Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Difficult times come to us all. We must all help one another. We must stand with one another. We must be understanding of each other’s problems. We must share each other’s burdens.

The General Service Office of AA on behalf of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland (GSBAA) will continue to update the Fellowship, via this document, during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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.

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 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 20 \textsuperscript{th} 2020 to June 26 \textsuperscript{th} 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. GSBA 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 25\textsuperscript{th} 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 29\textsuperscript{th} 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](http://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” 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 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.