



Issued by the General Service Office on behalf
of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland

Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Tuesday 6th October 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

Press Release: Tuesday 6th October 2020

Minister for Public Health and Wellbeing publishes guidance for drug and alcohol support groups and treatment programmes

The Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Frank Feighan TD, has today published new guidance for drug and alcohol support groups and treatment programmes and other addiction treatment services. In line with 'Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19', this new guidance has been developed to ensure these groups can operate safely, including at levels 3 and 4 of the government framework.

Minister Feighan said: "The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a major impact in Ireland and globally. By following the public health advice, we can reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and support the provision of vital non-COVID healthcare services. As Minister, I fully recognise the vital role played by drug, alcohol support groups and treatment programmes in reducing the harms of substance use and supporting rehabilitation and recovery. They help individuals to build their recovery capital and to avoid relapse into harmful patterns of substance use. The restrictions on social interaction, the requirement for self-isolation and the restructuring of services, are particularly difficult for those accessing drug and alcohol services and supports.

"I want to acknowledge the input of supports groups and service providers in the formulation of this new guidance. We all share a common goal for the safe resumption of recovery support groups. However, these groups and programmes have to align with the Government framework for restrictive measures in response to Covid-19. Many people affected by drugs and alcohol are at a higher health risk from COVID-19. It is imperative that drug and alcohol services adhere strictly to public health advice."

Monday 5th October 2020 Urgent Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Members of the General Service Board (GSBAA) have for a couple of months been in regular consultation with the Office of the Minister for Health, his Junior Minister with responsibility for Alcohol and Addiction, and with his assistants in an effort to obtain clear guidelines for holding AA Group Meetings during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic. GSBAA has had a number of very constructive meetings with the Junior Minister for Health. GSBAA has been seeking clarification on the resumption of AA face-to-face Meetings, and the numbers permitted to attend these meetings, while continuing to comply with Government guidelines as they relate to the Global Pandemic.

A task force was established by the Department of Health and suggestions and recommendations were sought from various frontline organisations including Alcoholics Anonymous.

We are happy to report that our deliberations with the Minister and his Officials have been completed and we can now set out below clear guidelines, as published by the Department of Health, for all AA Groups in the Republic of Ireland. These guidelines mean that AA physical meetings can continue to remain open in the event of level 3 restrictions being imposed. This is very good news for us all. The Department of Health will follow shortly with posters outlining the requirements and these will be made available to all, to be placed prominently in our rooms. The main result of these deliberations is that, at last, clarity will be brought to this sometimes very unclear and difficult issue.

We recognise that Tradition 4 states ***“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.”*** We would request that each Group Conscience examine these guidelines published by the Department of Health and ensure all AA attendees appraise themselves of the important points they contain.

As you will see in the document furnished; *‘Covid-19 has created a time of uncertainty and anxiety for the Irish population. The restrictions on social interaction, the requirement for self-isolation and the restructuring of services, are particularly difficult for those accessing drug and alcohol services and supports.’*

‘Covid-19 presents a major threat to public health, in particular for those who are medically vulnerable or older. This includes people living with drug and alcohol addiction who may experience poor physical health and weakened immune systems.’

Please note these guidelines apply to the Republic of Ireland only. AA Groups, Colleagues and fellow Members in Northern Ireland should continue to visit nidirect.gov.uk for updates in their region regarding Government restrictions.

From: Jim Walsh <Jim_Walsh@health.gov.ie>
Sent: Friday 2 October 2020 19:24
To: leinstertrustee <leinstertrustee@alcoholicsanonymous.ie>
Subject: guidance for drug and alcohol support groups and programmes

Hi Pat,

The Dept is publishing guidance for the continued operation of drug and alcohol support groups and treatment programmes under the Govt plan for living with Covid-19.

Minister Feighan has asked me to bring this guidance to the attention of the AA. The Minister is very supportive of your work and is believes that the guidance will ensure the continuation of your local meetings under level 3 in Dublin and elsewhere.

He wishes to thank you for your input into this document.

Please note that the maximum number attending support groups is capped at 15, as this aligns with existing guidance.

The Dept is keen to work with the AA national office to implement the guidance with local groups and to identify any issues of concern. The guidance will shortly be published online. We are developing a poster to communicate the guidance and will forward this to you shortly.

Jim

Jim Walsh
Principal officer
Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit
IE National Drug Coordinator

An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

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Department of Health

Guidance for drug and alcohol support groups and treatment programmes

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a major impact in Ireland and globally. Progress has been made on suppressing the virus due to the huge effort of our citizens. **By working together, we have saved lives and limited the impact of the disease.** We all must continue to do everything possible to avoid the virus spreading.

Covid-19 has created a time of uncertainty and anxiety for the Irish population. The restrictions on social interaction, the requirement for self-isolation and the restructuring of services, are particularly difficult for those accessing drug and alcohol services and supports.

Covid-19 presents a major threat to public health, in particular for those who are medically vulnerable or older. This includes people living with drug and alcohol addiction who may experience poor physical health and weakened immune systems.

The Government has set out a plan for living with Covid-19, *Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021* (<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/resilience-recovery-2020-2021-plan-for-living-with-covid-19/>). **A key priority is to protect, safeguard and support health, social care and other essential services.**

The safe resumption of drug and alcohol services, including community-based services, residential programmes and recovery support groups, is a component of this.

Government recognises the vital role played by drug and alcohol support groups and treatment programmes in reducing the harms of substance use and supporting rehabilitation and recovery. Support groups and programmes help individuals to build their recovery capital and to avoid relapse into harmful patterns of substance use.

The Department of Health has prepared this guidance to enable the safe operation of drug and alcohol support groups and treatment programmes during Covid-19. It builds on existing guidance for vulnerable groups (<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/vulnerablegroupsguidance/>) and complements the framework set out in the Government plan for living with Covid-19.

The guidance applies to the following drug and alcohol services

- **support and recovery groups** for people and families who live with drug and alcohol addiction (including gambling addiction), e.g. self-help/fellowship groups, peer support, family/parent support
- **community projects** providing services and supports for people who use drugs, e.g. drug rehabilitation CE programmes, harm reduction/advocacy training
- **treatment programmes** (non-residential) for people with drug and alcohol addiction, e.g. counselling, stabilisation, therapeutic communities, aftercare.

Important points to note

Protecting public health is a **shared responsibility of convenors, leaders and participants in support groups and programmes.**

It is recommended to **hold meetings and deliver programmes online or outdoors** where this is possible, without diluting the benefits for participants.

Where it is decided to host a face-to-face group/programme meeting, organisers are advised to **undertake a risk assessment to ensure the health, welfare and safety of participants.** See here for sample risk assessment prompt sheets
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/healthsafetyand%20wellbeing/safetystatementsandrisksassessments.html>

Individuals at higher risk from Covid-19, or in close contact with such individuals, should avoid face-to-face group/programmes meetings and instead attend meetings that are conducted online.
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>.

Employees and volunteers who convene groups and programmes **should follow the return to work safely protocol,** and have access to training and personal protective equipment
<https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf>

General public health guidance

Drug and alcohol support groups and programmes should adhere to general public health advice regarding hygiene and social distancing, including the following:

- Frequent handwashing
- Cough and sneeze etiquette
- Sanitise equipment before and after use
- Social distancing of two metres
- Wear a face covering in indoor environments
- Reduce the number of social contacts
- Restrict movements for 14 days if a close contact of someone with Covid-19 or if returning from travel to a country not on the green list
- Self-isolate if experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 and contacting your GP

immediately See here for details of public health advice on Covid-19:

<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

Facilities and attendance at support groups and programmes

Facilities used to host groups and programmes should be for exclusive use, where possible, and not shared with other users

Where **community or commercial facilities are used on a sessional basis,** there should be separate entry and exit points, management of queues to avoid congestion and thorough cleaning of rooms and toilets before and after use.

Facilities should be **airy and well ventilated** as far as is possible

The recommended **maximum number of attendees is 15 people (including leaders), with 2 metres social distancing**. The maximum number may be reduced at level 4 or 5. (Face coverings should be used where social distancing of 2 metres is not possible due to space constraints.)

Attendance at multiple groups or programmes, by leaders or participants, should be avoided to reduce social mixing between groups and programmes

Support groups and programmes should **last a maximum of 115 minutes** (1 hour and 45 minutes)

Public health posters should be prominently displayed

(<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/ee0781-covid-19-posters-for-public-use/>)

Responsibilities of convenors and leaders

- Convenors and leaders should put in place a plan to communicate this guidance and general public health advice to participants in support groups and programmes
- Convenors and leaders should receive training in Covid-19 preparations either through their employer/service provider or through a third party
- A Covid-19 officer should be appointed for each support group and programme, who would be responsible for ensuring that Covid-19 guidance is adhered to
- The Covid-19 officer should be recorded on booking forms for facilities
- The names and contact details of all participants should be recorded; ideally this should be done in advance of a group or programme event, to manage attendance
- A health questionnaire should be circulated to all participants in advance; where this is not possible, a temperature check should be conducted for participants
- Where the recorded temperature is over 37.5 degrees, participants should not be allowed to attend the group/programme
- No refreshments should be provided at a meeting/programme;
- All chairs, doors and handle should be sanitised before and after every meeting/programme
- There should be no sharing of equipment or books at a meeting/programme

Responsibilities of participants

- Participants should adhere to the general public health guidance
- Participants at higher risk of Covid-19 should not attend support groups or programmes
- Participants should complete a health questionnaire in advance where possible
- Individuals should wear a mask in communal areas and on arrival and departure
- There should be no congregating before or after a meeting/programme
- Participants should bring their own water

Tracing and isolation procedures

- Have procedures in place for isolating a person who develops Covid-19 symptoms
- Maintain a log with details of leaders and participants to facilitate contact tracing
- Inform all participants if an individual subsequently reports symptoms of Covid-19
- Advise participants to restrict movements if close contacts of a positive case of Covid-19
- Give participants details of HSE Live helpline 1850 24 1850 for support

Communicating and monitoring the guidance

The Department of Health has developed this guidance following consultation with public health officials and providers of drug and alcohol support groups and programmes. It forms part of its framework for the restoration of drug and alcohol services. The guidance should be considered interim and is subject to ongoing review and updating to reflect public health advice, Government decisions on restrictive measures and emerging issues.

The Department is responsible for communicating the guidance to relevant stakeholders. The Department will work with drug and alcohol task forces, sectoral oversight bodies and HSE addiction services to assist drug and alcohol support groups and programmes to implement the guidance and to identify any issues of concern.

Advice and resources for people affected by drug and alcohol during Covid-19

People who use drugs and/or alcohol may be at greater risk from Covid-19. The Department of Health and the HSE has produced advice on harm reduction. Drug and alcohol services continue to be available. Information on these resources is available on Drugs.ie (<http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/>). A drugs and alcohol helpline is also available at 1850 24 1850

This update was prepared by the Office Management Committee

Tuesday 22nd September 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Due to an increase in the number of calls and emails to our General Service Office from the Province of Leinster regarding Level 3 restrictions in the Dublin area and the holding of AA Meetings in the Dublin area, The General Service Board (GSBAA) sought clarification from the office of the Minister of state at the Department of Health, Mr. Frank Feighan.

Set out below is our query along with the response from the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of State.

Good morning Blaine,

We are grateful for the Minister's clarification of 8th Sept.

We now seek clarification concerning AA Meetings in the Dublin Lockdown Area. Would it be possible for Minister Feighan, who has been extremely helpful in the past, to email me an up to date clarification of the present situation?

We will put this information on our website as soon as it is received.

I would also like to point out that Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland has only one set of contacts and all our email addresses are "@alcoholicsanonymous.ie." Any other email addresses are not part of the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous and might operate outside our guidelines.

AA Ireland continues and will continue, to follow all Government and NPHE Guidelines, and encourages all Members (approx. 15 - 18,000) to do the same.

We are a substantial constituency and we wish to continue following Official Guidelines.

Thank you for your continued assistance in this matter.

Regards

GSBAA

Subject: RE: Clarification re Dublin Area

Pat,

I hope you are keeping well.

Please see the below release on this issue that issued today.

Kindest regards

Blaine Gaffney

Parliamentary Assistant to Minister Frank Feighan

An Roinn Sláinte

Department of Health

An Roinn Sláinte, Bloc 1, Plaza Míseach, 50-

58 Sráid Bhagóid Íochtarach, Baile Átha Cliath, D0 XW14

Block 1 - 4th Floor, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Lower Baggot St., Dublin 2, D02 XW14

health.gov.ie

Minister Feighan said:

'The Covid-19 pandemic has created a time of uncertainty and anxiety for everyone and particularly for those who are affected by drug and alcohol addiction.

The restrictions on support services, social distancing measures and self-isolation can be particularly difficult for those who are trying to remain drug or alcohol free and for those who are in recovery.

The Government framework for restrictive measures in response to Covid-19 states that no organised indoor gatherings should take place at level 3 (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad569-level-3/#organised-indoor-gatherings>).

I have received confirmation that this level 3 restriction applies to indoor meetings of drug and alcohol support groups. However, organised outdoor gatherings of up to 15 people are still permitted.

Officials in the Department of Health have been working with Drug and Alcohol Task Forces and the HSE Social Inclusion Services to ensure that services and supports continue to be provided for those with problem drug and alcohol use, in line with public health advice. Details of services operating during the coronavirus outbreak can be found www.drugs.ie.

The HSE has advised that some support groups may be available online. AA have responded to the crisis by providing online support groups and several other groups including NA and SMART Recovery are also providing online support.

For AA Members in Northern Ireland, please continue to refer to www.nidirect.gov.uk for the latest information on Covid-19 restrictions applicable in your area.

The Office Management Committee.

Wednesday 9th September 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Following a meeting on Monday evening between the Minister for Health and his officials, the General Service Board of AA received the below confirmation from Minister Feighan's assistant.

We are pleased to publish this in full for members and groups. Needless to say, all the previous conditions as laid down by the Government and NPHET still apply. This is clearly stated.

“Minister Feighan welcomes clarification that drug and alcohol support groups can continue to operate, subject to strict public health measures

Sligo – Leitrim T.D. and Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Frank Feighan has today welcomed clarification that Drug and Alcohol support groups, such as AA, NA or Smart Recovery, are not subject to the recently introduced regulations relating to indoor events, which limit attendees to no more than six people.

Minister Feighan stated: ‘The public health advice relating to Covid-19 is kept under continuing review by the National Public Health Emergency Team, and it provides advice to Government in line with the current epidemiological position.

I am aware of concerns that recently introduced regulations that restrict indoor events to no more than six attendees would impact on the operation of drug and alcohol supports groups. It has been clarified to me that drug and alcohol support group meetings are not impacted by these restrictions and can continue to operate, subject to adherence to public health guidance relating to physical distancing and other protective measures.'

Minister Feighan stated: 'Drug and alcohol support provide are a key lifeline for people struggling with addiction and support their recovery and rehabilitation. I welcome the clarification that these support groups can continue to operate. I would advise that the support groups proceed with a degree of extra caution, as individuals with addiction problems are more vulnerable to the risk of Covid-19, and put in place strict protective measures.'

The Minister highlighted the following general guidance on indoor events:

- *Meetings should take place online where possible.*
- *Where face-to-face meetings are necessary, physical distancing of 2 metres must apply. Meetings should be kept as short as possible.*
- *Managed and organised arrival and departure processes must be in place.*
- *Where possible, increase ventilation in the meeting facilities.*
- *The numbers attending should be kept to an absolute minimum. Capacity will depend on the venue and the ability to physically distance and ensure other protective measures are in place, the overall numbers at any one time within the meeting facility should not exceed 50 people.*
- *To ensure optimal physical distancing, multiple pods of a maximum of 6 people in each is preferable if sufficient space is available and if it is feasible, with no intermingling between pods.*

Minister Feighan concluded: 'The situation regarding COVID-19 has been, and continues to be, an evolving situation. The measures in place and the public health advice have been adapted to the changing circumstances and this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. We all must continue to do everything possible to avoid the virus spreading.'

For information:

The recent regulations [(S.I. 326 of 2020) Health Act 1947 (Section 31a – Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) (No. 4) Regulations 2020], which state that events being organised indoors may have no more than six attendees, apply to social, recreational, exercise, cultural, entertainment and community events. The regulations were introduced on 31st August, 2020.

The latest public health advice on these matters is available at the links below and is updated on a regular basis:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-health/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/>

Blaine Gaffney

Parliamentary Assistant to Minister Frank Feighan

An Roinn Sláinte

Department of Health

An Roinn Sláinte, Bloc 1, Plaza Míseach, 50-58 Sráid Bhagóid Íochtarach, Baile Átha Cliath, D0 XW14

Block 1 - 4th Floor, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Lower Baggot St., Dublin 2, D02 XW14

We wish everyone well in reopening AA to every still-suffering alcoholic who needs AA's help.

Again, thank you all for your forbearance and tolerance during this period of uncertainty.

Monday 7th September 2020 Urgent Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Sadly, as is usual in times of uncertainty, truth is often the first victim, with inaccurate information and even misinformation proliferating. AA is no exception to this, and this behavior has added unnecessarily to the confusion and uncertainty felt by AA members. We ask all the fellowship to remember that information coming from sources other than the General Service Board and the Office Management Committee of GSO has no guarantee of accuracy or veracity.

Members of the General Service Board are voluntary officers, as is the Office Management Committee except for our Operations Manager. We are not investigative Journalists or Media experts. At all times we provide the clearest and most up to date information available to us.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (GSBAA) wishes to thank AA members throughout the fellowship for their continued forbearance and support over the last six months in what have been extremely challenging times of change. Over the last number of weeks, AA Trustees have been working behind the scenes to obtain clarification from the Irish Government and Department of Public Health as to how AA Group Meetings could reopen safely and continue to carry the AA message. We have been in correspondence with the Irish Minister for Health, the acting Chief Medical Officer at NPHET and public representatives, and we are grateful to all for their input and support.

The culmination of these efforts by GSBAA, AA Members, and a National Public Representative have come to fruition and we are now in a position to publish a letter (set out below) received on Saturday September 5th with a direct quote from the Minister for Health via a Clare based TD. The quotation from the Minister is highlighted in yellow.

This followed a phone conversation that occurred early on Saturday morning with the TD who had spoken with the Health Minister and directed that the following text be forwarded to the Secretary of the General Service Board of AA and in turn forwarded to AA Groups.

“AA meetings are essentially a healthcare/public health function. As such, once social distancing is strictly observed, and other relevant measures, they can go ahead as normal”



Constituency Office: 4 Francis Street, Ennis, Co. Clare. ☎ 065 682 3494 ✉ cathal.crowe@oireachtas.ie 📱 📧 📺

Constituency Office,
4 Francis Street,
Ennis,
Co. Clare
V95 W9NP

AA Company Secretary,
Alcoholics Anonymous,
Santry Business Park,
Swords Road,
Dublin 9

Dear Anthony,

I hope this letter finds you and the many members of your organisation safe and well.

Further to our phone conversation this morning I wish to add some clarity to the issue of the continuance of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings during this challenging time.

I have spoken with Minister Stephen Donnelly twice this week and again this morning - and he has sent me the following statement which I am pleased to share with you:

“AA meetings are essentially a healthcare / public health function. As such, once social distancing is strictly observed, and other relevant measures, they can go ahead as normal”.

Minister Donnelly’s statement paves the way for a normal resumption of all AA meetings so long as guidance is followed and general precautionary common sense prevails.

I know that many AA members in Clare have found these past few months very difficult and are anxious to be able to, once again, lean on the wonderful support provided to them by local AA branches. I ask that you might please circulate this clarification letter to them, and also those affiliated to other AA branches nationwide, so that they can have certainty about the resumption of meetings.

Warm regards,
Cathal Crowe TD

GSBAA, after consultation with all parties involved are now confident in accepting the Minister's statement. We would further state, that it is now a matter for each Group Conscience (being the ultimate authority) to put in place appropriate measures for all AA Meeting rooms to ensure all Government guidelines including 2 metre Social distancing, wearing of face coverings, hand sanitisation, and contact tracing. It is up to each AA Group and each AA Member to take personal responsibility and use common sense, given that we are going to be living alongside Covid 19 for some time to come.

Our best advice is to limit the number of people in meeting rooms to help contain the spread of the virus. In this instance, Groups may wish to consider holding more than one meeting in their venue to spread out attendance. Your Group Conscience may have a number of alternatives to holding physical meetings and once these are done in a safe and responsible manner and in line with Government directives there should be no impediment to AA Groups having their regular scheduled meetings.

We would also suggest the following measures:

- 2-metre social distancing
- The use of face coverings
- Hand sanitisation facilities
- Contact tracing log (with first name and contact Telephone Number) This should be kept by a designated person on file in the event of an outbreak of the virus.
- No refreshments ought to be served before during or after the meeting.
- Arrangements ought to be made to practice the seventh tradition safely without passing the basket.

Online meetings. It should also be highlighted that several AA members who may be medically vulnerable or fearful of returning to AA rooms because of Covid-19 can still avail of online meeting platforms, a list of which is available on www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie.

Physical Meetings. Groups need to inform GSO, so that their Meeting details can be made active again the AA Group database and on the Website. Groups can email GSO directly using their Official AA Mailbox. Or, alternatively, Groups can inform their Area or Intergroup Secretary, who will then pass the details to GSO. If any Meeting details have changed e.g. Times, Days or Venues, then a Group Information Sheet must be completed. This can be emailed directly to gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie from your Official AA Mailbox or completed online in the Members Area of our website.

Seventh Tradition. To all Members who made the effort to contribute via the Tabletop Contributions option on the website: we wish to express our sincere gratitude for your generosity. This option continues to be available to all members.

We would again remind Groups and Areas that wish to send their contributions that they can do so using the following details.

Bank: AIB, Swords Road, Santry, Dublin 9.

Account Name: The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

IBAN: IE63 AIBK 9323 5318 4020 47

Northern Ireland:

Government advice may differ in Northern Ireland. For more comprehensive information you should visit: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronaviruscovid-19>

Friday 4th September 2020 2pm Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Following today's earlier update, the GSBAA Board Secretary has received a letter from the public representative referred to. This letter is printed here, and we are grateful to the representative for this.

However, we wish to stress that the suggestions contained in the letter are still not official Government/NPHET/NIdirect.gov.uk guidelines, and groups and members should continue to act as previously advised.

We continue to request further clarity from the Minister for Health. Nevertheless, we are very grateful for the representations made on AA's behalf by the public representative concerned.

As ever, a well-informed Group Conscience is our ultimate authority and these updates are prepared to help groups arrive at their best possible decisions. The guidelines regarding contact tracing, social distancing, masks, sanitisers and so on continue to be a requirement for all groups, without exception.

All groups are strongly urged to update themselves regularly on requirements and to follow the recommended guidelines. Groups should carry out regular risk assessments to ensure rooms are adequate for purpose regarding distancing, and that all appropriate measures have been taken.

For members who might be vulnerable or fearful of attending physical meetings, we remind you that online meetings continue to be available, and that a list of these is published on the AA website.

2pm Friday 4th September 2020



Cathal Crowe TD
CLARE



September 4th, 2020

RE: Alcoholics Anonymous meetings

Dear Tony,

Thank you for your phone call this morning. I really value the work undertaken by AA in helping people throughout Ireland combat their addiction issues. You have given huge support to these people and their families over the years.

Over the past fortnight, quite a number of people have contacted my office asking if it would be possible for AA meetings to continue during this period of social gathering restrictions.

I contacted the Department of Health and Minister Stephen Donnelly and this week I had a short meeting with the Minister at which I again raised the matter.

Minister Donnelly explained to me that these meetings are essential; that the AA is an important support service and that groups up to a maximum of 50 can attend meetings - that obviously relates to where the meeting would be happening, for example in a large function room in a hotel.

It is important for AA to communicate to its members that where venues are smaller, groups that are gathering should be downscaled appropriately, in accordance with public health guidance.

I fully believe this gives your organisation scope to continue with meetings in as normal a way as possible.

I understand that it would be helpful if you had an official government letter to confirm everything that I have outlined.

I will endeavour to get a copy of this sent to you in as quick as possible timeframe.

Is mise le meas,

Cathal Crowe TD

Friday 4th September 2020 11am Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Much has happened since our last update. We would point out, in the strongest possible terms, that the Government/HSE/NPHET has not issued any update or changes to the COVID-19 regulations. Therefore, the guidelines remain **unchanged**. We are acutely aware that there is much confusion among Members and Groups regarding what they can and cannot do.

We can confirm that we have contacted the Minister for Health, HSE, and NPHET seeking clarification for AA Members and Groups, and we are assured that a response will be issued shortly. We are aware of a social media post from a TD. This is NOT official information of any sort. We have spoken to the TD concerned and expect some clarification later today.

We hope that this intervention will prompt the Minister for Health to speed up the process of clarification and await his response. Please remember this and continue to act responsibly on behalf of yourselves, your family, and friends and for the greater good of AA. And remember, a **well-informed** Group Conscience is the ultimate authority in AA.

Until such time as an official response is received, we urge Groups and Members to continue to follow the guidelines as previously issued.

We are all only too aware that social media outlets such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc. etc. are not official Government channels for updates!! Please refer to trusted sources such as Gov.ie, HSE, NPHET, or NIdirect.gov.uk for Northern Ireland, for your information and updates.

"Every single contribution and effort you make counts to the national push to curb the effects of this infectious virus on our society. Every time you take responsibility to keep your social contacts low, avoid a crowded place or get-together, know that you are making a vital difference. It is individual action built upon individual action that will get us through this pandemic."

(Dr Ronan Glynn Acting CMO, NPHET)

"What we can do to help this effort is play our own part as individuals - physically distance from others at all times, avoid congregated settings, and wear face covering where appropriate."

(Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE)

We are fully aware that there is frustration among groups at the ambiguous and confusing messages that are going around in relation to Covid -19 guidelines and how some are interpreting the advice which has been published.

The General Service Office has seen a very substantial increase in calls from people seeking help for their drinking. We would kindly request AA Members to refrain from ringing the General Service Office seeking advice on COVID-19 and guidelines for holding physical meetings.

We will continue to post COVID-19 updates on the AA website. These updates continue to be in line with current Government advice.

Staff at GSO are not in a position to offer any further clarification or guidance on these Government guidelines, please visit www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie to view Covid 19 updates. We are attempting to keep phone lines free for person(s) seeking help and support with their drinking problem in line with AA's Primary Purpose.

Be reassured that we will update you as soon as we have any further information. We expect an update later today, and, if received will be distributed to all members immediately.

11.00 AM Friday 4th September 2020.

Friday 28th August 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

While there is a certain amount of ambiguous and sometimes confusing guidelines in the light of the current Global COVID-19 Pandemic. There are several facts that we should all remind ourselves of:

It is important to remember that COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease. The risk of getting COVID-19 is now part of our daily lives and will remain so for the foreseeable future. We are all vulnerable to this virus and some people, particularly those over 70 and the medically vulnerable, are still at a greater risk of becoming seriously ill.

Currently COVID-19 is spreading with 30% of cases occurring with community transmission and 66% close contacts. The National Public Health Emergency Team (NEPHET) are asking us to limit our close contacts.

- limit your contact with others when out and about
- keep your close contacts to a small number of people
- keep a log of all of your contacts throughout the day
- limit the amount of time you spend in direct contact with other people
- Wearing cloth face coverings may help prevent people who do not know they have COVID-19 from spreading it to others.

We have received a letter from the Health Service Executive (HSE) Covid response team which we have set out below.

We have, in line with Data Protection and for the purposes of protecting our Traditions of autonomy and anonymity, removed the name and location of the AA Group.

The letter should serve to remind us of the seriousness of the pandemic while, highlighting the reputational risks to the good name and work carried out by Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland. We must act responsibly and with the welfare of others foremost in your mind. We should always be conscious of our responsibility to others, inside and outside AA.

We would also advise that we have written to the Irish Minister For Health at his department seeking clear guidelines for the holding of AA Meetings nationally, we are awaiting a response and will update all groups when a response is issued from the Health Ministers office.

RECEIVED 20 AUG 2020



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Alcoholics Anonymous
General Services Office
Unit 2, Block C
Santry Business Park
Swords Road
Dublin 9
D09 H584

25th August, 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has come to our attention that an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, namely that mentioned above, is not currently operating in compliance with the current government directive in relation to indoor events and is currently operating in breach of current guidelines.

We are aware that on two evenings weekly, AA meetings continue to be held in a venue where more than the maximum 6 people (from 3 families only) have been in attendance, along with non-appropriate COVID-19 preventative measures in place. We have been notified that people are not wearing face coverings when indoors, are not adhering to social distance requirements but most critically are not adhering to the maximum number of people permitted at any indoor event.

We respectfully request that you notify the relevant parties, in relation to this meeting and request immediate cessation of these meetings until further direction is provided on 13th September, 2020. All directives are available on our website www.gov.ie in relation to indoor events which is applicable to all indoor events of this nature.

Confidentiality and anonymity I am aware is the foundation of your organisation so we would respectfully ask that you implement this request on our behalf as soon as possible.

I will follow up with a call to your office over the coming days to ensure adherence.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter...'.

HSE COVID RESPONSE

HSE COVID Response

This update was prepared by the Office Management Committee

Friday 21st August 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

No doubt we are all aware of conflicting and confusing messages that are being proliferated at present. Our advice remains the same as always. Follow Public Health/Government guidelines and let an informed Group Conscience be your best guide.

Always act responsibly and with the welfare of others foremost in your mind. We must at all times be conscious of our responsibility to others, inside and outside AA.

To help GSO keep accurate records, we ask all groups to inform us if they have re-opened physical meetings. This is the only way we have of knowing which groups are active. Similarly, if your group re-opened and has had to close again, please also inform GSO.

Those groups holding meetings online should also inform GSO, who will list these as available meetings for 12 Step calls and for newcomers to attend. The newcomer and the newly arrived member are in grave danger of being overlooked during this crisis. Please remember our primary purpose: "to stay sober and to **help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.**"

Tradition 4 tells us that it is up to the collective Group Conscience of each AA Group to make the most prudent, well-informed decisions regarding the Group and its Meetings.

We fully understand that doing this work can be tiresome, but the Fellowship needs to keep itself informed, and we are relying on all of you to do your part.

Regarding the COVID-19/Coronavirus generally, members should be conscious of their personal responsibility to protect themselves, their family and friends, and other AA members, in line with Public Health/Government advice.

This update was prepared by the Office Management Committee.

Monday 10th August 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Please be advised that HSE/government requirements are mandatory not optional. All AA groups are required to fully comply with all these requirements.

These requirements not only protect members at meetings, but also protect your family members and the wider public from the transmission of COVID-19.

- Government advice may differ in Northern Ireland. For more comprehensive information you should visit: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Maintain 2-metre social distance in AA meeting rooms as this is vital to help limit the spread of the virus.
- From 10th August 2020, face coverings are mandatory in most indoor settings. For more information see gov.ie/covid19
- In line with Government advice, indoor gatherings are still limited to 50 people.
- Have hand sanitiser available for all attendees

- Ensure your meeting room is sanitised
- Have a contact tracing policy in place. Where possible, one group member should log attendees in a notebook. This prevents multiple users of the same pen and paper.
- Handshaking should be avoided.
- Ensure meeting rooms are well ventilated
- It is advisable not to have Tea/Coffee available
- Be sure to inform GSO that your group is up and running again. Otherwise your meetings will not be listed. This can be done using your official AA group email address, or via your Area and Intergroup Secretary.
- If your group intends to hold online as well as physical meetings, please inform GSO through the prescribed channels.
- If you have any flu like symptoms you should not attend AA meeting.
- You are urged to use your own best judgement and take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your friends, and your family.

To all members who made the effort to contribute via the Tabletop Contributions option on the website: we wish to express our sincere gratitude for your generosity. This option continues to be available to all members.

We would again remind Groups and Areas that wish to send their contributions that they can do so using the following details.

Bank: AIB, Swords Road, Santry, Dublin 9.

Account Name: The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

IBAN: IE63 AIBK 9323 5318 4020 47

Having returned to physical meetings, groups need to inform GSO, so that their meeting details can be put back in the Directory and on the Website. Groups can email GSO directly using their official AA mailbox. Or, alternatively, groups can inform their Area or Intergroup Secretary, who will then pass the details to GSO. If any meeting details have changed e.g. Times, Days or Venues, then a Group Information Sheet must be completed. This can be emailed directly to gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie from your official AA mailbox or completed online in the Members Area of our website.

All visitors to GSO are required to wear facemasks while on the premises.

GSO has no other way of knowing which groups have reopened, or which remain closed. Without this vital information, we cannot inform existing members and newcomers alike about meetings that are so badly needed.

Our website is currently showing just 76 Groups Nationwide who have informed us that they have reopened, pre-Covid, there were 854 Groups. Many Counties have no meetings listed at all.

Remember: "when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to be there - for this I am responsible." Please be responsible.

The Office Management Committee

Tuesday 4th August 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

We are aware that the easing of Coronavirus COVID-19 restrictions is not the same in Northern Ireland as it is in the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, we print below the Recovery Timeline as it applies to Northern Ireland. Members needing further information are encouraged to visit: nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19regulations for a more detailed breakdown of the guidelines.

Northern Ireland Executive		CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY TIMELINE					POSITION 24/07/2020		WE ALL MUST DO IT TO GET THROUGH IT		STAY SAFE SAVE LIVES	
	Lockdown Position	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Pathway To Recovery Item	Status				
Work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key worker list <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote working (default position)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote working <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some on-site working	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote working where possible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Property market <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased on-site return	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote working where possible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Property market <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased on-site return	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote working where possible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Property market <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased on-site return	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return to on-site work	Outdoor Sports Facilities (06/Jun) Outdoor Retailers (06/Jun) Groups of 10 outdoors (12/Jun) Other Retail Non-essential shops (12/Jun) Lone Residents Can meet indoors (13/Jun) Elite Athletics Outdoor facilities (15/Jun) Housing Market (15/Jun) 6 People indoors (23/Jun) Tourism Self Catering (26/Jun) Places of Worship (26/Jun) Non Urgent Dental (29/Jun) Contact Sport Training (29/Jun)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Retail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food retailers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vulnerable children <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garden centres <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restaurants takeaway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cafes takeaway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-food retail <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shopping centres	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hairdressers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tattoo parlours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restaurants <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cafes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pubs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return to on-site work	Elite Athletics Indoor Training (29/Jun) Parking Charges re-introduced (29/Jun) Groups of 30 outdoors (29/Jun) Betting Shops (03/Jul) Hospitality Private Clubs, Pubs (with food & Restaurants) (03/Jul) Museums/Galleries (03/Jul) Tourism Hotels (with restrictions) (03/Jul) Personal & Salon Services (06/Jul) Close Contact Services (06/Jul) Indoor Gyms and Fitness Studios (10/Jul) Outdoor Leisure Playgrounds (10/Jul) Weddings & Baptisms (10/Jul) Bingo & Cinemas (10/Jul) Indoor Arcades (10/Jul)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key worker children <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vulnerable children <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key worker definition expanded <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priority opening <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Blended learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open on part-time basis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full-time school return	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return to on-site work	Competitive Sports Behind closed doors (11/Jul) Libraries (16/Jul) Indoor Sports and Leisure Centres (17/Jul) Active Venues incl. Bowling Alloys (24/Jul) Seated Venues incl. Live Performance (24/Jul) Outdoor Sporting Spectators (24/Jul) Swimming & Spas (24/Jul) Soft Play Areas (24/Jul)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Travel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public transport limited capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-essential trips <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased operation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased operation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased operation in rural areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return to on-site work	Competitive Sports Behind closed doors (11/Jul) Libraries (16/Jul) Indoor Sports and Leisure Centres (17/Jul) Active Venues incl. Bowling Alloys (24/Jul) Seated Venues incl. Live Performance (24/Jul) Outdoor Sporting Spectators (24/Jul) Swimming & Spas (24/Jul) Soft Play Areas (24/Jul)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Family & Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Household contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 - 6 people outdoors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drive through churches <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Churches - private prayer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indoor family visits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Groups of 10 outdoors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single occupancy support bubble <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outdoor shielding social <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outdoor weddings of 10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Childcare in centres	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Groups of 30 outdoors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weddings and baptisms <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wider range of gatherings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extended group gatherings	Competitive Sports Behind closed doors (11/Jul) Libraries (16/Jul) Indoor Sports and Leisure Centres (17/Jul) Active Venues incl. Bowling Alloys (24/Jul) Seated Venues incl. Live Performance (24/Jul) Outdoor Sporting Spectators (24/Jul) Swimming & Spas (24/Jul) Soft Play Areas (24/Jul)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sport, Cultural & Leisure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exercise permitted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outdoor spaces open <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Walking/cycling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Golf/tennis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water sports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drive-through cinema	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elite Athlete Training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Selected libraries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museums/Galleries open <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-contact group training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Libraries open <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concert/theatre rehearsals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indoor Sports <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leisure centres <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gyms/fitness studios <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outdoor concerts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competitive Sports Behind closed doors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bingo and Cinemas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nightclubs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indoor concerts	Competitive Sports Behind closed doors (11/Jul) Libraries (16/Jul) Indoor Sports and Leisure Centres (17/Jul) Active Venues incl. Bowling Alloys (24/Jul) Seated Venues incl. Live Performance (24/Jul) Outdoor Sporting Spectators (24/Jul) Swimming & Spas (24/Jul) Soft Play Areas (24/Jul)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Get up-to-date advice at nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus

Key
 Step taken
 Step confirmed but date not reached
 Indicative date to be confirmed
 Date still to be decided

Friday 24th July 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

With life slowly returning to normal, it is a good time for groups to do some housekeeping and to ask themselves how they are going to deal with the new restrictions in a manner that is both compliant with requirements and also in keeping with AA ethos and Tradition.

Having survived the lockdown, GSO and the AA services are now getting back into full swing. Of course, everything we do to help the still-suffering alcoholic has a cost attached to it. GSO and AA relies totally on the generosity of members. Now that physical meetings are starting up again, we remind groups not to hold on to surplus funds above the Prudent Reserve, but to forward them through the Structure or directly to GSO. It is worthwhile repeating what we said a few weeks ago.

'The Tabletop Contributions option continues to be popular. We wish to reassure members that the words 'Alcoholics Anonymous' will not appear on bank statements and members' anonymity will continue to be protected.

At online meetings, when Tradition Seven is read, some groups find it useful to send the link to the Tabletop Contributions option via text to members present at the meeting. This reminds us that AA continues to be self-supporting through our own contributions. Other groups, who already have bank accounts, have an option for group members to contribute and this is another way to help keep the AA Structure operating. Of course, groups can also continue to make their contributions through Area and Intergroup. Whichever method members choose to contribute, their contributions are used to assist AA in carrying the Message, and this is our primary purpose.'

To all those members who made the effort to contribute via the Tabletop Contributions option on the website, we wish to express our sincere gratitude for your generosity. This option continues to be available to all members.

For Groups, Areas, and Intergroups we reproduce here the bank details for AA GSO.

Bank: AIB
Swords Road
Santry
Dublin 9

Account Name: The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland

IBAN: IE63 AIBK 9323 5318 4020 47

Having returned to physical meetings, groups need to inform GSO, so that their meeting details can be put back in the Directory and on the Website. Groups can email GSO directly using their official AA mailbox. Or, alternatively, groups can inform their Area or Intergroup Secretary, who will then pass the details to GSO.

If any meeting details have changed e.g. Times, Days or Venues, then a Group Information Sheet must be completed. This can be emailed directly to gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie from your official AA mailbox or completed online in the Members Area of our website.

GSO has no other way of knowing which groups have reopened, or which remain closed.

With 12 Step calls and other calls for help having almost doubled in the past few weeks, we urgently ask groups that have reopened **to please, please** send in their new information. Without this vital information, the office staff have no contacts for this most urgent of services. In fact, our sole reason for existing is to help the still-suffering alcoholic.

Get that contact information to GSO as soon as your group reopens.

Our primary purpose is to help the still-suffering alcoholic. The AA Members' role is to help us to help them!! This is about AA being visible and available to help wherever and whenever we are needed. Your service is your way of showing your gratitude for the gift of sobriety. Do not be found wanting because we are depending on you to let us know. AA was here for you in your hour of need.

Be here now. You are being called.

For your convenience we have reprinted a Group Checklist for Reopening of Meetings:

- Comply with any additional requirements from Landlords.
- Contact Tracing is a requirement, not an option.
- Social Distancing is a requirement, not an option.
- Have Sanitiser in place.
- Handshaking is not permitted.
- Attendees should wear Masks.
- Tea/Coffee facilities are not permitted.

- Numbers are limited by the size of the room.
- Make sure there is adequate air circulation.
- Know what to do if more people arrive than the room can accommodate.
- Find a safe way to handle Tradition Seven, e.g. a box/basket on the way out. AA is not about money, but without money there is no AA. Send surplus funds through the Structure as soon as prudently possible.
- Ensure room sanitising between meetings.
- If your group wishes to also hold Online Meetings, ensure that this is done safely and in accordance with previous guidelines.
- Liaise with other groups to share ideas.
- Be sure to inform GSO that your group is up and running again. Otherwise your meetings will not be listed. This can be done using your official AA group email address, or via your Area and Intergroup Secretary.
- If your group intends to hold online as well as physical meetings, please inform GSO through the prescribed channels.

This update was prepared by the Office Management Committee.

Monday 6th July 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

We are all surely grateful that restrictions are continuing to ease. This allows AA groups to begin holding physical meetings again. Indeed, many groups are already making the necessary arrangements to reopen. Group Conscience is the ultimate authority on this matter. There are a number of things to bear in mind as we enter this new phase. We list some of these below. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, neither is it meant to replace individual Group Conscience. It is, rather, merely intended as a starting point for groups, and groups are free to add any other guidelines specific to their own group. The most important thing is that Groups comply with all HSE/Government guidelines (Dept. of Health and Social Care in N.I.).

- Comply with any additional requirements from landlords.
- Contact tracing is a requirement, not an option.
- Social distancing is a requirement, not an option.
- Have sanitiser in place.
- Handshaking is not permitted.
- Attendees should wear masks.
- Tea/coffee facilities are not permitted.
- Numbers are limited by the size of the room.
- Make sure there is adequate air circulation.
- Know what to do if more people arrive than the room can accommodate.

- Find a safe way to handle Tradition Seven, e.g. a box/basket on the way out. AA is not about money, but without money there is no AA. Send surplus funds through the structure as soon as prudently possible.
- Ensure room sanitising between meetings.
- If your group wishes to also hold online meetings, ensure that this is done safely and in accordance with previous guidelines.
- Liaise with other groups to share ideas.
- Be sure to inform GSO that your group is up and running again. Otherwise your meetings will not be listed. This can be done using your official AA group email address, or via your Area and Intergroup Secretary.
- If your group intends to hold online as well as physical meetings, please inform GSO through the prescribed channels.

No doubt there are many other requirements and we will keep you updated as these become known. Please remember that your group represents AA as a whole and don't do anything to bring AA into disrepute. We in AA are not exceptions to the rules that govern the rest of the population.

The General Service Office is now fully operational, with full compliance to all regulations as they apply.

Recently, as the restrictions began to ease, the number of calls to GSO greatly increased. Most of these were for guidance on matters relating to reopening. Unfortunately, some callers became abusive when the answers to their questions did not suit. Staff were insulted by some callers; their jobs were threatened by other callers. In general, the integrity of our staff was called into question. The General Service Board has a duty of care to its employees and will always take whatever steps are required to protect and care for them. Staff have been instructed not to tolerate offensive or abusive calls, and to hang up when this becomes evident. Needless to say, the abusive callers managed to maintain their anonymity while indulging in this cowardly behaviour. The only thing in question here is the so-called sobriety of these callers.

From Friday March 20th 2020 to June 26th regular Covid-19 updates were placed on the Official AA Website, in an effort to keep all AA members and groups informed of the relevant Government Guidelines, further stating that the General Service Board would be adhering to these directives.

We accept that the last number of months have been a challenge for many people including AA Members. There was no blueprint/rulebook for the global pandemic. People have become ill, lives have been lost, and we are still not free of this disease. A cure has not been found. GSBAA took the best relevant Government/Public Health advice available and passed that same advice to AA Groups via their official AA Group Mailboxes and the AA Website. We believe that the updates and emails that were sent to all mailboxes covered the guidelines and protocols as set out by the relevant authorities.

The majority of members are understanding and patient, showing tolerance and awareness of the difficult situation we all find ourselves in. We thank you for this.

This update was prepared by the Office Management Committee.

Friday 26th June 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

The third phase of lifting the public health restrictions that were put in place to protect us all from COVID-19 are to be effective from Monday June 29th, 2020.

Additional Government directives for this Phase include:

Face coverings

Face coverings are mandatory for public transport, and recommended in retail outlets, and other places where it is difficult to maintain social distancing.

Indoor gatherings

Indoor gatherings of up to 50 people when conducted in line with public health advice are permissible.

Outdoor gatherings

Outdoor gatherings of up to 200 people when conducted in line with public health advice are permissible.

The Government directives for Northern Ireland may differ, please refer to the relevant website for appropriate COVID updates.

Resuming Physical AA Meetings

AA groups resuming physical meetings should refer to the Government guidelines in relation to gatherings, social distancing, sanitising protocols, cough and sneeze etiquette, face masks, contact tracing etc.

We would remind AA groups of Tradition Four 'that each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole'. It is the responsibility of the AA Group to agree the necessary protocols for their meetings.

We are aware that landlords may require the group to provide protocols to demonstrate their compliance with the Government directives and also to ensure the safe return of members to their physical meetings. Other groups in your area may already have these protocols set up, consider reaching out to other AA's for guidance.

Website Display of Physical Meetings

Groups should notify GSO when their physical meetings resume via their official AA group mailbox or via their Area or Intergroup Secretary. Only groups that notify GSO will be displayed on the website.

Use the Group Information Sheet to notify GSO if there are changes to existing information. This can also be completed online under the Members' Section.

Website Display of Online Meetings

The existing process using the 'Temporary Registration Form for Online AA Meetings' for displaying AA Group Online Meetings will continue until further notice.

General Service Office Shop

GSO will open to the public from Monday 29th June. COVID-19 protocols are in place to protect visitors and staff members.

Members can pre-order and pre-pay for literature by phone or online. These orders will be ready for collection at a prearranged time.

If it is necessary to visit the shop, members are encouraged to have their order ready for processing and to use contactless payments. Only one person will be permitted at a time. Government protocols regarding hand sanitising, cough etiquette and physical distancing should be adhered to when visiting GSO.

If you have any COVID symptoms we ask that you do not visit GSO.

The GSO Office Management Committee

Monday 8th June 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Thankfully, since our most recent update on Friday 5th June, the restrictions on gatherings have been further eased. People can now meet indoors with up to six people at a time, whilst maintaining the 2 Metre Social Distancing guideline.

Outdoors groups of up to 15 people can meet for cultural or social activities, also while maintaining the 2 Metre Social Distancing guideline. At the time of writing, there has been no change in the Northern Ireland Restrictions. We will update as changes happen.

Already, some groups are working on ways to hold physical meetings. Some groups are planning to have two, or even three 50-minute meetings in one evening. A meeting would be held on the hour with six people attending, for a strict 50 minutes and, when the room is vacated, it is then prepared for another group of six people to begin a meeting on the hour.

Another method is to have six people chosen randomly from a group to attend the physical meeting, while other members may attend via Zoom. Each meeting would have a different set of six members attending.

These are just a couple of the ideas we have heard and if there are other ideas that might work, we would be very happy to hear of them, and to publish them here.

If you or your group can help with ideas please contact your GSRs to pass the message through the structure, or simply email your Delegates or Trustee.

We look forward to hearing your workable suggestions and thank you in advance for your help.

The Office Management Committee.

Friday 5th June 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

While the lockdown continues, many groups are asking when they can begin holding physical meetings again. We can only repeat that AA is fully subject to the rules of the Government/Public Health as the various stages of re-opening are rolled out.

There is no special case to be made for AA. We have no priority over other Organisations, Cubs, Groups, etc. And, more importantly, the Coronavirus Lockdown is an "outside issue" and Tradition 10 tells us that AA has no opinion on this and we do not become involved lest *"the AA name be drawn into public controversy"*. AA will wait until the restrictions are eased and permission is granted to reopen.

In the same vein, AA cannot hold outdoor meetings of more than four people (in Northern Ireland the permitted number is six), and groups who hold such meetings are in breach of Government Regulations. GSBAA dissociates itself from this and does not condone, under any circumstances, any behaviour that breaches National Guidelines.

The Staff at the General Service Office will return to work at GSO on Monday, 8th June. Literature orders that have been delayed will begin to be processed and the backlog cleared. We thank you for your understanding of the delay.

Members can again order literature online or over the phone, but the shop at GSO will remain closed until further notice. GSO itself will also be closed to casual visitors and members of AA, and the public are not permitted inside the building. Again, these procedures will change as restrictions are lifted.

The Tabletop Contributions option continues to be popular. We wish to reassure members that the words 'Alcoholics Anonymous' will not appear on bank statements and members' anonymity will continue be protected.

At Online Meetings, when Tradition Seven is read, some groups find it useful to send the link to the Tabletop Contributions option via text to members present at the meeting. This reminds us that AA continues to be self-supporting through our own contributions. Other groups, who already have bank accounts, have an option for group members to contribute and this is another way to help keep the AA Structure operating. Of course, groups can also continue to make their contributions through Area and Intergroup.

Whichever method members choose to contribute, their contributions are used to assist AA in 'Carrying the Message', and this is our Primary Purpose.

We hope the easing of restrictions will begin to happen more quickly, and that members can get back to their normal lives as soon as possible.

Please continue to stay safe and stay well.

The GSO Office Management Committee.

Monday 25th May 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

In general, AA has settled well into the new way of working. We will get be back in the office as soon as Government/HSE guidelines permit. Literature orders, which have been waiting for completion, will be sent out at this time.

Some members have reported difficulty accessing online AA mailboxes and using our website. The General Service Office has compiled a Step by Step User Guide for Mailboxes and Website. We hope this will clarify and simplify access for members. Any member who needs technical help can simply ask Area Secretaries, Intergroup Secretaries, or Conference Delegates for a copy of this easy-to-use guide.

The AA Contributions option on the website is for members to make their normal Tabletop donations to AA. These contributions are used to provide all of AA's services to members and the wider public. These contributions are not used to help fund individual group activities such as online meetings etc. "Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting."

Reports indicate that online meetings are going well and are popular among members. Details of registered meetings can be found on the AA website, Online Meetings Section. We are aware that most members would prefer actual 'physical' meetings, but the Government/HSE guidelines are clear on this matter. Persons can meet outdoors in groups of up to four people, while keeping two metre social/physical distance.

We will continue to update members as the situation progresses. In the meantime, please be careful and keep safe.

One Day At A Time, from the General Service Office Committee

Wednesday 29th April 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

We hope you are all keeping well.

In our last update we stated that where an online group or meeting did not say @alcoholicsanonymous.ie then it was outside our structure. This was incorrect.

Many registered groups are holding online meetings, which they are entitled to do, and have not registered these meetings with GSO.

But remember, GSO can only publish a list of those meetings which have sent in the *Temporary Registration of AA Online Groups Form* via their official AA email address, to GSO.

Also, many registered groups have joined online websites that are not Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland and therefore have no assurance that other groups joining are inside our structure. So, while many groups are holding online meetings, only those meetings published on our "Online Meeting List" have been verified by GSO.

Please register so members can access much needed meetings. Be careful and stay safe, both online and out there in the world. We apologise for any confusion caused.

Reminder: The *Temporary Registration of AA Online Groups Form* can be sent, from a groups official AA email address, to GSO where they will be checked for accuracy etc. Forms are available online at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie. Just click on "Online Meetings" where you can download the form. Or contact GSO and a copy will be sent to you.

There has been a gratifying uptake on the Tabletop Contributions option on the AA website. As our vital services are provided solely from members' contributions, please consider making your contribution online. If you do wish to contribute it might be more prudent to donate weekly or monthly rather than after each meeting as each transaction attracts a fee.

GSO Office Management Committee.

Friday 17th April 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

The Office Committee keeps working to ensure that as many of AA's services as possible continue to operate normally. Due to the volume of calls and emails we ask members to be patient with minor delays.

Since the last update, the Online Meetings have begun to be listed in the Members Area. These have been slow enough to get started but no doubt it takes time for new ideas to embed themselves.

Remember, if an online meeting does not say "[@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://alcoholicsanonymous.ie)" then it is NOT A REGISTERED AA IRELAND meeting and is outside our Structure. All our existing protocols for meetings remain in place. Meetings which are not clearly open to all members are not part of our Structure, e.g. Women's Meetings, LGBT Meetings or any other meetings which appear to be exclusive to anyone at all are not part of AA Ireland Structure.

The Tabletop Contributions option has been moved to the front of the Website, where members wishing to contribute can now do so without their Group Login details.

This has resulted in a substantial uptake of this option. As we said before, please consider donating your weekly or fortnightly contribution at one time as this greatly reduces the charges incurred by GSBAA.

AA is not about money, but without money there would be no AA. Our gratitude to all who continue to contribute to our Fellowship. And, to those who have not already contributed, please consider doing so by visiting our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie.

Thursday 9th April 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

With the Coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown still firmly in place we hope that members are keeping in touch in whatever way possible for them -telephone, WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom and others. Whatever way you choose, the important thing is to keep in touch. We suggest longer-term members contact newcomers and offer the hand of friendship. Many people may be struggling to maintain their sobriety during these undoubtedly difficult times and any help would be useful to them. Pass it on.

Since the beginning of this week, we have made a List of Online Meetings available on our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie and this list is growing daily.

This list is intended to help members find ways to stay in touch and to attend meetings as often as they wish. Before listing, these meetings must register online with GSO, using the format provided on the website. Once details are checked for accuracy and groups are within the structure then the information is listed.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that details remain accurate. This list does not constitute an endorsement by GSBAA and is compiled by the Office Management Committee to provide up-to-date information.

The "Tabletop Contributions" option is up and running. Some members have remarked that they were having difficulty logging in to the payment option. To help with this we have taken steps to move the payment option to the homepage of the website. There will be no further need to login to the Members area.

Still, members should know their login details as there is much of interest on the Members Area – Road Back magazine current and back issues, Area minutes, Intergroup minutes and much more of interest to members.

Groups and Areas wishing to make their contributions should remember to retain the Prudent Reserve as decided by their Group Conscience. These funds will be needed to pick up their services as soon as the current lockdown is lifted.

A word of advice to groups and members: Please check your junk mailbox on your emails as some messages are being automatically sent to junk/spam.

Once you retrieve any mail you can choose to continue receiving AA mail. Some members have reported that they weren't receiving their mail. We hope this will solve the problem.

Finally, as this is the long holiday weekend, the GSO phones will close at 5.00pm today, Thursday 9th April and re-open on Tuesday morning, 14th April at 9.30am. AA Helplines around the country should be aware of this and have their various phones in operation for as long as possible over the weekend, as it may be a difficult time for some.

We hope you all have a peaceful and sober holiday break and look forward to picking up again next week. Stay safe, stay well, stay sober.

GSO Office Management Committee.

Monday 6th April 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Suggested Guidelines for Online Meetings.

These suggested guidelines acknowledge the many online Meetings that already exist. They do not constitute an endorsement by GSBAA or by the fellowship.

Only Conference can ratify and endorse these changes. This will be brought to Conference at the first opportunity, when the current COVID-19 emergency has ended.

There are helpful guidelines in place for groups wishing to avail of this service and we ask that Groups and members voluntarily keep to the guidelines at all times.

These steps are necessary to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of members wishing to attend, and to preserve the precious unity of the fellowship which we all work so hard to maintain. This acknowledgement is our effort to accept all who seek the hand of AA, and to unite us in our common purpose, and not divide us in our differences.

- Secretary/Host welcomes everyone "to this online meeting of XXXX group of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is XXXXX and I'm an alcoholic.
I will read a few housekeeping tips as many of us are not familiar with online attendance at meetings. Please bear in mind that this is an online meeting and, as such, your privacy cannot be guaranteed.
GSBAA have taken all possible steps to protect you and your anonymity but the internet is always vulnerable to hackers. So, please bear this in mind when sharing. Share as if you were at an Open, and not a Closed, AA meeting.
- I will now read the preamble.
- This meeting will close at (insert time here).
- As secretary/host of this meeting I have the ability to mute all attendees. You can still hear the person speaking. When the Chair has finished speaking you can put your hand up if you wish to share. I will get around to as many of you as possible during the time available.
- Let us take a moment to reflect (15-20 seconds)
- If there is a reading invite the reader now.
- Thank the reader and introduce the Chair to the meeting. Duration of Chair is whatever group conscience has decided.
- The meeting is now opened to members who wish to share. The Secretary/Host allows members to share according to Group Conscience decision.

- Five or so minutes before the end of the meeting introduce Tradition 7 and stress that, like everyone else, AA is facing difficult and uncertain times and needs YOUR help. Explain to attendees that they can donate much-needed Tabletop Contributions via the AA Ireland website at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie. The "Tabletop Contributions" option can be found in the Members Area. We recommend contributing your usual weekly contribution at one time as this incurs lower transaction charges to the Fellowship. Otherwise your valuable and much-appreciated contribution is substantially diluted by online expenses.
- Any group business or AA announcements can be read out at this point, as can the date and time of the next group online meeting.
- Read Tradition 12.
- The meeting closes with the Serenity Prayer.
- Secretary closes the internet connection.

Friday 3rd April 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

AA MEETINGS ONLINE

It has been decided to introduce AA Meetings online. This is an acknowledgement and does not constitute an endorsement. Only Conference can ratify and endorse these changes. This will be brought to Conference at the first opportunity, when the current COVID-19 emergency has ended. There are strict guidelines in place for groups wishing to avail of this service and these will be fully enforced at all times. These steps are necessary to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of members wishing to attend. Please go to the Updates Section of the website for further information.

Preliminary Online Meeting Guidelines

These preliminary guidelines are intended for use by groups holding or wishing to hold online AA meetings as part of their normal and usual schedule of meetings.

These will be updated regularly to take account of the evolving situation. More definitive guidelines will follow shortly along with a Temporary Registration Form for Online Meetings

Only groups which are already registered with GSO are eligible to use this online service. What this means in practical terms is that groups who have decided, via their Group Conscience to hold an online meeting, should complete the new Temporary Registration Form for Online Meetings.

Official mailboxes may be used to set up online meetings for now. It is a temporary measure during the Coronavirus emergency only. Email the completed Temporary Registration Form for Online Meetings to gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie. The group details

will be checked for accuracy etc. and the online meeting information will be uploaded to our website as it becomes available. Online meetings will be available to view under the 'Meetings' Tab on the Home page. Visitors can ask the Meeting Secretary/Host for an invite to join the meeting. Secretary/Host email address will be included with the group's online meeting information.

Only information coming from official AA email addresses will be considered. The information fields required to display your group's online meeting on the AA website are shown below. All AA's usual protocols remain in place.

County

Town

Group Name

Group Number

Official AA Group Email Address

Date of Group Conscience meeting

Group Conscience Secretary name *(required)*

Group Conscience Secretary tel. no. *(required)*

Online Media Platform being used

(i.e., Zoom, WhatsApp, Webex etc)

Online AA meeting days and times

Some preliminary guidelines to remember:

Only AA Ireland registered groups may be listed.

Specialist meetings are not recognised.

Traditions must be adhered to.

Online meeting format should be similar to normal meeting.

Meetings ought to be conducted in accordance with current guidelines. Nothing that could be considered outside of our AA structure should be introduced.

Tradition Seven at all online meetings.

As stated, these are very preliminary guidelines and will be updated regularly. We are in contact with AA UK and Europe to help each other to prepare these guidelines for the conduct of online meetings.

Monday 30th March 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Firstly, we would repeat the request sent out on Friday last, 27/03/20, To the many voluntary AA telephone helplines around the country, we are asking all the people who man these to consider extending the hours that the helplines are available to take calls.

Please consider this and the vital role our volunteers are playing in keeping AA available to all.

GSO is compiling a list of these Helpline numbers which it will publish on the website over the next few days. It will be updated as information becomes available, with opening hours and general geographic location and any other pertinent information.

Everyone knows the problems we are facing at this time. Perhaps now is the time for members to begin to offer solutions to these problems. Contact us with positive suggestions by logging on to www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie, pressing the 'CONTACT' button and leaving your helpful suggestions.

AA's declaration of unity: This we owe to AA's future: To place our common welfare first; To keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

Due to the vast number of people working from home in all walks of life, there is a backup of requests to web companies for 'work from home' enquiries. Therefore, AA's request for an Online Contribution Option is taking a little longer than normal. Please be patient, this will arrive on the Members Area of the AA website over the coming days.

Back issues of the Road Back Magazine are being put on the website today and members can access these. More issues will be uploaded as they are checked for confidentiality and GDPR issues.

Please note that GSO is no longer filling literature orders, in compliance to the Government's instructions of Friday 23/03/20, which prohibits employees from going to their place of work.

At this time, good sponsorship is one of the most valuable ways we can help each other. Newer members need the experience, strength and hope of the longer-term members. Sponsorship helps both the sponsor and sponsee. Both side of the relationship benefit from the relationship that builds up over time. So, reach out to your sponsor or sponsee for sobriety's sake.

As previously stated, we are fully aware of many online meetings being held around the country and around the world.

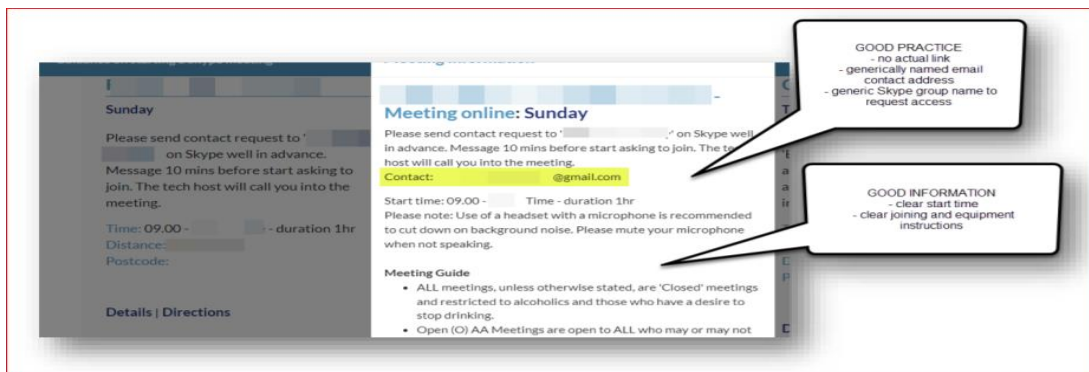
Many, but not all, of these meetings are held with AA's Traditions kept in mind. How does the ordinary member know which meeting is which? This is difficult to know when we are bombarded daily with irrelevant and even harmful information, when we are fooled by those who tell us they are only helping. We urge members to be safe out there and not be lulled into a false sense of security and certainty.

Although not endorsed by GSBAA, if a member or group does wish to meet up online, or start an online meeting there are a number of suggestions listed below.

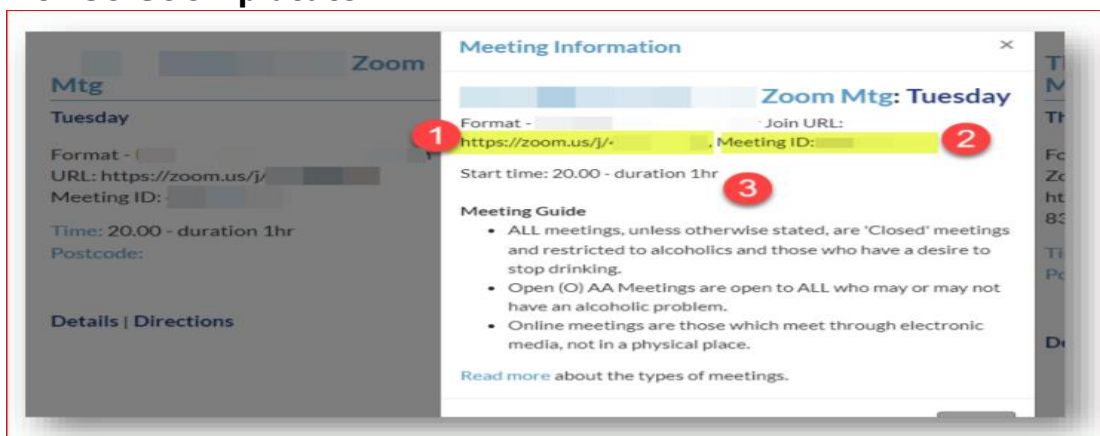
Remember that correspondence from alcoholicsanonymous.ie is the ONLY official Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland correspondence. AA Ireland has NO other websites or email addresses. Be careful and be safe.

There is an anonymity risk associated with sharing online meeting links directly online.

- **Good practice:**



- **NOT SO GOOD practice**



1. Online meeting link shared
2. Meeting entry password shared
3. No clear joining guidelines

Online meeting links often display personally identifiable information such as full names and email addresses – immediately upon opening the link.

There is Anonymity risk associated with sharing online meeting links directly online

- Online meetings are encouraged to provide a **generically names email address** which we can Post to the Meeting Finder page.
- People who wish to the online meeting can then **contact the email address and ask for the meeting link.**

Friday 27th March 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Following on from recent updates, we would like to thank those online meeting groups who have clarified their status on their web addresses. This makes it easier for us all to know where we are in regard to what is or is not part of AA Ireland. It helps us to Keep it Simple.

At this juncture, unity is of critical importance to us all. Our common welfare should come first. We do need to keep physical separation in place, but we do not need to isolate ourselves from our fellow members. More and more, we are keeping connected through the many means of communication available to us. GSBAA is pleased that members can keep in touch and "pass it on." Over the coming days we hope to offer some guidance on how best to handle the all-important issues of anonymity and confidentiality. This present situation is a seismic shift in perspective for us all and, like almost everyone else in the world, we are learning as we go along, adapting and accommodating ourselves to the evolving situation.

Anecdotal evidence from our phone records suggests that members are coping well with these changes. The AA programme teaches us how to live and how to accept what we cannot change, to accept life on life's terms.

Regarding the many voluntary AA telephone helplines around the country, we are asking all the people who man these to consider extending the hours that the helplines are available to take calls. Please consider this and the vital role our volunteers are playing in keeping AA available to all.

GSO is compiling a list of these Helpline numbers which it will publish on the website over the next few days. It will be updated as information becomes available, with opening hours and general geographic location and any other pertinent information.

Everyone knows the problems we are facing at this time. Perhaps now is the time for members to begin to offer solutions to these problems.

Contact us with positive suggestions by logging on to www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie, pressing the 'CONTACT' button and leaving your helpful suggestions.

Thursday 26th March 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

GSO continues to provide its full range of services to all members. The staff are now working from home but are connected to their workstations and there has been no interruption to service.

Orders for literature continue to be processed, 12th step calls are being taken, and other vital areas of our work are being dealt with. Thank you all for your continued support.

We continue to investigate all avenues of communication. Security of members' confidentiality and anonymity are foremost. Many online meetings have **NO** guarantee that that these fundamental requirements are being respected.

We respectfully ask that unregistered online meetings please **act responsibly and with honesty and to clarify to all members attending your meetings that you are not in any way associated with Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland. It is possible that, through neglecting these basic principles, ordinary members are allowed to believe that they are acting within the structure of AA Ireland when this is definitely not the case.** Thank you all in advance for your responsible co-operation and understanding.

"Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided they have no other affiliation." It is easy to see how our 3rd Tradition, in these unprecedented times, can be interpreted to include any two or three alcoholics who speak on their phones or via social media outlets or platforms and may, if they wish, call themselves an AA group.

As Bill W., our co-founder said: modern communication "used unselfishly and well (it) can produce results surpassing our present imagination."

There is no doubt that AA will survive and thrive when the current emergency ends. And it will end. **"This too shall pass."** When it does pass the hand of AA will continue to reach out to all who look for it.

Think of your AA friends and isolated members. Call them. Talk to them. Encourage them to do the same. AA will not be found wanting and will continue to secure the future of the Fellowship and all its members.

Tuesday 24th March 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

The Irish Government has today 24/3/2020 announced that "social gatherings of no more than four people are allowed – unless they are all from the same household."

There has been some confusion over whether Groups should close their meetings. The above statement should clarify this vitally important matter.

Yesterday's recommendation to close groups for the time being has now become Government instruction. In Northern Ireland, one of our Provinces, all meetings have also been suspended for the time being, following UK Government intervention.

Today, the decision was taken to suspend the Find a Meeting/Plan your Meeting section on the website.

Due to the unprecedented volume of calls to GSO, we request that members phoning GSO please be patient while waiting for a response. Where possible, please visit our website for updates **before** phoning to allow for urgent 12th Step calls to get through.

Literature orders may take some time but will continue to be filled. For Health and Safety reasons An Post and our courier company are changing their work rotas and this may result in delays.

We will continue bring you the latest information on the Coronavirus as it pertains to AA and its services.

Monday 23rd March 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

In strict accordance with HSE, Government and WHO recommendations, we strongly urge AA groups that are still holding meetings where members gather, to consider their responsibility to each other and to the larger public, and to close such meetings for the duration of this Coronavirus/COVID-19 emergency.

We are conscious that there are many alternative ways to keep in touch and, indeed, to hold virtual meetings; for example, WhatsApp groups, Skype and Zoom meetings, facetime calls and so on. *GSBAA, without instruction from Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Conference of Ireland*, cannot endorse any of these media meetings, we are nonetheless deeply conscious of the fact that these methods of mutual communication are an extremely valuable addition to members' "Sobriety Toolkit." We therefore urge group members to stay in touch using whatever means their Group Conscience may deem appropriate, keeping within our 12 Traditions, while still following statutory guidelines as they are issued and updated.

We will continue to update you all as the situation evolves. Be safe and be well during this difficult period.

Social Distancing:

Social distancing aims, through a variety of means, to decrease or interrupt the spread of COVID-19. It does this by minimising contact between potentially infected individuals and healthy individuals.

Social distancing is keeping a 2 metre (6 feet) space between you and other people is important to reduce the risk of further spread of the infection.

Self-isolate: People are now being asked to stay at home if they have 'flu-like symptoms (for example, fever, cough and so on) regardless of travel or contact history.

Social Interactions: Reduce interactions with people outside the workplace as much as possible.

All citizens are required to:

- avoid crowded places

- increase interpersonal distance (ideally separation of at least 2 metres, not shaking hands, avoiding communal sleeping areas)
- when in crowded settings, people should practice personal protective measures as they usually do (for example, frequent hand hygiene, avoid touching eyes/nose/mouth)
- You should not shake hands or make close contact where possible.

It is estimated that all these social distancing measures will significantly reduce the demand for hospital capacity during the peak of the epidemic. This may also reduce the total number of cases and death.

Friday 20th March 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

AA members using Social Media Platforms and Social Networking Sites

The General Service Board of AA is aware that some AA Members are using WhatsApp, facetime, online meetings and other media platforms to stay in touch with each other. While we acknowledge all of these efforts to carry our message of recovery, GSBAA neither endorses nor opposes any of these initiatives. ([Disclaimer – The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland wishes to stress that there is no connection between \[www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie\]\(http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie\) and Social Networking Sites or Social Media Platforms claiming to represent AA](#)).

The personal anonymity or confidentiality of those attending online meetings or using other media platforms may not be protected.

Members are encouraged to consider the isolated alcoholic who may not have access to these media platforms. Please reach out to members in your locality to let them know that we are still here for them. This is an opportunity for us to get back to basics and keep AA alive and well during these difficult times.

Postponed and cancelled AA Meetings

Some premises where meetings are held may impose restrictions and/or postpone activities in their buildings and this may affect AA group meetings/activities. Please contact the relevant premises for clarification.

During these unprecedented times, Groups that need to close temporarily due to Coronavirus (COVID-19), can have their information removed from the website.

The information will NOT be deleted from our database, but simply made inactive and can be made active again in due course.

However, this information will only be accepted by GSO via an official AA mailbox, i.e., group mailbox, Area Secretary mailbox, Intergroup Secretary or Conference delegate mailbox. GSO cannot accept changes by phone, personal mailboxes or via the AA website.

Groups that are temporarily moving meetings to more suitable locations should inform their insurance company/broker of their temporary change of address.

AA Conventions and One Day Events

Changes to scheduled AA Conventions etc will be communicated through the official AA website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie. **It is confirmed that the All-Ireland Convention 2020 is cancelled.**