

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE OF IRELAND**



**ROLL CALL AND MINUTES
OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
MEETING OF CONFERENCE**

Online Meeting

4th September 2021

1. Opening of Conference by Chairperson

Tom D. (Chairperson) opened Conference by welcoming everybody and asked for a moments silence to consider why we were here. Conference recited the Serenity Prayer and Tradition Two was read. Brian F. (Ulster Trustee) read from page 49 of the General Service Handbook 'Why Do We Need a Conference?' He also clarified that all Sub-Committee recommendations passed by a minimum of two thirds majority will become Conference policy immediately.

Conference agreed to complete its business on Saturday at 1.00pm. **(See Appendix 1).**

Roll Call

Connaught		Munster	
Trustee	Rory H.	Trustee	Martin C.
Delegate	Joe B.	Delegate	John T
Delegate	Marilyn K.	Delegate	Michael McG.
Delegate	Hubert J.	Delegate	
Delegate	Sean C.	Delegate	James S. (Absent)
Alternate IG Secretary	Michelle R.	IG Secretary	Audrey McD.
Leinster		Ulster	
Trustee	Emmet O'H.	Trustee	Brian F.
Delegate	Philip McG.	Delegate	John McC.
Delegate	Anthony McN.	Delegate	Billy I.
Delegate	Barbara A.	Delegate	Brian G.
Delegate	Michael D.	Delegate	Kenny P.
IG Secretary	Maria M.	IG Secretary	James McK.
Other		Observers	
Board Secretary	Tony O'C.	Barbara Counihan Mallory M.	Operations Manager Observer
WSD's	Helen H. Moira S.	Apologies	Monica McE. (Connaught IG Sec)
Non-AA Member Director/Trustee	Liz Cullen (Apologies)		
Non-AA Member Director/Trustee	Cindy O'Shea		
Non-AA Member Director/Trustee	Aisling Hussey		
Chairperson	Tom D.		

2. Sub-Committee on Literature (Appendix 2)

The Committee was requested to bring forward submission and recommendations on the following:

“A lot of literature, particularly Pamphlets in GB, are sold to Groups for a nominal fee (1 Penny). This is done for a number of reasons, primarily to encourage Groups and Members to purchase and read this material. Are there any items of literature that we could consider adopting a similar policy with, in Ireland?”

Martin C. (Munster Trustee) introduced this Agenda Item. At the outset, Martin C. acknowledged the contribution of all Sub-Committee Members, including Monica McE. (Connaught IG Secretary) who could not be present at today's Conference.

Martin C. also wished to have it recorded that he welcomed Michelle R., as Monica's Alternate. Martin C. then handed over to Anthony McN., Secretary of the Committee, to present the recommendations of the Sub-Committee.

Anthony McN. (Leinster) read the report and recommendations (**Appendix 2**). Anthony reported that the Committee had met on six occasions since March 2021. The Sub-Committee Members were Martin C. (Munster Trustee), Anthony McN. (Leinster), Kenny P. (Ulster), Philip McG. (Leinster) and Monica McE. (Connaught).

Synopsis of points highlighted in relation to this item:

There was a lengthy discussion in relation to Appendix A - Template for Closed AA Meetings.

- Moira S. (WSD) felt it would be better to discuss the recommended Template under item 6 - Sub-Committee on Online Meetings - as this Committee were bringing forward a similar Template for Online Meetings. Moira stated that perhaps both templates could be amalgamated.
- Hubert J. (Connaught) stated he was somewhat confused at the introduction of a template for Closed AA Meetings. Hubert went on to say that it was his understanding that the committee was to look at suggestions that came about as result of GB Conference in relation to Literature.

- Anthony McN. (Leinster) suggested that we accept, in principle, the proposed Template (Appendix A), with a view to both Committees meeting together later to amalgamate both recommended Templates for Online and Physical AA Meetings.
- Michael McG. (Munster) sought clarification on what we were being asked to vote on. Anthony McN. clarified the position on what was being suggested.
- Marilyn K. (Connaught) stated that when it came to voting on matters, Conference should be informed that a vote was about to take place.
- Brian F. (Ulster) pointed out that we started out speaking about Literature (Pamphlets), and we had now somehow moved on to making decisions about meeting templates.
- Helen H. (WSD) echoed Brian's sentiments. Moira S. (WSD) stated that both templates were nearly identical and rather than vote on the template suggested by the Literature Committee, she would suggest that we vote now on the remit of the Literature Sub-Committee. She said we could then deal with the Template for Closed Meetings afterwards under Item 6 when the Online Meeting Template would be discussed.

Moira suggested that both Committees could meet and agree to marry both Templates into one document. Hubert J. (Connaught) sought clarification on what the templates for meetings had to do with free literature. Anthony McN. (Leinster) clarified that literature is a collection of written work. Anthony further pointed out, that the proposed template was a piece of literature that currently does not exist in the General Service Handbook or Online. He felt that this piece literature should be made available for all Groups who wished to avail of it.

- Moira S. (WSD) wished to reiterate her earlier suggestion that Conference defer the discussion on the proposed Template and deliberate on it under Item 6, when the matter of Templates for Online Meetings would be discussed.
- Anthony McN. (Leinster) clarified the remit of the Literature Sub-Committee.

Conference at this point, decided to leave the topic of the proposed Template for Closed AA Meetings and discuss the matter under Item 6 - Online & Digital Meetings in Ireland.

Anthony McN. (Leinster) confirmed that the Sub-Committee had another recommendation as follows:

We are recommending the introduction of a "GSR Introductory Pack".

Having looked at all of the different forms of literature available from GSO and taking into consideration the many discussions held at Conference regarding 'Encouraging Members into Service', the Committee felt that the most appropriate place for us to look at was the role of the GSR.

The Committee felt that we should find some way to help new GSRs to adapt to their new roles. After much discussion, we agreed that we would put together a GSR Introductory Pack, as an aid to GSRs.

- John T. (Munster) reported that Kerry, along with North and East Cork have been producing this pack for the past twelve months. John further stated they had included additions, such as the General Service Handbook and the pamphlet The AA Group. The Area's bear the cost of this. John said he welcomed this initiative and would have some further suggestions in relation to the Booklet.

The Conference Chair asked if Conference were happy to agree in principle to the proposed Booklet.

An electronic poll was taken on the recommendation of the introduction of GSR Introductory Pack.

Conference **voted 100% in favour** of the introduction of the Booklet.

Anthony McN. (Leinster) thanked Conference and the Sub-Committee and suggested that the Sub-Committee would continue its work in researching other AA Literature.

- Hubert J. (Connaught) asked if there was a Sub-Committee of the General Service Board. The Secretary responded by saying no. Hubert J. (Connaught) felt it would be much better if the Board had its own Sub-Committee.
- Billy I. (Ulster) stated that he saw a major problem. This, he said, had do with a lack of communication. Billy felt that Conference should have been given advance copies of documents for review prior to Conference. That said, Billy wished to thank sincerely all the Sub-Committees for the work they had done.
- Brian F. (Ulster) felt that the suggestion put forward by Anthony McN. ought to be left until Conference next year.
- Marilyn K. (Connaught) agreed with Billy I's remarks regarding the distribution of documents and better communication.

Anthony McN. (Leinster) clarified the remit of the Sub-Committees as decided in March 2021.

- Mick McG. (Munster) said that all the proposals presented here today were discussed in his Areas.
- Hubert J. (Connaught) stated that there were now Motions and Proposals before Conference that Conference Delegates were not informed about in advance. The information presented today, Hubert said, should have been presented in advance of Conference to enable the Delegates to discuss same.

The Chair of Conference (Tom D.), put the question to Conference if they wished the current Sub-Committee to continue to carry out work in relation to Literature. Tom (Chair) clarified that the members of the Committee would rotate in and out of service as applicable to their terms as Conference Members.

- Helen H. (WSD) made the point that this matter should be deferred to the next sitting of Conference.
- Tom D. (Chair) again, asked if in principle, Conference agreed that the Sub-Committee should continue with a view to evaluating the issue again at the next Conference.

An electronic poll was conducted on the question. 59% voted in favour. 41% voted against.

The proposal to continue the Literature Sub-Committee was not carried.

Moira S. (WSD) stated that it should be a given, that we form Sub-Committees of Conference when required.

3. Sub Committee on Young Persons' Liaison Officer (YPLO) (Appendix 3)

Emmet O'H. (Leinster Trustee) read the report on behalf of the Sub-committee stating that; "At Conference in March 2021, following discussions on the matter, it was decided to form a Sub-Committee to investigate the merits (or not) of introducing the concept of utilising YPLOs within the Structure of AA in Ireland."

Conference Members from each of the Intergroups were invited to join the Sub-Committee. Eventually the Committee consisted of Emmet O'H. (Trustee), Anthony McN. (LIG), Kenny P. (UIG), Seamus Mc (MIG), Barbara A (LIG), James (UIG).

Synopsis of points highlighted in relation to the above Motions:

Marilyn K. (Connaught) sought clarification from Emmet O'H. (Leinster Trustee) on what would be the purpose/function of Young Persons Liaison Officer. Marilyn wished to establish if the purpose was to encourage people into service.

Emmet O'H. clarified that it was indeed the purpose to encourage young people into service.

Marilyn K. stated that she felt there should not be someone specifically appointed for such a role. Marilyn felt that all AA Members had a responsibility to encourage people into service. Therefore, she did not agree with the creation of a YPLO.

- Mick McG. (Munster) stated that all the services within Areas are currently suffering because of a lack of people coming into service. Michael felt that we had a bigger job of work to do in getting the services back up and running. He felt that the creation of such a position could be deemed as splitting the AA Structure or weakening Structure. Michael further stated that this recommendation could possibly be brought to the AA Groups and discussed.
- Moira S. (WSD) felt it was an excellent proposal and long overdue. Moira went on to say that she had been speaking with the YPLO in GB, and the role had transformed the thinking of young people in that country. Moira concluded by saying we should absolutely support this recommendation.
- Audrey McD. (Munster) concurred with the comments of Moira S. In Audrey's experience, young people have been lost to other 12 Step Fellowships because we are not reaching out enough to young people and involving them sufficiently. Audrey McD. fully supported the Proposal put before Conference.
- Hubert J. (Connaught) stated that he was not happy with the Proposal. Hubert pointed out that there was a certain amount of emotivism attached to this debate. Hubert felt we should not be bounced into making a decision. He further stated that there was an implication regarding this matter, that young people need handholding in AA. Hubert said he would not be supporting the recommendation.
- Cindy O'Shea (Non-AA Trustee) stated that the Proposal was excellent. Cindy said that in two years she has been consistently hearing that, we cannot keep young people in our Fellowship. Cindy felt that if we had a Young Persons Liaison Officer, it might help us understand how we can meet the needs of young people. It is not she said about rushing them into Service or giving them positions that they may not be ready for. Cindy concluded that it was a very open and inclusive recommendation, and she would be very supportive of it.

- Sean C. (Connaught) thanked the Sub-Committee for their work and his feeling was that young people connect with young people, and we should accept that. We have, Sean stated, a serious lack of young people in Service in AA. If we have a lack of these young people in Service, this means that there are more young people coming behind them who will also fall through the cracks. Sean summed up by saying that while he knew there was a fear of change along with fear of new things, we needed he said to do something to encourage young people. And he would be supporting the Proposal as we had nothing to fear with this initiative.
- Barbara A. (Leinster) pointed out that she was a member of the Sub-Committee, and an extensive amount of research had been done, including speaking with young people. Three meetings were held with people from GB as the Committee wanted to gain as much insight as possible. Barbara also said that they had spoken with young members who had come to AA as young people and went on to become YPLO'S themselves. Barbara, in conclusion, said that there was no concept of pushing or bouncing when it comes to this recommendation. Barbara said that there is a whole different concept around how young people communicate with each other etc. Young people in AA are not heard, not because they are being dismissed. They feel they don't have a voice. It is important that we do not continue to lose these young people and she would be strongly recommending this Proposal to Conference.
- Anthony McN. (Leinster) stated that he had recently spoken a small group of young members in Cork City recently and the believed that this concept was a brilliant idea. Anthony finished by saying that he couldn't understand what the hesitation was in relation to this recommendation.
- Brian G. (Ulster) said he would be totally supportive of this recommendation. Brian went on to point out that all he had to do was look around at the attendance at Area Meetings and see 30% attendance. Brian G. pointed that that young people have their own way of communicating. He asked members to have an open mind on this Proposal, he commended the Sub-Committee on their work and on their recommendation. Brian concluded by saying that we needed young blood in the Fellowship and in Service. He did not see why there could be any objection to the recommendation.
- Marilyn K. (Connaught) said she had listened to the contributions from Conference and her mind had not changed. She loved to see young people in Service. Marilyn said she had no difficulty in helping young people in AA. But she did not feel that this recommendation was the way forward.

- Helen H. (WSD) stated that she would like to see what the remit of a Young Persons Liaison Officer is. Helen added that such a remit would have to be made very clear, overall, Helen said that we certainly needed to try something different help young people and make them part of the Fellowship.
- Maria M. (Leinster) said that she would fully supporting this initiative. Speaking as Leinster Intergroup Secretary, we have spent hours discussing the challenges facing AA relating to Service and promoting this very important subject. Young people, Maria stated, need both the support of older people in AA because of their wisdom but equally they needed the support of their young counterparts. This, Maria concluded, was a wonderful Proposal.
- John T. (Munster) pointed out that his feeling was that this recommendation was excellent. John had investigated the concept of a Young Persons Liaison Officer on the GB Website; he said the remit was very clear and concise. John failed to understand what the difficulty was with accepting this Proposal. He further stated that maybe some people had some preconceived ideas regarding the role. If this was the case, he suggested people should visit the GB Website and investigate the role and remit.
- Mick McG. (Munster) asked for clarification on how such a person would be appointed to such a role. Anthony McN. (Leinster) said that the appointment would be made within the Service Structure. The existing Committee would guide the process if Conference agreed to keep the Committee in place for an 18-month period.
- Audrey McD. (Munster) confirmed that there was 48-page Conference document available on www.aa.org dedicated to young people, if people wished to view it.
 - Anthony McN. (Leinster) clarified that the document that Audrey was referring to was not Conference Approved in Ireland and could only be used as a guide.
 - Moira S. (WSD) pointed out that there was extensive documentation available in the AA GB Service Structure Handbook on this matter.
- Brian F. (Ulster) said that he supported the idea of the Committee staying on place to help support the person coming into the role of YPLO.

Emmet O'H. (Leinster), at Conferences request, repeated the Proposal of the Sub-Committee.

At this point the Chairman of Conference called for a vote on the recommendation of the appointment of a YPLO for Ireland and the Sub-Committee remaining in place for an 18-month period.

87% voted in favour of the recommendation, 13% voted against.

The recommendation was carried.

4. Sub-Committee on Service (Appendix 4)

Brian F. (Ulster Trustee) introduced this report on behalf of the Committee. Brian noted the contributions of the Committee Members which included along with himself; Anthony McN. (Leinster), Kenny P. (Ulster), Helen H. (WSD), Rory H. (Trustee Connaught) and Mick McG. (Munster).

In Great Britain, retiring Delegates and Trustees are encouraged to stay involved in Service at Intergroup/Area level. Is this something we should look at in Ireland?

Synopsis of points highlighted in relation to this item:

Brian F. (Ulster Trustee) stated that initially Committee Members had strongly held views on whether Conference Delegates/Trustees, should return to Service at Area/Intergroup level. Brian said that the Sub-Committee had a thorough discussion on this item. The Committee, he said, decided to go out the Areas to obtain their views on this matter. Subsequently the Committee reported back that there was no real support for the initiative. Brian further added that in some Provinces, there was a strong feeling against Delegates/Trustees returning to Service apart from at Group level. Brian F. stated, the Sub-Committee felt that reviewing page 51 of the General Service Handbook, particularly in relation to Conference Delegates and encouraging them to return to Service at Group level might be helpful. This he said was the conclusion of the Sub-Committee.

However, the Sub-Committee were asking Conference to review the section on page 51. *'Former GSCDS having served a full term ought not to return to Service at Area or Group level. They may serve as Officers of their Group.'*

Brian F. concluded that the above should, in his view, be changed to read *'Conference Delegates who have served their full-term ought to return to Service at AA Group level.'*

- Rory H. (Connaught Trustee) apologised to for his absence at some of the Committee Meetings. Rory stated that he supported the report as presented by Brian F.
- Anthony McN. (Leinster), who sat on three of the Sub-Committees, felt that this particular Committee did not function well at all. There were a number of reasons for this. Anthony continued by stating that the report that was read out was not the report that was agreed, he said there were changes to it.
- He also pointed out that the Sub-Committee, in his view, was strongly influenced by a former Secretary to the Board. Anthony's sense was that the Fellowship's voice was not heard in relation to this item.

- Anthony McN. further stated that he did not think we had done this question justice, he was also aware that this item was not discussed at every Intergroup. The Sub-Committee, he said, did not work in harmony or as part of a team. Suggestions, he said, were put forward by other Committee Members, but these were ignored. Anthony concluded by saying that a new Committee should be established to examine this question again.
- Cindy O'Shea (Non-AA Member Trustee) asked if the Committee considered how the experience and skills of the people retiring from service could be harnessed. Cindy agreed with the principle of boundaries around people's periods of Service and encouraging new people into Service positions. Cindy's concern was the loss of experience and skills to the organisation. Was there any consideration given to the loss of experience given to this question aside from the local AA Groups and Area Committees, Cindy queried. Could retiring Delegates experiences be harnessed in some form, to help foster and develop the organisation?

The Chairman (Tom D.) asked if any Member of the Sub-Committee could bring clarity to the queries raised by Cindy O'Shea.

- Brian F. (Ulster Trustee) said that this was a delicate topic. He stated that the conclusion of the Committee was that it wouldn't be feasible for ex- Conference Delegates to return to Service, but they could he said return to Group level if there was a change to the General Service Handbook. He highlighted that there were eight pages (14 to 22) in the Handbook dedicated to the AA Group. Brian reiterated that the Handbook could be changed to reflect '*ought to return to Service at Group level*' to replace '*ought not to return to Service at Area level*'
- Hubert J. (Connaught) said that if the Proposal that was just outlined by the Ulster Trustee (Brian F.) is as reads, he would not have any difficulty with accepting it. Hubert stated that he would not be in favour of former Delegates returning to Service at Area Committee level.
- Kenny P. (Ulster) stated that as a member of the Sub-Committee, he had made a Proposal which he noted had been removed from the report. It was Kenny's feeling that former Conference Delegates or Trustees should not be brought back to Area's or Intergroups to influence any decisions. He said that as an outgoing Delegate, he was happy to return to his Group and help in any way possible. Having said this, Kenny went on to say that there was a difficulty filling Service Positions at his Intergroup.
- Anthony McN. (Leinster) said he gotten an overwhelming response from members of the Fellowship; their sense was that they did not want

former Conference Delegates returning to Service after they had rotated out. This he said was somewhat surprising.

- However, Anthony went on to point out that he also got a substantial response from Fellowship Members who stated that they did not want to lose the experience and skills of Delegates who had given long periods of time to AA Service. They wondered how this experience could somehow be harnessed. Anthony further pointed to the fact that to-date; we had not come up with a solution to this issue. Anthony concluded by stating that re-examining the page in the Service Handbook was not a solution to this matter as it didn't go far enough.
- John T. (Munster) suggested that this whole issue ought to be looked again as he been in touch with Groups in his Area. The Groups, he said, were not in favour of former Delegates returning to Service. However, the Groups did pose the question what if? And how could the experience of these former Delegates in Service be utilised rather than be lost. John concluded that the matter needed to be revisited again sooner rather than later.
- Helen H. (WSD) pointed out that she had served on the Committee and that her sense was that we could be a bit more open in the Service Handbook particularly around language, to allow former Delegates to return to Service in their own Area and Committees attached to those Areas.
- Mick McG. (Munster) felt that the Committee worked quite well. He stated that there was huge opposition to Delegates returning to Service at Intergroup, and Conference level. There was, he said, no objection to anyone returning to Service at Group level. He did not see an issue with former Delegates returning to Service and being involved in PI, Prison Service Committees etc., as their experience could be valuable.
- Barbara A. (Leinster) reported that she too had also discussed this item in her Areas and in her anchor Group. There is plenty of scope, Barbara said, for former Delegates to return to Service at Service Committee level.
- Anthony McN. (Leinster) pointed out there has been a lot of good discussion and suggestions from various Conference Members however, Anthony pointed out that none of these contributions were included in the Proposal before us today. We could, Anthony stated, only vote on what we were presented with in the recommendation from the Sub-Committee.

Brian F. (Ulster Trustee) pointed out that the consensus of the Sub-Committee was that we change the wording of the General Service Handbook (page 51).

Brian F. stated that the Proposal was clear and should be as follows: "*former Conference Delegates having served their full-term ought to return to Service at Group level.* (Pages 14 to 22 of Service Handbook). "*They ought not return to Service at Area or Intergroup*".

That Brian concluded is the proposal from the Sub-Committee.

After a vote, 67% in favour of the proposal. 33% voted against.

The recommendation was carried.

5. Sub-Committee on Online & Digital Meetings in Ireland (Appendix 5)

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

Moira S. (WSD) presented this report on behalf of the Sub-Committee.

Synopsis of points highlighted in relation to this item:

Moira S. (WSD) stated that the Sub-Committee began at its first meeting by asking the following question – 'Are Digital Online Meetings part of our Structure in AA?'

We looked, Moira said, at the foreword to the Fourth Edition of the 'Big Book' where it is quoted; "*While our literature has preserved the integrity of the AA message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances for example, AA Members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting anywhere, AA's share experience strength, and hope with each other in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics modern to modern or face to face. AAs speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity*"

Moira said it's already stated "*AA Members with computers can participate in meetings online*"

We decided we can simply accept this. Moira highlighted that there was no issue here, as AA Online Meetings are indeed already part of our Structure, and the Sub-Committee of Conference accepts this.

The next question the Committee asked was, do we need to bring Digital or Online Meetings into the Structure of AA in Ireland?

Having discussed and accepted that such meetings are already part of the AA Structure as outlined in the 'Big Book', the question was already answered.

The Sub-Committee were happy to have their report along with the recommendations (Appendix 5) to Conference passed through the Structure to all AA Groups in Ireland. Moira concluded by stating that the Sub-Committee, had worked very well and overall being part of the Committee was a very positive and enlightening experience.

Billy I. (Ulster) shared some of the negative experiences he had regarding an Online Group in Ulster.

- John T. (Munster) Groups, he said, will do their own thing but posed the question how we would regulate Groups if they were not following our Traditions. Maybe this a question for another day. John concluded by saying that he would be very much in favour of the recommendations as submitted by the Sub-Committee and thanked the Committee for their work.
- Joe B. (Connaught) stated that he wished to thank the Committee for all their work. Joe said Online Meetings were here to stay. Joe B. was happy that the Committee had highlighted the issue of the funds going through Structure.
- Kenny P. (Ulster) congratulated the Committee on a job well done. Kenny said he was very happy that Online Meetings are within the Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous and that guidelines are now before us to enable AA Groups to run Online Meetings, that Online Meetings were not outside the Structure, and he would be strongly supporting the recommendations.
- Anthony McN. (Leinster) stated that this Committee of Conference was established as a result of two Motions coming from Cork. Anthony further said that these two AA Groups were wrongly advised that Online Meetings were outside Structure as were other Groups around the Country by a Conference Delegate. He also clarified that that AA Groups in Leinster were written to on the 9/8/2020, advising them that a Group that is part of the AA Structure can only be a Physical Meeting. We need, Anthony said, to be very careful, that as Delegates we do not give inaccurate or incorrect information to the Fellowship. Members of Conference should not be contacting AA Groups all over the Country, giving their own personal views, without seeking clarification from Conference.

It has been shown here today, after investigation by the Sub-Committee, that Online Digital AA Meetings are inside our Structure.

- Anthony McN. concluded that in relation to the Meeting Format, as discussed as part of this Sub-Committee's recommendations, his Proposal was that if the Sub-Committees approved the recommendations before Conference on this item, that both Committees meet and discuss the Meeting Formats as recommended by the Literature Committee and the Sub-Committee for Online & Digital Meetings to marry both Meeting Formats into one format for Groups. We are, he said, looking for agreement in principle on marrying both Meeting Formats after both Sub-Committees agree on this document.

Moira S. (WSD) recommended that the recommendation for Online Meetings along with the suggested Meeting Format be sent with Conference Minutes and that all the details be placed in the Members Area of the AA Website.

A vote was taken on this recommendation. 100% in favour.

The Recommendation was unanimously carried.

The Chairman of Conference thanked everyone for their contributions and their assistance.

The Secretary to the General Service Board announced that the Board have expressed a desire to hold an in person General Service Conference in March 2022.

This, he said, would be contingent on Government and Public Health Guidelines.

Appendices

- (Appendix 1) Adoption of 2021 Conference Agenda.
Adoption of Agenda and other urgent
business in accordance with Paragraph 1.5,
page 58 of 01/2021 Service Handbook.
- (Appendix 2) Report from Sub-Committee on Literature
- (Appendix 3) Report from Sub-Committee on YPLO
- (Appendix 4) Report from Sub-Committee on Service
- (Appendix 5) Report from Sub-Committee on Online
Meetings



DRAFT AGENDA

Meeting Type: General Service Conference of AA in Ireland
Date: Saturday 4th September 2021
Time: 9.30am – 1.00pm
Venue: Online using Zoom Platform

1	Opening of Conference by Chairperson	9.30am
2	Roll Call	9.30am
3	Sub-Committee on Literature	9.30am – 10.15am
4	Sub-Committee on YPLO	10.15am – 11.00am
	Tea/Coffee Break	11.00am – 11.15am
5	Sub-Committee on Service	11.15am – 12noon
6	Sub-Committee on Online Meetings	12noon – 1.00pm

Sub-Committee on Literature

Appendix 2

Presented to the Meeting of Conference 4th September 2021

“A lot of literature particularly pamphlets, in GB are sold to groups for a nominal fee (1 penny). This is done for a number of reasons, primarily to encourage Groups and Members to purchase and read this material. Are there any items of literature that we could consider adopting a similar policy with, in Ireland?”

A Committee was set up following Conference in March 2021 to look at the above question and to return to Conference with proposals/recommendations. The Committee consisted of the following members:

Martin C.	Munster Trustee (Chairman)
Anthony McN.	Leinster Delegate. (Secretary)
Kenny P.	Ulster Delegate
Philip McG.	Leinster Delegate
Monica McE.	Connaught Intergroup Secretary

The Committee met on 6 different occasions. We initially met to decide what areas we should look at. We analysed all literature currently available from GSO. We took into consideration many factors including benefit to members, cost to the Fellowship, likelihood that this literature might be used.

A lot of robust and lively discussion took place in what can only be described as a highly constructive forum. Eventually we unanimously agreed on 2 recommendations, which we would like to place before Conference.

- 1. We are recommending that a “Suggested Meeting Introduction Template” be included in the Service Handbook. We are also recommending that this Template be downloadable from the AA Website.**

While there is currently a similar Template for Group Conscience Meetings, there is no template for an actual AA Meeting. In the past, many groups, particularly new groups, have sought out such a template. Our suggested template is almost identical to that currently used by most groups in Ireland. However, it was agreed by our committee that we should include some extra information regarding Tradition 7, giving a brief description of how all monies collected are spent. This has been introduced over the last 12 – 18 months in Area 12 in Leinster (Wicklow) and it has made a positive difference to the sums collected at meetings. However, as with everything in AA, this template is only a suggestion for those groups who wish to use it. It is completely optional, and it is intended for those groups who may not be sure of the correct format to use. *Our proposed template is included as Appendix A.*

We believe that this Template would be beneficial to the Fellowship and therefore have no hesitation in recommending its inclusion in all future Service Handbooks.

Appendix 2

2. We are recommending the introduction of a "GSR Introductory Pack"

Having looked at all of the different forms of literature available from GSO and taking into consideration the many discussions held at Conference regarding 'Encouraging Members into Service', the Committee felt that the most appropriate place for us to look at was the role of the GSR.

As Bill W. once stated, *"the strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative (GSR) that the group elects. I cannot emphasise too strongly the GSR's importance"*

The Committee felt that we should find some way to help new GSRs to adapt to their new roles. After much discussion, we agreed that we would put together a GSR Introductory Pack, as an aid to GSRs.

Initially, we intended to put together a number of Pamphlets in a folder, along with an explanatory page or two. However, GSBAA subsequently obtained permission from GSO in New York to reprint all of the literature that we intended to use, into one Booklet, which would be much simpler and cost effective. We are proposing to produce such a Booklet.

The Table of proposed contents is included as Appendix B.

The background is to encourage Members into Service. The first copy for each Group should be free, to be distributed by the Conference Delegates.

We have produced an explanatory letter for the Delegates which is included in this report as Appendix C.

Further copies of the Booklet should be available for purchase from GSO, at cost price. Areas might be encouraged to purchase copies for incoming GSRs

This Committee has worked extremely well. We are recommending that the Committee be made permanent with new members co-opted as members rotate out of Service. We believe that this would be very beneficial to the Fellowship going forward.

The Literature Committee

Report Appendix A

1. Good morning everyone and welcome to this closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, ' _____ ' Group. A special welcome to any newcomer, visitor, or anyone returning after an absence.
2. My name is ' _____ ' and I am an alcoholic and your Secretary for today.
Can I ask please that all mobiles be turned to silent mode. I will now read the Preamble after which ' _____ ' will read from Chapter 5, "How it Works"

Preamble

3. Alcoholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA Membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.
4. ' _____ ' will now read "How it Works" from Chapter 5 of the A.A. Big Book
5. Thank you ' _____ ' and, before I pass you to ' _____ ' who will share their experience, strength, and hope, let us pause for the customary moments silence to reflect on why we are here and remember the still suffering alcoholic both inside and outside of the AA rooms,

To end:

Thank you ' _____ '.

Tradition 7 states:

'There are no dues or fees in AA. We are entirely self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Therefore, we take up a collection for the Rent and a Contribution through the Structure to assist AA in providing services to help bring the message to those who still suffer through the Afterhours Phone Service, Hospital, Prison and Treatment Centre support and Literature.

(Due to Covid regulations the contributions can be placed in the box here – if required).

Remember Tradition 12

Anonymity is the Spiritual Foundation of our all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place Principles before Personalities.

Who you see here, What you hear here, When you leave, please let it stay here.

We will now close the meeting with the Lord's Prayer and the Serenity Prayer for those who wish to join in and before that lets show our appreciation to '_____' for a wonderful chair.

Report Appendix B

CONTENTS

- 1. The role of the GSR**
- 2. Understanding Anonymity**
- 3. Growing into Service**
- 4. AA Tradition – How it developed**
- 5. 12 Traditions – Illustrated**
- 6. 12 Concepts For World Service – Illustrated**

Report Appendix C

September 2021

Fellow Delegates,
"Sometimes it is easier to say No".

Successive Conference Agendas have included the ever-present topic of Encouraging Members into Service. The filling of service positions continues to pose difficulties across the fellowship.

Sometimes this reluctance is born out of a fear of the unknown and not because we don't want to give back. In an effort to assist us as Conference Delegates in dealing with this an INFORMATION PACK is being made available free of charge and will consist of:

The Role of the GSR
Understanding Anonymity
Growing Into Service
AA Traditions – How it Developed
12 Traditions – Illustrated
12 Concepts for World Service – Illustrated

Appendix 2

It is hoped that its introduction by us through each of our Areas that this pack can be then brought to all groups by the Area Committee to further the knowledge and understanding of members who wish to be volunteer as GSR'S.

Yours in Service
Literature Committee

DRAFT

Sub-Committee on YPLO

Presentation to Conference on findings of the Sub-Committee on the merits of Young Persons' Liaison Officer (YPLO) within the Structure of AA in Ireland

At Conference in March 2021, following discussions on the matter, it was decided to form a Sub-Committee to investigate the merits (or not) of introducing the concept of utilising YPLOs within the Structure of AA in Ireland.

Conference Members from each of the Intergroups were invited to join the Sub-Committee. Eventually the Committee consisted of:

Emmet O'H. (Trustee)
Anthony Mc. (LIG)
Kenny (UIG)
Seamus Mc. (MIG)
Barbara A. (LIG)
James (UIG)

INVESTIGATIONS

We believe that young people are the future of our fellowship. We don't believe that young people should be treated differently or in an exclusive manner. The purpose of a YPLO, as we understand, is to mentor and encourage young people into service at Area & Intergroup levels and to ensure their knowledge of our Traditions and Concepts for World Service.

We met together on 5 occasions – initially to discuss a strategy going forward. Some Committee Members individually met with “young” members in their Areas, to ask what their thoughts were on their place in AA and reported back to the Sub-Committee. We wanted to find out, first-hand, what more could we do as a Fellowship, to include and encourage young members to stay with AA, and to get involved with Service.

At subsequent meetings, we met several times with GB Members - some who were involved with the initial introduction of YPLOs in GB, and others actively in Service, filling the roles at GB equivalent of Area, Intergroup and Conference levels. These meetings were extremely informative, and we learned a lot regarding the role in GB of a YPLO.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

At the end of some pretty lengthy meetings, and exhaustive discussions, we believe we have teased out almost all we could regarding this subject. We feel ~~ta~~ this subject is too important to make any rash decisions. We believe that the concept of YPLOs is definitely something that could work really well in Ireland.

However, if it is to be successful, it will need time, guidance, and support. This is the key for it to be successful in the long term.

We had an analogy, that if we simply appointed YPLOs with no particular purpose or role in place, it would be like putting somebody in the Sahara Desert with a shovel and asking them to "Move it!"

PROPOSAL TO CONFERENCE

We came to a unanimous consensus decision of what our proposal is today.

We are recommending that the position of Young Person's Liaison Officer be introduced into the Fellowship.

To help the new position get off the ground, we are also proposing the following;

1. The current YPLO Sub-Committee should stay in place, in the short term. (The Members of that Sub-Committee may change as some Delegates rotate out of Service)
2. The Sub-Committee should introduce Young People from each Intergroup onto the Sub-Committee.
3. As we move forward, the original Conference Members would gradually pull back from the Sub-Committee, allowing the YPLO's to bring it forward. We would hope that this would happen in a timeframe of about 18 months.
4. All future YPLO positions would happen through the Structure in the normal manner.
5. Expenses, if they are incurred, would be funded by the Intergroup

This is the unanimous consensus proposal of this Sub-Committee on YPLO.

Presented to Meeting of Conference 4th September 2020

Sub-Committee on Service

Sub-Committee:

Kenny
Anthony
Helen
Rory
Mick
Brian

Question:

In Great Britain, retiring Delegates and Trustees are encouraged to stay involved in Service at Intergroup/Area level.

Is this something we should look at in Ireland?

Maybe there is some way we can harness and use this experience which is currently being lost.

The Committee met three times and had a thorough discussion on the pros and cons of retiring Delegates returning to Service.

It was felt by the Committee, after listening to the views of Areas and Intergroup, that there was no real support for a return at Area or Intergroup level, and in some Provinces, a strong feeling against.

The Committee felt that Conference could review Page 51 of The Service Handbook:

(Former GSCDs, having served their full-term, ought not return to service at Area or Intergroup level. They may service as officers in their home group).

Presented to Meeting of Conference 4th September 2020

Sub-Committee on Online Meetings

Online & Digital Meetings in Ireland

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 5

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

Listing your group on www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

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

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

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

Groups with both Online and Physical meetings

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

Tradition 7

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

Paying for Online Meetings

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

Sharing

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

Chat Function

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

Meeting Format Guide

Below we have an example of an Online Meeting Guide. It covers some of the concerns that our Groups and Areas have experienced. We recommend that you tailor it to suit your own group.

Hello everyone, and welcome to this closed meeting of the '___' Group of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is '___' and I am an alcoholic.

I'd like to extend a special welcome to any newcomers, visitors, or anyone in early sobriety. If you would like to introduce yourself, please let me know by raising your hand.

This is an online meeting where the group has optimised privacy and security settings to protect our anonymity. In line with Tradition One, we try to ensure that this is a safe space.

We ask that you keep your video turned on. If you cannot do this, please phone in on the following number '___' and check your provider for the phone cost.

(Optional: If there is an interruption, the Secretary might need to remove you from the room subject to Group Conscience decisions).

As Secretary/Host of this meeting I will mute all attendees. When the Chair has finished speaking you can unmute yourself if you wish to speak.

The Chat function will be enabled at the end of the meeting to allow members to share information.

I will now read the Preamble:

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Appendix 5

I've asked '____' to read 'How it Works'.

Can we pause now for a moments silence to reflect on why we're here, and to spare a thought for the still suffering alcoholic both inside and outside the rooms.

Now I will hand the meeting over to '____' who is going to share her/his experience, strength, and hope on recovery from alcoholism for approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

When the Chair has finished:

Can I ask you all to keep your sharing brief, so that as many people as possible can share? You may unmute yourself/raise your hand and I'll unmute you. The meeting is now open for sharing.

After sharing:

TRADITION 7, which states "Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions".

Money goes to pay Rent and Literature, and excess funds are sent to our General Service Office for the Phone and Prison Service, and the running of the Office to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Members can make an anonymous contribution by going to the following link: (Pay Pal and SumUp or contributing directly to www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie are some options). I have put the details in the Chat.

Are there any Group or AA related announcements?

Our group conscience is held '____'. If you are a member of the '____' Group or would like to be, please attend.

Literature is for sale from GSO at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie. Service positions are available for _____.

I've asked '____' to read The Promises.

I'd like to thank '____' for reading How it Works, '____' for reading The Promises and '____' for co-hosting.

Anonymity is the Spiritual Foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place Principles before Personalities. Therefore, who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

We will end the meeting with the Lord's Prayer and the Serenity Prayer, for those who wish to say them, but first can we thank '____' for doing the Chair.