subcommittee to examine the current structural relationship between Conference and the GSBAA subsequent to motions to Conference in 2023 regarding this matter.
4. A subcommittee to examine the current method by which motions are brought to Conference. This subcommittee was formed arising from the observations of observers from Ireland’s Conference who attended the recent GB Conference. Concerns were raised over the possible implementation of such recommendations at Conference 2024 with the express hope that any recommendations brought to Conference are brought back to the groups before being voted on at Conference.

Motion No. 17

Motion to Conference from Passage West Group (Group No. M82)

“That Conference cannot set up a subcommittee unless it is in response to a motion from a group”.

Background

As stated in the October minutes of Cork City Area the Trustee's Report to Munster Intergroup outlined that 2 subcommittees were formed at Conference 2023. These committees are to report back to Conference in March 2024.

3. A subcommittee to examine the current structural relationship between Conference and the GSBAA subsequent to motions to Conference in 2023 regarding this matter.
4. A subcommittee to examine the current method by which motions are brought to Conference. This subcommittee was formed arising from the observations of observers from Ireland's Conference who attended the recent GB Conference. Concerns were raised over the possible implementation of such recommendations at Conference 2024 with the express hope that any recommendations brought to Conference are brought back to the groups before being voted on at Conference.

Motion No. 18

Motion Title: Charity Number.

At the Group Conscience of the Salthill Zoomers Group (Group C199, listed by GSO as Galway City Good Morning Salthill) held online on 29 August 2023, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion:

That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland and its member groups be allowed to use the GSBAA charity number when opening bank accounts.

Reason:

To improve the capacity of each individual group to collect the Seventh Tradition and to increase the percentage of funds collected that is actually available to support the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous and the service structure of AA in Ireland, and to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

In the current financial environment, electronic banking and electronic funds transfers have become a requirement for everyone, including the groups of Alcoholic Anonymous. This is particularly true of on-line meetings, where the Seventh Tradition must be collected virtually.

More than ever before, individual groups must engage with commercial financial institutions and open accounts that will facilitate funds transfers, meaning that every group in Ireland has to face the pressure of bank fees in an effort to collect the Seventh Tradition. If the group were able to use the charity number, they would be able to set up these necessary accounts and perform those functions as a charity.

The Salthill Zoomers Group alone has paid more than four-hundred euros (€400) in bank fees over the past four years, just to maintain a basic account. The account for

this group does not have a bank card, nor does it allow on-line banking, because that would cost an additional two-hundred-fifty euros (€250) per year in fees, more than the cost of our annual on-line hosting fees.

Most banks offer preferential banking fees to holders of a Charity number, with some offering a 50% reduction in banking fees. In our group alone, that would have resulted in an additional two-hundred-fifty euros (€250) sent forward to Area and through the structure to GSO over the past four years. If all the individual groups in Ireland were all able to use the charity number, it might result in an additional €24,000 per year (800 groups x €30 / year) that would be available to carry the message.

Finally, over the past four years the Salthill Zoomers Group has sent forward over €3,000 in Seventh Tradition funds to GSO through the service structure, meaning that we are a member of the organization and have been acknowledged by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous as such. Since we are recognized as a part of the charity, we should be entitled to utilize the number.

Motion No. 19

Motion Title: Change the wording in the Service Handbook regarding the Official AA Website.

At the Group Conscience of the Salthill Zoomers Group (Group C199, listed by GSO as Galway City Good Morning Salthill) held online on 29 August 2023, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion:

That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland, remove the word "only" from the statement:

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

- Page 22 of the Service Handbook, also referenced on page 64.

Reason:

The word, "only," is restrictive and limits the capacity of the General Service Conference of AA in Ireland to serve the greater membership of Alcoholics Anonymous throughout Ireland.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a diverse fellowship and is geographically widespread throughout Ireland, and has found many ways to utilize the internet to improve connectivity and to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

There are many excellent on-line resources available in Ireland for newcomers seeking help, beyond the Official Website maintained by the GSBAA, but there is no reference to any of them on that official site, because of the restrictions imposed by that single word: "only."

By deleting this word, we encourage unity and inclusivity and we acknowledge the reality of our current world, where local groups, Areas, and Intergroups are already utilizing the reach of the web to provide information, support new members, and in many ways to extend the hand of AA. This action will permit the GSBAA to include on the Official Website links to other sites and to the wider fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

We live in an age where many problem drinkers begin their search for our message of hope on electronic devices, notice boards, social media, and a wide range of worldwide websites. The function of those platforms is to carry the message of AA to the problem drinker, as well as to the wider public, including professionals engaged with problem drinkers. The purpose of this motion is to authorize the General Service Conference of AA in Ireland to extend a hand to everyone seeking help or information, through acknowledgement of the existence of other sites that may be helpful - without any expectation that the GSBAA will necessarily approve or endorse them.

As a Reference:

In 2013, 10 years ago the GSO New York produced a detailed document of guidelines on the internet, from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada).

https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/mg-18_internet.pdf

Motion No. 20

At a group conscience meeting held on 8th September 2023 of the Summerhill Group in Drum community, Athlone, the following motion was agreed by all present concerning the Road Back magazine.

That the Road Back Magazine and Newsletters to be sent out to groups again in print form. "Multiple copies through a subscription".

As a group we have identified some reasons why the Road Back Magazine and Newsletters should be readily available in print again:

The group feel that moving the Road Back Magazine and Newsletter online is a disadvantage for members who may be unable to use technology. There are a diverse range of people and age profiles within the Association, some may be very confident

using the internet and online publications while others do not have any knowledge or access to the internet, email or smart phones.

Also, people in facilities such as Prisons, Garda Stations, Hospitals etc would not have access to the internet to access the Magazine.

We also note the reduction of the number of publications from bi-monthly to quarterly, why did this happen? If it was due to the lack of stories being submitted, using online platforms only will not aid this as some members will neither be aware or information of this request if they do not view the Magazine online.

We feel the Road Back Magazine and the Newsletter are fantastic publications, we used to provide any new members or people in the local prisons/hospitals with books when facilitating there.

We understand the need towards more sustainability and less paper-based information but for the large demographic of people we propose that the booklets are printed and supplied to groups again. A suggestion could be for each group to submit an application for the required number of books in advance of the printing to guide the printing numbers and to reduce waste.

Another suggestion from the group is to advertise the new publications using other accessible formats such as posters to each group with QR codes, telephone number for the head office to cater for those who may have difficulties with both technology and or read/writing/speaking etc. It is important to have an easily accessible service for member, at the end of the day the members of each local group donate at each meeting and this money is used for the Road Back Magazine and newsletter publications.

The road back has been the 2nd longest running book in the world after 'the grape wine' in the USA, it seems such a pity to let it be lost in realm of technology.

We ask that this motion is considered for all members but especially those who may have issues accessing the online publication.

Appendix E – National PI Subcommittee Report

National PI Subcommittee Report

The role of the National PI Subcommittee

The National PI Subcommittee aims to establish how we, working in cooperation with AA groups, areas, and intergroups can effectively carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers in the community. We seek to increase public awareness of AA in its programme for sobriety to ensure that it is freely available and accessible to all who seek help.

The focus of our National PI Subcommittee work

The key areas of our work are summarised and illustrated below.



What work are we doing and plan to do for national PI?

Linked to our areas of focus above, we have outlined below under each theme work in progress and other future planned activities to relay the message of recovery to those in need.

Connecting with other organisations

The National Subcommittee intends to connect with community professionals at a national level. These will include relevant stakeholders such as first responders (emergency services, PSNI/Gardai Siochana), professional bodies for health and social care professionals (e.g. Royal College of Physicians etc.), training bodies for professionals, community and voluntary organisations and other relevant networks (e.g. such as local drug and alcohol task forces).

We want to ensure that any third party can relay the AA message of recovery to those in need through this work. Practical PI work on this involves:

- Developing more relationships with other organisations to connect with professionals/community workers who meet people struggling with problem drinking to raise awareness of AA and what we do.
- Ensuring we have distributed AA PI information to other organisations so they can refer people to AA to get support and have our AA website links (where we can) on others' websites.
- Identifying opportunities where we can connect with the training of future professionals so they learn more about the work of AA.

Developing national social media

Social media is constantly changing and offers many platforms to relay the AA message. This is an area which we know needs to be substantially strengthened. This is a work in progress at its early stages which we will build step-by-step.

We have reviewed different platforms and are starting first with building our social media presence on X (formerly known as Twitter). Posts to this media platform are posted daily with GSO telephone and website details.

Linking with the media

Identifying and responding to media opportunities which enable us to build an understanding of what AA does to reach more people who are struggling is another area for development. Connecting and nurturing relationships with the media are also key to this work.

Examples of our recent national media work include the following:

UTV Christmas Campaign

The *One Minute to Change Your Life* animated film available on our AA website was screened on UTV for two weeks in late December/early January. It is estimated from figures obtained that 900.000 viewers would have seen this clip.

RTE Morning Ireland radio coverage

RTE. Radio One requested information regarding Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland in mid-January 2024. They were keen to know how many AA groups and meetings were held on the Island of Ireland and how many calls we were receiving for assistance from people with a drinking problem.

Media releases were provided to 21 radio stations nationally in January 2024 outlining who we are, what services AA provides, meetings held throughout the island etc. This radio piece was featured on *Morning Ireland* at the end of January and in subsequent news bulletins. [Click on this link to listen.](#)

Refreshing national PI AA resources

This is a priority area of our PI work. We want to refresh our national AA PI resources to improve the standard and professionalism of our public information and how it is delivered.

The National PI Subcommittee wishes to reach people struggling with problem drinking in local communities initially through traditional poster publicity in community hubs, meeting places doctor surgeries, hospitals etc.

In December 2023 we commissioned a graphic designer to work with us to design new posters. The poster templates we are designing include:

- Posters to send other organisations with AA contact information and details to connect people struggling with problem drinking to AA.
- National AA posters for general awareness raising (ideally including a QR which links to our national AA website).
- Poster templates which can be tailored to local contact points. It is envisaged that AA groups, areas, and intergroups will be able to download and access these poster templates from the AA website and use them as a tool for PI service locally.

We have designed a dedicated presentation to support our work connecting with other organisations at a national level. We will use this presentation when we have the opportunity to meet with other organisations that may encounter people who may have a drinking problem.

Small AA business cards are also being designed for other organisations and professionals to have and distribute.

Other resources we are exploring

Not just limited to print resources, the Subcommittee are also currently reviewing other mediums of outreach and connection. Stories of hope and recovery which we see in *The Road Back* are a powerful means of helping people take that first step to AA. Podcast development is something we are actively exploring as an additional way of carrying the AA message.

Encouraging PI service

The National PI Subcommittee has also designed a second presentation for groups, areas, and intergroups. This is titled *Getting Involved in PI* and emphasizes the need for public information at all levels of the AA structure. It is a tutorial on How to do Public Information service and why it plays such a vital role in Alcoholics Anonymous. This presentation will get its first airing at the forthcoming All Ireland Convention next month in Tullamore.

Exploring PI collaboration

The National PI Subcommittee is in the early stages of linking with Al-Anon to see where we can connect and identify appropriate opportunities for joint PI work to enhance our reach and awareness raising.

DRAFT

Appendix F - Conference Delegates Reports 2024

Clare Area Report

Clare Area meets on the last Thursday of the month and is attended on average by 30% of the groups in the Clare Area.

- It has three new officers, a telephone response secretary, a new PI Convenor and three MIG Representatives.
- Irrespective of the relatively new people in these positions, the Area meeting itself is held in an informative and respectful manner and is a pleasure to attend.
- The new PI Officer has already begun his term by having PI posters printed and ready to distribute to localities by the relevant groups with the Area contact number on them and is also engaging with local radio to have a member speak and get the word out to the public regarding who we are and what we provide.
- The Area has been asked by a treatment service to provide speakers for meetings within the centre, and this will begin soon
- Efforts are ongoing to increase the groups representation at Area and an afternoon's training on how to use and utilise the AA Mailboxes is just one effort to have the groups come together.
- Unfortunately, Clare Area has again decided (due to lack of background support) not to run a convention but this is hoped to change in 2025.
- An invitation to the Munster YPLO has been sent and a date that suits all is being finalised.
- The Area continues to forward all surplus funds through the structure.

Tom K

Limerick City Area Report

- Limerick City Area meets on the 3rd Monday of each month and is on average attended by 80% of the groups.
- In addition, it also has three officers, four Intergroup Representatives, telephone response, awaiting a new Public Information Convenor and a robust H&I committee.
- The four Intergroup Representatives keep the Area and the groups well informed as to what transpires at MIG and this alleviates any disconnect (real or perceived) within the Limerick Area.

- Telephone response has been quite busy over the past year and the new telephone secretary is building up a network of people to continue to make this service available to those members of the public that may use it.
- They will also be working with the incoming PI Convenor as to the range of calls they are receiving so that if targeting is required by PI they are aware of the demographics.
- The H&I Committee set up earlier last year has been a success, in large part to having an overall secretary that each of the services communicate to and not as stand-alone entities.
- Unfortunately, there is no H&I report to attach this year due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The Area recently agreed to seek a local YPLO representative for the area and to liaise with the Intergroup YPLO as per one of the suggestions brought by the provincial YPLO who attended Limerick City Area last year.
- The 2023 Area Convention was successful despite it being a Bank Holiday weekend and inclement weather (report in MIG minutes) and the 2024 Committee is working to make this year's even better.
- The fellowship in Limerick City continues to forward any surplus funds through the structure.
- The Area is also setting up a day where groups can be shown how to use and utilise the AA Mailboxes.

Tom K

Limerick County Area Report

- Limerick County Area continues to hold a monthly area meet in Rathkeale Co Limerick.
- It has a poor attendance record although this has picked up slightly in the last month or so.
- Numerous attempts at attracting representation from the groups has been unsuccessful, nevertheless the officers continue in their efforts to do so.
- They also have representation at MIG and are also actively involved in the Limerick Convention.
- They have indicated a desire to have the Munster YPLO at a future event to give a presentation.

Tom K

West Cork Area Report to Conference March 2024

The West Cork Area consists of 16 groups across a large geographical region. Area is well attended by the groups, and all groups have attended at least one meeting during the year. We are currently looking for a new Area Secretary and all the other Area office positions are filled. We have two Munster Intergroup delegates.

A Mini-Convention was held at the end of May at the Coolcower Hotel in Macroom. It proved to be a very successful Convention, helped by beautiful weather and the participation of the YPLO.

The telephone service is rotated between the groups with the handover taking place at each Area meeting. A detailed report is presented at each Area meeting and no serious issues were raised during the year.

There are no hospital meetings now, but we are in contact with two facilities to host weekly Open Hospital Meetings.

There is a very active PI Committee, and they are making great efforts to re-engage with schools and other institutions Post-Covid. There was a very successful open Public Meeting in January 2024. A local GP and Al-Anon spoke at this meeting.

Mick D.

Cork City Area Report to Conference 2024

There are 40 groups (approx.) in the Cork City Area. Over 20 groups attend the monthly meeting regularly, including one online group. This figure is slightly down on the previous year, when there was great enthusiasm following the removal of the Covid restrictions. Discussion is often lively and passionate, and the area is kept well informed by the intergroup delegates on what is happening throughout the structure. MI delegates visit groups to encourage members to get involved in service.

Great credit is due to the convenors for getting all the services up and running. Their persistence was vital in engaging with the institutions involved.

The Hospital Committee holds 4 meetings a week in 3 institutions. The groups rotate monthly to provide speakers for these meetings. Recently, additional members were added to the Committee. A recent request from Sarsfield Court Hospital for an Open Hospital meeting had to be passed to the North/East Cork area as we couldn't provide sufficient members to run the meeting. The Hospital Committee Secretary is rotating out of service shortly, having played a pivotal role in re-establishing the live hospital meetings.

Cork City Area holds an Open Public Meeting on the first Tuesday of every month. Despite the best efforts of a very dedicated Secretary this service is proving problematic. Parking can be an issue at the venue, leading to difficulties accessing the room. However, some newcomers have had their first introduction to AA thanks to this service.

There has been a significant change in focus with the Public Information Committee. There is an effort to engage with the frontline responders, who experience firsthand

contact with suffering alcoholics. PI is letting them know of the services that are provided by AA.

The Prison runs one meeting a week in Cork prison. Again, great persistence by our Prison Secretary was vital in re-opening this service. Efforts are being made to increase the number of members to help maintain this service.

Cork City Area runs a Literature Bank. It is open for an hour before the Area meeting begins and enables the GSR's to purchase literature for their groups. Going well now.

2023 saw the return of our Mini-Convention, held in Blarney during March. This was well supported and successful. It was great to see the fellowship in action during the weekend. The 2024 Mini-Convention in Cobh will be held the weekend before Conference.

Mick D.

Area reports of Kerry and North/East Cork For 2024 meeting of conference

Just to note I became conference delegate on January 1st this year.

Kerry Area report

The Kerry area is made up of 32 groups. All towns and most villages are represented. Luckily in Kerry you never have to travel too far to get to a meeting.

The area meetings are held in The Brandon hotel on the first Tuesday of every month at 8pm. Where groups GSR meet to discuss business. Kerry areas are very fortunate to have all service positions filled at top table. This is made possible by the 7/8 groups who are in regular attendance at area. It is a shame that more groups don't attend as it's a well-run productive meeting. It can always seem it's the same members asked to do the service positions. Area minutes are well taken and sent out in a timely manner via email and post. Groups in Kerry are good for running open public meetings. As a result of feedback from Munster intergroup members present where reminded to share where possible the positives of service and area. Group insurance is always well supported and utilized.

Phone service

Groups who visit the area are given an opportunity to do phone service on a rotating monthly basis. This is a great service as with people visiting Kerry looking for meetings its helpful and also the suffering alcoholic and concerned person. With the phone there is an updated list of meetings.

Public information

The newly energized committee is up and running. The committee meets regularly and has definite plans going forward to inform the community about Alcoholics Anonymous.

Kerry area convention

Another successful weekend for the convention committee and members of Kerry area. Record numbers again of just under 400 registered and countless more attending who didn't. To add to the meetings there was song dance and plenty of chat.

Attendance at Munster intergroup.

Kerry has been well represented at intergroup. This has a positive effective on Kerry area and the GSRs as they are well informed as to what going on with the other areas and GSO

Hospital meeting

Unfortunately, area haven't been able to get back into the hospital to re start meetings since covid. Not from the want of trying. Area is now trying another approach to get in contact with the powers to be. Hopefully it won't be long till they get re started.

Motions to conference

Kerry haven't sent any motion to conference 2024

To the year ahead.....plans are being put in place for the yearly convention. PI have exciting plans. 3 incoming Munster delegates with outgoing delegate Lorna going to intergroup treasure and Linda to conference delegate. Also, a date for diary the convention is on November 9th 10th and 11th in the Brandon hotel.

North and East Cork Area

The area meetings have continued to rotate for most of the year with lately meetings been held in Carrigtwohill' though perhaps the one location might provide regularity. Normally GSRs would travel a distance to area. Area reimburses for travel expenses at 30c a km. Paid at the end of area. Each group GSR is asked for a brief word at their meeting. This is handy as everyone present can help each other. More groups would be welcome of courses. The group insurance scheme is well subscribed.

Hospital meeting

Cork city has asked for the area's help with hosting and facilitating meetings in Sarsfield court. The area is to help where possible.

Phone service

The phone service is going well with different groups taking the phone monthly. Area has guidelines around phone service to support the service position.

Munster intergroup

Unfortunately, the area could be better represented in intergroup at times when there are no delegates present. Gladly though there is now one new delegate. Going forward it is something to work on promoting. Sponsorship into service. Promote the opportunity to be an observer. Also, the area was privileged to have John T outgoing conference delegate for last 4 years.

Public information

The area is lucky to have great support here. Recently they produced meeting cards with QR code to show local meeting information. Very handy. PI could also do with some more committee members, but the message is getting out there to the community.

Cork County Convention

This years convention was held in Coolcower House in Macroom 26th – 28th May. It was well attended and supported.

Area Group Inventory

I actually chaired this meeting. I found it most beneficial to the people present to be able express their opinions in a safe respectful environment. I felt some GSRs present got to air some resentments. It was felt some GSRs took over the meeting to their own agenda. Going forward more "law and order" from the chairperson. As in try to keep it to those who have their hands up and no cross sharing negatively.

Motions to conference

Motion from mallow mercy aa group (m77)

- 1) That the minutes of the GSBAA's Annual General Meeting be issued to all members of the company and all who sit at that meeting who are also members of conference and that it is done in a timely manner (as with minutes of conference)
- 2) To reverse the decision to incorporate our conference

Going forward for the year ahead I hope the feedback from the group inventory will positively enhance the overall service and fulfillment of been a GSR and perhaps go further in the service structure. A date for the diary the Cork County convention end of May 2024 in Coolcower House Macroom.

SYNOPSIS REPORT 2023

ROSCOMMON, SOUTH LETRIM, ATHLONE AREA REPORT

Area:

Our Area comprises of 16 groups, of which 4 – 6 groups attend our area meetings which are held every 6 weeks. We are beginning to see an improvement, because of

our 1st Open Day since Covid 19. As a result, 3 new members have joined Area, from our Open Day Committee. One person hopes to take up the position of P.I and the other to take up position of Secretary, as we did not have an official Secretary, (one person did stepped in to take relevant notes which were sent on to Intergroup). This will be good for our Area going forward.

We got a notice from GSO in our Area, where a school requested through the website, giving all their details of the school (size etc.) to have AA speakers come in for a talk. After some time, we got suitable speakers to attend, which was very successful according to the feedback from the teacher involved and other teachers.

The school has now requested AA to attend again in a Wellness Week which we want to attend with the help of our P.I person.

It is a fantastic A.A facility where the school "puts the handout looking for our help", requesting speakers. This facility had to be taken down from our web site due to all the problems within service and since Covid19 etc.

I believe P.I will get up and running, going forward and the facility on the AA website for schools could be put back up on the website as soon as we have speakers through P.I and liaison with other P.I in other areas.

Also, in the last couple of months AA meetings in Castlerea prison have recommenced on a small scale at the moment, through our prison co-ordinator.

Kind regards,

Joe B

Mayo Area Report 2023 To Conference.

Mayo Area hold their Area Meetings every eight weeks at different venues around the county so as to try and attract more members to attend Area. There are 29 groups in Mayo. 54 physical and 24 on-line meetings held weekly. Mayo have no PI convener at the moment, but there is plenty of PI work been done by other members. Last year we held four Open Public Meetings, we held a Day of Gratitude. Posters updated, distributed to Garda barracks, Community Centres. Starter packs put in doctors surgeries. Stickers put on Bottle banks with the helpline number on them. We are also linked to a phone service to provide help to people. We also sent speakers into Schools to talk to the students. Mayo Area is doing well. Meetings are well attended. Mayo Area contributed €13,000 to Connaught Intergroup.

John G. GSCD

Galway Area Report to Conference 2024

Meetings

Galway Area meetings are held every six weeks in the Galway Bay Hotel. Attendance varies with many groups not represented by GSRs. Area meetings are hybrid with an

Online platform provided for a small number of members who cannot attend in person.

Attendance and functioning of groups are reported on by GSR's and others attending. Such reports include such items as attendance, venues, frequency, finance and Group Secretary and Treasurer vacancies. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a strong shift back to physical meetings post Covid restrictions. A smaller number of well attended online group meetings remain and indications are, they will continue into the future.

Public Information

The PI committee became defunct for a short period after the previous convenor rotated out. However, the committee was reconvened with the election of a new convenor. There was an appeal to groups for members to join the committee or help out in whatever capacity they could.

The traditional method of putting an Advertisement in the local paper continues. This is done in the *Galway Advertiser* weekly.

The evidence remains that younger people's preferred choice of accessing information is through social media and online platforms. After a lapse of the Social Media Sub-Committee a strong attempt was made at the most recent Area meeting to reinvigorate this sub-committee with a view to increasing Area's (and AA generally) presence on Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Communications

475 subscribers are receiving notifications by email, on meeting changes, updates, local events such as open public meetings and conventions and other relevant AA information.

There is an ongoing campaign by Area to encourage groups to fill the GIS. This information is crucial at local and national level. Groups are informed that their presence will not appear on the printed national directory of national website if the GIS is not filled in.

Group Insurance

Galway Area continues to provide a service to the rest of Connacht regarding Group Insurance. The current cost to each group is €50 per annum which is paid to Galway Area. Area in turn pays a bulk premium to the insurance company. Receipts are issued to each group when they pay.

Phone Service

Galway Area continues to provide a localised phone service via a mobile phone 085 753 7100 which is publicised by PI committee. This is manned from 12 noon to 10pm 7 days a week. The Phone Convenor redirects all calls to the next responder for the coming week every Sunday. Persons wishing to do phone service are required to view

a twenty-minute video plus a twenty-minute Power Point Presentation briefing on the 'Dos', 'Don'ts' and guidelines for safe and ethical phone service, before they are placed on the panel of responders. Responders are strongly advised to remove their personal or business identification from their personal mobile greeting (that would identify them or break their anonymity) before having the published number forwarded to their phone.

A recent analysis for a two-year period reveals that there were 359 calls as follows -

Meeting info 143 (40%)

Other 70 (20%)

Help for self 64 (18%)

Member queries 36 (10%),

Help family 32 (8%)

Help for a friend 12 (4%)

Other/Unclassified 2 (4%)

The total cost to Area for telephone was €405.

There continues to be a marked increase in meeting information enquiries during the summer holiday period.

Positions – Filling vacant positions continues to be a struggle. Galway Area is seeking Connacht IG delegates. Fortunately, Phone and PI Convenor positions were filled during the year.

Convention

The Galway Area held its 49th annual convention in the Galway Bay Hotel from 5th to 7th January 2024. Attendance was up considerably with 750 members registering. There was a packed to capacity public meeting on Friday night and a 'Round Ireland' closing meeting on Sunday morning. There were well attended, themed marathon meetings running concurrently starting on the hour and half hour. Workshops, literature, entertainment and a new *Talent Show* were provided with large participation in all areas.

An almost half page article on the convention and AA generally was published in a local newspaper as well posters mailed to all groups, advertisements and the use of social media platforms.

A full report on attendance, finances, difficulties and successes will be reported to next Area meeting by the Conference Committee at the March 2024 Area meeting.

Connacht Conference Delegate Report 2023-2024

Sean C.

Sligo/North Leitrim

This is my final report as Conference delegate and I am privileged to serve in this position.

2023 was a busy year in Connacht Intergroup with all meetings returning to normal face to face meetings and many online meetings still taking place as well. As well as the Galway Area convention, which is always well attended, Mayo Area and Roscommon South Leitrim held 2 very successful days of gratitude in November 2023. Meetings in the Sligo North Leitrim Area are generally going well, some with attendances increasing, these are the daytime meetings and some that are struggling for attendance and anchor members.

Connacht Intergroup had the privilege of having 3 Munster Intergroup members attend the January 2024 meeting and I hope this attendance by the various Intergroups attending other Intergroups will continue.

The areas and Intergroup continued to forward surplus monies through the structure although some meetings in the Sligo North Leitrim area still forward their surplus directly to GSO.

As mentioned in my report last year, and a big concern during this year again was the numbers of members attending area, many groups were consistently not represented and concern was also voiced at many area meetings about some long time members that were giving negative commentary about area and intergroup service which we thought is against the spirit of AA and is damaging to AA as a whole and is not acceptable and contrary to Tradition 1. The area is committed to continue to look at ways of encouraging all groups to send at least one member to area. The concern at area is that attendance is low and that current members are in their positions longer than the suggested period.

The prison meetings at Loughan House are now being organised by members of the Fermanagh area of Ulster Intergroup. This is working out well, with well attended meetings each Thursday night and some members of the Sligo North Leitrim area are still on the meeting rota.

I am also privileged to serve on the YPLO Sub Committee with a number of other conference delegates from Ulster, Leinster and Munster. It is a pleasure to report that there is 4 YPLO officers in place, one in each of the four provinces. These young members are a pleasure to work with and are working hard to encourage young people in to service in the fellowship and carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic, young and not so young. We can look forward to hearing how this exciting group of people will grow and help our fellowship in the coming years and will provide younger members serving at Conference in the coming years.

I also had the privilege of serving on the sub-committee looking into 2 motions brought forward at last years Conference and grateful that this committee worked well to bring a final report to Conference this year.

PI is a concern in this area as well. Sligo/North Leitrim is still looking for members to serve in this area. Despite this there was a lot of PI work going on in the area during the past year including 2 school talks. We also held a day of gratitude on February 3rd in Strandhill Campus.

We are delighted with our new Trustee, James O S, who has been doing fantastic work in Connacht Intergroup and at Conference and Board level since his appointment.

The phone service is working really well with approximately 30 members offering their time to cover the phone for a week at a time. Well done to James O S for his great service.

Positions are available at Intergroup for Treasurer, Phone Convenor Prison Convenor and PI. We are also very short of Intergroup Delegates and we are encouraging all areas to send their full quota of 4 members from each area to Intergroup.

I wish outgoing Conference members for Connacht Joe B and Hubert J, all the very best for the future.

Indeed I wish all outgoing, current and new conference delegates the very best in 2024.

I look forward to attending this 2024 Conference in Santry which will be my last Conference as Conference Delegate.

Yours in Service

Sean C.

Report to Conference

It has been a transitioning year in many ways but as they say, despite all the difficulties we as an Intergroup I feel we got through with room to spare, due the exemplary work undertaken by the outgoing OMC Committee, so many thanks for your Service.

I undertook to pay visits to most Areas in Ulster, always communicating and advising and helping where I could with Area events and activities. Advising on Financial difficulties some Areas have encountered and working out a solution. Helping and encouraging Workshops and PI Events is important and it will be a prim objective to deliver in 2024, so lots to do.

During my first year I have attended Conference and found it interesting and was able to contribute to the debates around Motions. Was particularly pleased that the 2 Motions from Ulster got through.

I was also involved in the Code of Conduct debate.

Ulster held the All-Ireland Convention in Monaghan earlier in the year and it was a privilege to serve as Treasurer for that event for a number of reasons. The event was a success and more importantly it was a great Committee to be part of, and a Special

thanks to Barbara, UIG Treasurer for her diligence and assistance in me carrying out this role.

It was also a comfort working with Seamus, our Trustee as part of this Committee, and I wish to convey my best wishes to him.

I'm looking forward to working with Kenny P our new Trustee as there is lots to do in 2024.

We met the Board informally this year in Armagh which I found helpful.

The Ulster Intergroup Inventory next year should be beneficial to Ulster as it will define where we are and what we can deliver better on.

I have attended Leinster Intergroup during the summer and was made very welcome.

I've hosted the GSCDs Online meetings where asked and try and make a Positive impact.

Finally, I would like to thank my GSCD colleagues for all their hard work during this year and appreciated all the help, support and advice.

Looking forward to 2024 and will endeavour to encourage Areas to be more proactive to Public information, Area Inventories, Workshops and to encourage Area Attendance.

In December 2023 I was invited onto the National PI Subcommittee. I have been working in partnership with my fellow Subcommittee members into delivering an up-to-date and structured plan for the Fellowship internally and externally to help us Carry the Message better and start delivering on Our Primary Purpose.

In Fellowship,

Brian D.
GSCD
Ulster

Conference Report 2024

James McK – Ulster Intergroup

This was my first year as a GSCD having previously served as the Intergroup Secretary and it was a privilege to be of service. In Ulster all the Conference Delegates rotate around all the areas and I visited all the functioning Areas over the last year. There are 10 Areas in Ulster 9 designated by county and an additional area for Belfast. Cavan Area did not function during the past year, though there continues to be several groups operating in the county, 2 of which attend Fermanagh Area. All Area meetings are physical except for Antrim which is still online.

I continued to be a part of Conference's YPLO subcommittee, while progress has been slow in Ulster, it's great to have Maurice onboard as a YPLO. Other provinces have

made progress at different paces and it's great to see the position fulfilling part of its quest with the Leinster YPLO has now been appointed as a GSCD.

Some Areas have continued to struggle getting all access to their financial dealings straightened out, but some progress is being made. All the GSCD's encourage Areas to try and resolve these challenges which are mostly connected to the change of officers at Area level, this problem does seem to trickle down to Groups and is often voiced at Area meetings. Donegal Area also struggled with the closure of Ulster Bank in ROI but did finally manage to get all funds through to the Intergroup. Treasures handbooks have been distributed at many Area meetings and the Intergroup intends to run a workshop for Treasures in the early part of this year. Some money is being sent straight to GSO rather than through structure as there was a belief that because the office in Belfast is now closed that the money should now flow that direction. Ulster Intergroup can accept Euro and Sterling contributions from all Areas.

A few Areas did hold inventories this year and hopefully that will flow through to Groups. It does take some time to work through the findings but does help to answer some questions which I am sure variations of are being asked across all Areas in Ireland, including why the few are serving the many and how it might feel for a newcomer into service. A couple of further Area's are currently in discussion about holding inventory meetings in the early part of this year and Ulster Intergroup itself has one on the agenda for the first quarter of 2024.

Holding inventory meetings over the past year has helped some of the Areas to look closer at their effort at fulfilling the primary purpose and hopefully this year we will see Fermanagh and Derry running Days of Gratitude in their respective Areas which had not happened in a long number of years. Donegal Area has plans to run a Day of Gratitude as well as a Convention. Antrim, Armagh, Belfast, Down & Tyrone all ran successful Day's of Gratitude over the past year with Donegal also having hosted a convention than ran very well. Ulster hosted a successful 2023 All Ireland Convention in Monaghan on behalf of the Board and all Areas within Ulster played a part.

There have been some discussions around Areas about the carriage cost on literature coming from GSO, for Ulster this is only a change in point of payment for postage etc. The Intergroup previously picked up these costs up when literature was coming to Areas via the CSO office in Belfast. Areas and Groups forwarded money through the service structure, and it was recorded as an expense at Intergroup level.

Change is a big part of AA, with change talked about in over 40 sections of the Big Book and the 12 & 12. This year saw a lot of big changes in Ulster with the closure of the CSO office in Belfast bringing out some of the pain that comes with change. Some Areas felt the closure more than others with those closest to Belfast generally having occasionally made use of the ability to pop in to collect literature etc. A special thanks needs to go to last year's former UIG office management committee members who

handled more work in one difficult year than multiple previous years combined. They also got strongly behind telephone service and communication helping in the transition.

A telephone coordinator has been appointed at Intergroup and a committee formed of members from various Areas now with a rotating GSCD presence, to handle the management and rota setting on inbound telephone calls previously captured by the Belfast office and the weekend service that was already previously covered by Areas. There seems a great willingness amongst Areas to take their turn at providing cover and several online workshops have taken place to help members into this area of service. Telephone service is mentioned at all Area Meetings.

Post pandemic hospital service by Areas has been slow to recover with much of the challenge being with the institutions afraid to bring additional visitors to site. All Areas are providing cover to the facilities in their respective Areas albeit in some cases still online. Hospital reports are a part of all Area meetings and contact is being maintained with the management teams at all the facilities.

Prisons in Ulster are in Antrim, Belfast & Derry Areas but Fermanagh does assist with Loughlin House even though it is in Cavan, it is geographically closer to many Fermanagh Groups. Tyrone does have members doing prison service in other Areas and this is something that I personally would like to get more involved in coordinating in the coming year since Ulster has been unable to fill the prison coordinator's role at Intergroup in a while. There are members willing to do prison service in Areas that don't have a prison or that the meeting times in their own Area do not suit.

Ulster had no PI Convenor over the last year, but one was appointed at last November's AGM which should help motivate members. PI had been functioning at different levels over the past year dependant upon the Area with several Areas having had no action at all. I did assist Antrim and Belfast Area who had a joint workshop last summer with over 40 in attendance include members from a couple of other Areas.

Ulster Delegate Report

My Name is John, and I am an alcoholic.

It is hard to believe that this is my 3rd Annual General Meeting as a GSCD, as I move into my final year of service.

Over the past year I have visited most of the areas in Ulster Intergroup at least a couple of times and have been made very welcome on all occasions. However, it does sadden me to see that there was so much apathy out there in the general membership to do any service. The attitude seems to be let some one else do it I can't be bothered, or I don't have the time etc.

It reminds me of a saying I once heard about a job that needed done and it is "There was a job that **anybody** could do, but **everybody** said let's leave the job to **somebody** else to do it, but in the end of the day **nobody** done the job." In saying that can you imagine if Public Information, Service to groups, Area, Ulster Intergroup or God forbid 12th step work, were not carried out were the fellowship would be.

I was always told that if you were asked to do something in Alcoholics Anonymous you should do it, if at all possible and I still do that.

On the good side of things, I have been very impressed by the dedication and commitment of all the Area Officers I have met in my journey so far.

Most areas have been very active throughout the year organising Open Meetings, Public Information Meetings, Days of Gratitude, etc

Most areas have attended Ulster Intergroup through out the year with varying numbers of delegates. It would be nice to see all areas attend with a full complement of delegates.

One of the main things that caused a lot of unrest in groups and areas alike was the closure of the Central Service Office in Belfast. This closure was carried out in a well documented manner and was all done through structure. In the end of the day it was completed successfully due to the hard work of a small group of people, who done a fantastic job.

As always, I reminded areas that the Group Information sheets needed to be completed and returned through structure. This information is used for a number of things group contacts, meeting times, 12th Step work and so on. This information was also used for the publication of our directory which has been recently re published. All areas and groups should check their data and get it corrected if wrong through the submission of a new GIS sheet.

The big event for Ulster Intergroup was the all-Ireland convention held in April in the Hill Grove Hotel in Monaghan. This was a resounding success and everyone that I spoke to had a very enjoyable convention. Meeting old friends and new. This was all made possible by the members of this intergroup who all carried out the duties asked of them and most importantly working as a team for the good of the fellowship.

I have also attended Conference along with four other delegates from Ulster and the Ulster Trustee. Conference dealt with all its business, which can be found in the Conference Report. In my travels around areas, I have also reminded them that any motions for conferences should be submitted sooner than later.

Our Ulster Trustee stood down recently and in accordance with the procedure in the green handbook a new trustee was selected. I would like to welcome Kenny and look forward to working with him again.

In closing, I would like to thank all the officers of the various areas the officers of Ulster Intergroup and our previous trustee Seamus B for all the help and support given freely over the past year.

Finally, as I will not see a lot of you good people before the end of the year, I would like to wish one and all a happy, prosperous and sober Christmas and new year. It is hard to believe that there is only 29 sleeps to the big day.

Thank you

REPORT ON AREAS (LEINSTER) FOR CONFERENCE 2024

Leinster Intergroup consists of 14 area committees. Areas 3 & 4 are amalgamated. The 4 Leinster GSCD's attend the regular, allocated, monthly area committee meetings in Leinster. We rotate annually within the areas that we attend. We also attend the General Service Conference.

The purpose of attending at the area committee meetings is to act as a liaison between the Area committee, Intergroup meetings & Conference. We also offer support & assist the them where we can.

Some area's are well attended & some area's are poorly attended. The majority of closed meetings are now physical, with a minority of online meetings. A number of groups have reported losing their premises due to Covid eg HSE premises. In some cases, new meeting places have been established.

In order to have up to date information on the AA website & in directories, Group information sheets (GIS) must be completed with up to date Group information & forwarded to GSO. We find that some groups are not updating these despite our plea's.

The issues of concern for some groups & discussed at the area committee meetings include:

1. Difficulty in encouraging members to volunteer as GSR's to attend at the area committee, & where there are problems encouraging members to attend at Area, it then follows, that there is a lack of members to participate at Intergroup where there are ongoing issues filling service roles eg Leinster Public information Convenor, prison Convenor etc.

3. Group conscience -Regular group conscience meetings should be held to discuss all issues related to the groups, which include contributions to the groups from the members & the forwarding of finance through the structure. It is in the best interest of AA that all contributions made are properly accounted for.

4. It is also the role of group conscience to nominate members to attend at area meetings.

TELEPHONE SERVICE REPORT

There is a newly elected Leinster telephone Convenor Mal McD.

Twelve of the Areas between them share the 6 Afterhours Telephones (with the exception of Area 11). The phones are reported to be busy. Members who handle the after-hours phone service, constantly state the importance of all Groups registering their meeting times and venues immediately with GSO, so that an updated Directory is available to them when answering enquiries.

PRISON SERVICE REPORT

Out of the 13 meetings running in Dublin, three of them are in Mountjoy prison with another 8 up and running well. At these meetings, they have a core group attending on a weekly basis. An Open AA meeting once a month via zoom is being considered.

The Prison sub committee hosts information evenings for those who wish to get involved. There are currently approx 40 active members doing service.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICE

We currently have no Leinster PI Convenor, however we are continuing to try encourage members to the role.

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Appendix G - 22nd European Service Meeting Report

AA IN A CHANGING WORLD

20th to 22nd October 2023

York, England

Tom D and Moira S attended as World Service Delegates for Ireland. It was a very rich and rewarding weekend with 32 countries represented by a total of 70 members. The ESM is of great benefit in the sharing of experience, strength and hope between our different countries and is especially valuable for newer countries in the structure.

Registration took place from 2.00pm to 3.30pm on Fri 20th Oct 2023 and Conference was opened at 4.00pm by Ranjan B, the General Secretary of the European Information Centre who read preamble and the meeting chair Tobias D Denmark welcomed delegates before the 12 Traditions were read. Tobias then gave a moving Opening address.

Irene D, the International Coordinator of the US / Canada General Service Office in New York, gave a keynote address and led a very informative Q & A. The process of creating the 5th edition of the Big Book is ongoing; 2600 new stories have been elicited online and a committee of five are sifting through these to bring them down to hundred stories, and then perhaps to fifty for final consideration. The historical stories of significance will be retained along with some of these new stories.

The 2022 World Service Meeting Report was presented by Elena S Lithuania and Iza A. Poland.

Bob W., the General Manager of the General Service Office in New York, gave a report on the AA World Service Translation and Licensing Publishing Project. We are pleased to say that Ireland contributed €10, 000 to the International Literature Fund in 2023. The fund provides financial support where needed and most recently supported the translation of the Big Book into Kenyan and sent literature to Tanzania. Other key current activities include the expansion of eBook Licenses.

Members broke into groups for the three main committees: SERVICE, RECOVERY and UNITY. Experience was shared on the following themes: *How our different countries liaise with the media; How our countries involve non-alcoholics in service; What the compositions of our different GS Boards are; How our countries help people with Twelve Steps; and How countries deal with gender neutral language.* Each meeting was 3 hours duration with 30 minutes devoted to agreeing final report.

Once finalised, presentations were given to all attendees by the chairs of the Committees. These were followed by an open discussion in the form of a Q&A session. The day ended with a closed AA meeting entitled *We may refuse none who wish to recover: Inclusivity in AA*. (Daniel G. of Romania and Moira S. of Ireland shared their experience strength and hope). The meeting closed 10.00pm with Serenity Prayer.

In addition to the Committees, there were workshops with members sharing their countries experiences on pertinent questions: *How we take our groups' inventories; Love and tolerance is our code; and How our countries are keeping the history of AA alive*. Workshops were 2 hours 45 minute with 30 minutes of that to finalise reports.

Conference resumed at 09.15am on Sunday 22nd with presentations of the Workshop reports and at 10.15am there was a 30-minute slot for Q&A and open discussion. Ranjan B, led a healthy discussion on race and specialist groups and how they are a bridge to normal A.A. He remarked that they became necessary in the UK due to racism, homophobia and sexism within the fellowship.

The 23rd European service meeting in 2025 will be in York and Moira S. Ireland was elected to chair. The theme will be *Unifying and Safeguarding our Fellowship*. Delegates Jony F. of The Netherlands and Maija T. of Latvia were selected to prepare the ESM report for the WSM in 2024 in New York and then report back to ESM in 2025.

An agenda committee for the 2025 ESM was formed comprising Moira S. Ireland (Chair), Pascal D. Belgium (Flemish) – Service Committee chair, Dunja P. Croatia – Recovery Committee chair and Regis C. French speaking Europe – Unity Committee chair.

Ranjan addressed the matter of a £28,279.23 surplus and explained that it had been held in an old account. It was unanimously agreed to send it on to the WSM fund.

Second term delegates from four countries were invited to give closing addresses: Nevena B. from Bulgaria, Elena S. from Lithuania, Jo F. from Great Britain and Dany DeB. from Flemish speaking Belgium.

Tobias gave his closing address and each country was called upon to say the serenity prayer in native tongue. Moira did so in Irish.

Moira S. WSD2 and Tom D. WSD1, Ireland

Appendix H - All Ireland Convention 2023 Report

The All-Ireland Convention was held in the Hillgrove Hotel Monaghan 28th to 30th April 2023. A total of 602 people registered, all provinces were represented with visitors from England, Scotland America and Canada. Overall it was a very successful weekend, this was the first time our newly proposed Young People's Liaison Officers were given an opportunity to outline their present roll in the AA structure in Ireland, Marathon meetings were well attended throughout the weekend, and normal opening meeting, public information meeting international forum meeting ,around Ireland meeting, and closing meeting were all on the weekend programme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the convention committee: Barbara, Joanne, James, Brian D, Brian G, Billy and John, for the work carried out on the weekend also all the preparation work carried out before the event.

I would also like to thank Seamus B the then Trustee for his leadership and all the hard work he did to ensure Literature and the Archives arrived in Monaghan on time for the convention.

Thanks to the Board of Alcoholics Anonymous for trusting the organising to the Ulster Intergroup and their attendance at the convention.

The financial report is included below.

Kenny P Ulster Trustee

ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2023			
Hillgrove Hotel Monaghan		28 – 30 APRIL 2023	
FINANCIAL REPORT			
Income	Qty	Fee	Total £
Registration	602	15	9,030
Dance	152	10	1,520
Literature Sales			1,160
TOTAL INCOME			11,710
Expenditure			
Hotel			3,760
Band			1,650
Literature Sales			1,160
Committee Expenses			515
Printing			961
TOTAL EXPENDITURE			8,046
SURPLUS			£3,664

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