



Annual Report

2020-2021

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Preamble

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

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

“The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership”

Introduction from our Company Secretary

Company Secretary Anthony O'Carroll

Without question it has been a tough year for Alcoholics Anonymous, we faced unprecedented challenges, that seemed relentless at times due to the global Coronavirus pandemic.

As I reflect on the past year and the difficult times, I am touched by the resilience and perseverance from those who help steer and sail our organisation through the choppy waters of 2020. The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (GSBAA) and our General Service Office (GSO) staff were relentless in their determination to meet problems head on to ensure that the services of AA could continue.

Our team consisting of the Office Management Committee, GSBAA Directors and our General Service Office staff are motivated to always do their best for our AA membership and those accessing our services with a level of empathy and intuition that makes me as Company Secretary very proud. I would like to pay tribute to our three employees for their adaptability, diligence, and cooperation in a seriously challenging environment, especially during the past year. They were mobilised to work from home, practically overnight, when we were first grasped by the pandemic. They continue to work from home and provide support to those who seek the services of AA.

There was also a drive and determination amongst our AA membership in 2020 to find ways to keep our members connected. While it was tough, relentless and painful at times, the pandemic provided some of the greatest opportunities to really strengthen the bonds of love and service to others.

This year has shown me that having the right state of mind, the capability to change, to respond with agility and above all, resilience, is what keeps us strong. I believe everything in life is subject to change. Adapting to change and having the courage to change can be the key to growth and success. Our goal is to embrace change,

we do not want it to pass without grasping the opportunity to take our learnings and grow even stronger as we focus and plan for a future of hope with brighter days ahead for our organisation.

The past year saw a substantial number of new projects undertaken by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (GSBAA) Ireland. Our Strategic Plan was drafted and approved, advancement in areas of our plan for National Public Information, we updated the official AA Website, sanctioned a new Company Constitution, updated policies relating to the new Charities Governance Code which the General Service Board are committed to. None of this would have been possible if it was not for the commitment of Office Management Committee, it consists of the Director/ Leinster AA Trustee. Operations Manager and myself under the direction of our Company Directors/Trustees. This team should be credited for their unwavering and tireless dedication in their voluntary roles in what has been a truly difficult year.

Looking to 2021, we know we will all continue to face challenges, personal and professional. Any such challenges can and will be overcome with our support network of staff, Directors, Company Members, and the AA Membership who are the soul of AA on the island of Ireland. These combined resources will continue to deliver the much-needed service needs of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland.

Anthony O'Carroll

Company Secretary GSBAA

General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland CLG (GSBAA)

The company name of the registered charity known as AA or Alcoholics Anonymous, a company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital and registered under the Companies Act 2014.

GSBAA Trustee/Directors

The GSBAA consists of seven Trustees/Directors. These comprise of four AA Member Trustee/Directors (also known as Provincial Trustees) and three Non-AA Member Directors.

The main responsibility of the GSBAA members is to manage the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland in accordance with the Constitution of the Company as approved by the company members.

Board of Directors

- Patrick Kennedy
- Brian Fitzpatrick
- Martin Crowley
- Elizabeth Cullen
- Cindy O'Shea

Company Secretary

- Anthony O'Carroll

Company Information

Registered Company in Ireland 64287
Charitable Status CHY 6014
RCN 20010010

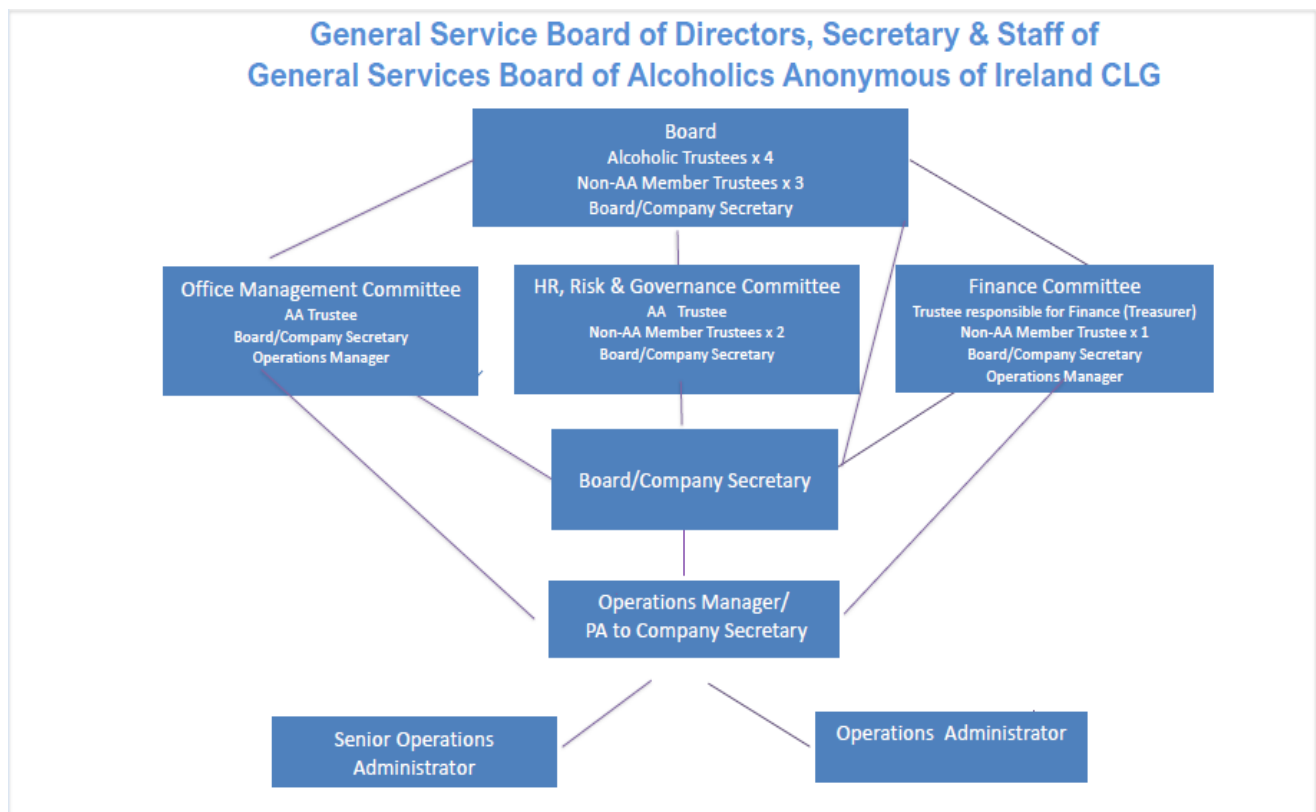
Premises

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG, (GSBAA) is in legal possession of two properties.

These are, the General Service Office (GSO) at Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Dublin 9. This property is held on a 20-year lease, which commenced in January 2007.

The second property is the Central Service Office, located at Unit 11, North City Business Centre, 2, Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GG. This property is held on a one-year renewable agreement.

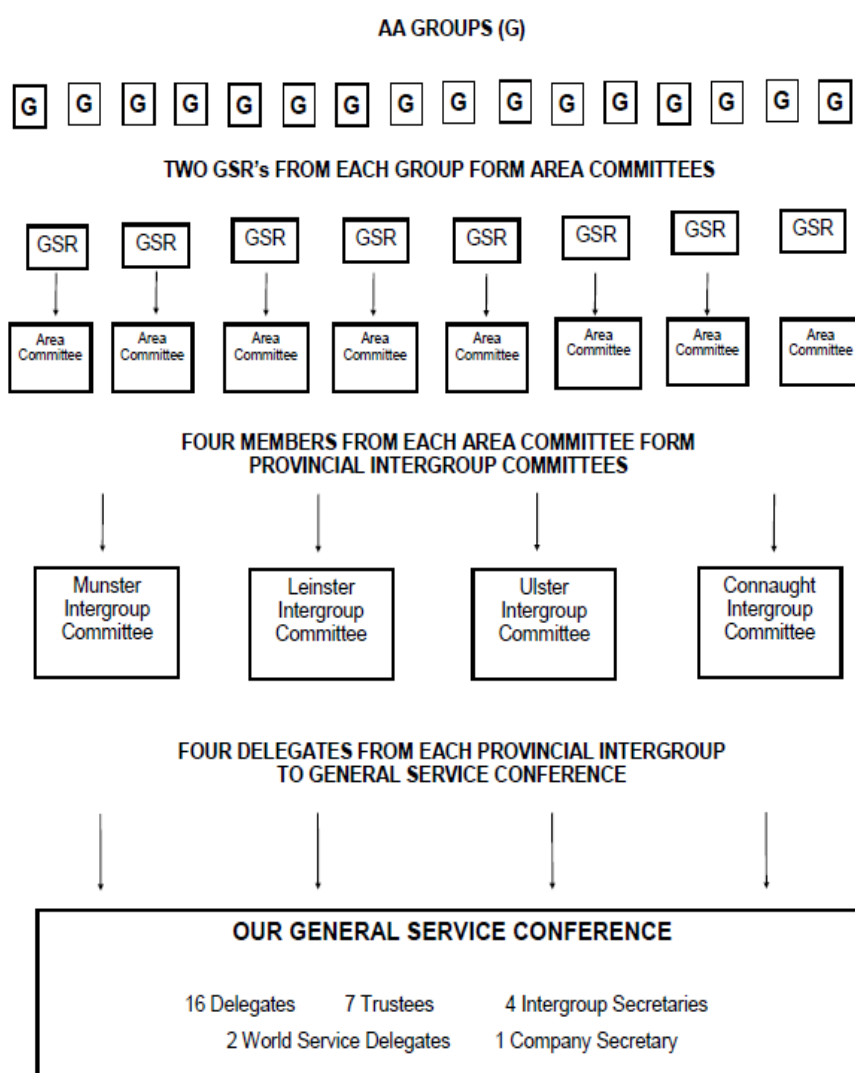
GSBAA Organisational Chart



The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous and the General Service Office is GDPR compliant. Our Privacy Statement is available on our website at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland

STRUCTURE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN IRELAND



Significant dates for AA History in Ireland

1946	18 th November	First Closed Meeting held in Dublin
1946	25 th November	First Public Meeting held in Dublin
1947	January	Departure of Conor F. for the USA
1948	April	Second Irish Group formed in Bundoran
1948	May	Group started in Belfast
1948	July	Group started in Limerick
1949	April	First issue of 'The Road Back'
1949	October	Group started in Cork
1950		Group started in Galway
1950		Bill W. and his wife Lois visit Ireland
1957		First All-Ireland Convention held in Dublin. This Convention rotates yearly between Connaught Munster Ulster and Leinster
1968	24 th November	First meeting of General Service Conference held in Dublin
1970		General Service Office opened in Essex Quay, Dublin.
1974	April	Return visit of Lois to Ireland
1978	23 rd August	General Service Board was incorporated
1978	18 th November	First meeting of GSBAA held in Dublin
1978		Service Handbook for Ireland published
1979	22 nd August	Sackville died
1979		Census estimated 6000 members
1980		Archival material was donated to GSBAA
1982		Ireland became a member of the new European Service Conference

1982	19 th December	Richard P died
1983	28 th April	Charity Status Number issued to GSBAA
1986		AA celebrated 40 years in Ireland
1987		General Service Office moved to new premises at 109 South Circular Road, Dublin 8
1988		Archives mobile display started
1992		Second edition of the Service Handbook for Ireland is published
1993	8 th July	Conor F. died in Philadelphia
1993		Census held – Conference decision to abandon it due to lack of response
1994		General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous acquired and developed the premises at 109 South Circular Road, Dublin 8
1996	13 th January	Opening of Golden Jubilee Year events held at the Burlington Hotel, Dublin
1996	25 th -28 th April	Golden Jubilee Year All Ireland Convention held in Killarney, Co. Kerry
1996	18 th November	Golden Jubilee Year Closed Meetings held throughout Ireland
1996	6 th & 7 th December	Closing function of Golden Jubilee Year held in Newcastle, Co. Down
1997	August	Eva Jennings died
2001		All Ireland Convention cancelled due to outbreak of Foot & Mouth Disease
2005		AA in Ireland website launched
2007	July	General Service Office moved to new premises at Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9
2009-2010		Census held
2011		The Road Back film was produced for use in Public Information

2014		Charities Regulatory Authority Registered Charity Number (20010010) issued to the General Service Board of AA
2016	October	Central Service Office, Belfast moved to new premises at North City Business Centre, Unit 11, 2 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast BT15 2GG
2016	18 th November	70 th Anniversary of AA in Ireland held in Green Isle Hotel, Dublin
2017	August	Mobile phone number especially for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing introduced by AA
2018	July	Launch of new website
2020	January	The Road Back magazine is introduced as an e-publication and made available free of charge on the AA website. It is no longer an option to subscribe to the Road Back booklet format.
2020	April	The 63 rd All-Ireland Convention in the Bloomfield House, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath is cancelled due to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.
2020	August	GSBAA Constitution is updated
2020	November	Due to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic restrictions the Reconvened Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland is held online for the first time in the history of AA in Ireland.
2020	November	The updated Service Handbook for AA in Ireland is approved by Conference v2021/01

The General Service Office (GSO)

The General Service Office (GSO) of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland is situated at Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland CLG is responsible for the General Service Office and its operations.

A core operational team consists of three staff members and members of the Office Management Committee, who, collectively provide the day-to-day services to AA members, AA groups and the general public on behalf of the GSBAA.



In an environment that is ever-changing due to shifts in charity and company compliance and to work within the confines of the AA Structure, the operations team strive to cooperate with these structures to ensure an effective and professional service is available to all who come in contact with AA to avail of its services.

This year was exceptional for the General Service Office. Its services had to be

restructured as the office was forced to close due to Government directives relating to the Coronavirus COVID-19 restrictions. Staff were mobilised to work from home, practically overnight. There was a continuous drive amongst the team in the office to respond to unforeseen challenges and ensure GSO could respond to the needs of the Fellowship, and those seeking help from AA for the first time. A higher level of empathy and intuition was needed to manage with the overwhelming fears and anxieties from callers, the team remained resilient throughout. The ability of the team in GSO to constantly adapt in the last year is testament to their dedication and commitment to AA.

Reception Area (GSO)

Our reception area has been modified in line with COVID-19 protocols.



The reception area is open to the public between 9.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday for literature sales and general enquiries. (subject to change in line with Government directives)

The core objectives of the General Service Office

- Provide guidance for anyone contacting GSO. Calls known as 12th step calls within AA are given priority.
- Process daily general enquiries relating to AA (see telephone call report).
- Process orders for AA publications to individuals, groups and AA events via telephone, email, website and counter sales.
- Ensure adequate stock of AA Conference Approved Publications is available to AA Groups & individuals.
- Design and collate various In-House booklets for AA Groups.
- Update our CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system with relative details relating to AA Groups, Committees etc.
- Process Public Information requests on behalf of the Fellowship.
- National Archives for AA in Ireland.
- Manages the Official website for AA in Ireland.
- Allocates and manages official AA mailboxes.
- Overall management of AA Group records.
- Collate and design Road Back eMagazine.
- Collate and design the News Sheet ePublication.
- Provide administrative support to the General Service Board and Company Secretary.
- Issue reports as required to the General Service Board of AA meetings.
- Prepare accounts for annual audit.
- Ensure financial accountability structures are maintained.
- Co-ordinate annual Conference arrangements.
- Co-ordinate Annual General Meeting arrangements.
- Minutes of relevant business meetings.
- Co-ordinate travel and accommodation arrangements on behalf of nominated Delegates from Conference.

The staff in GSO receive a wide range of calls each day, these can vary from general enquiries, AA related enquiries, orders for AA publications and calls from those seeking help for an alcohol related problem, whether it is their own drinking or somebody else's drinking. The term AA uses to describe calls from someone seeking help for their own drink problem is 12th Step. These calls are always prioritised.

It is a point of contact for AA speaker requests from various organisations such as schools, youth groups, hospitals, adult education colleges, places of employment, churches and so forth. AA has elected committee members who are responsible for liaising with anyone who requests speakers from AA. There is no fee for this service.

It is responsible for the sale of AA literature. AA literature can be purchased from our shop in Santry, although the shop is temporarily closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Also, via our online shop at **www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie** or by telephone at 01-8420700.

Incoming Telephone Calls Report

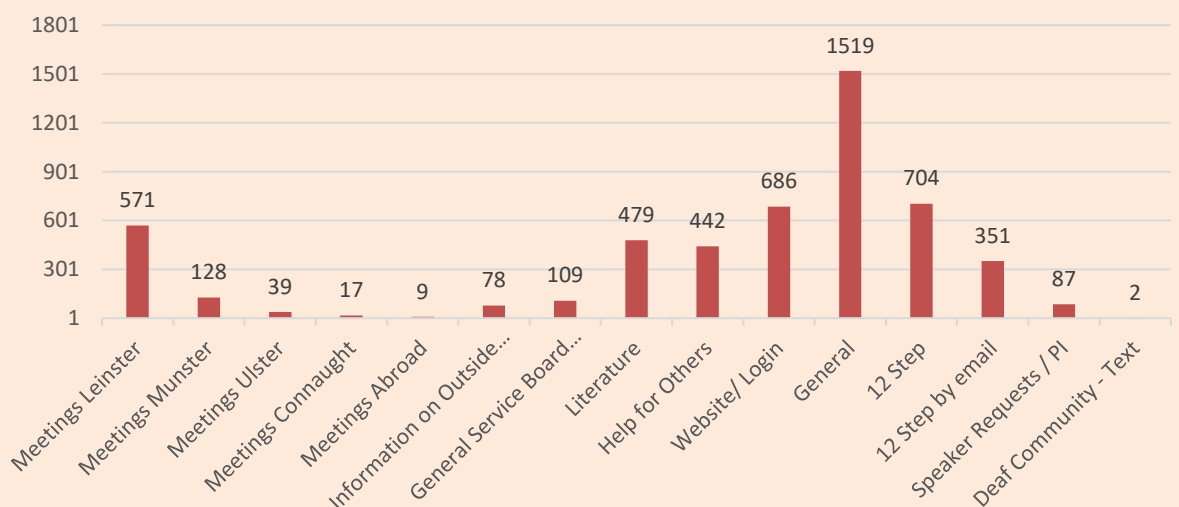
The General Service Office processed 5251 calls from the Fellowship and public during the year, an increase of more than a third on the previous year. All information retained for our records is in line with GDPR.

During the past year the nature of many of the calls to GSO changed.

COVID-19 and its effects on members was on many peoples' minds. This was evident in the requests we received. There was an enormous reliance on the availability of AA members to receive 12th step calls to ensure we could reach those seeking help.

With many physical meetings closed, members sought help and advice on how to access online meetings. These requests were always dealt with and appropriate advice given. On a more general note, there was a dramatic increase in calls from media outlets, interested professionals and others. At some point during the year, all our national and regional media contacted GSO with requests for interviews and information. These requests were all answered, and interviews given as necessary.

Overview of Incoming Calls January 2020 - January 2021



Directors' Roles and Responsibilities

Chairperson - Patrick Kennedy

Patrick Kennedy

- Finance/Treasurer to the GSBAA
- National Public Information
- AA Publications
- Official Website
- Road Back AA publication

Brian Fitzpatrick

- National Archives

Martin Crowley

- Health & Safety
- News Sheet AA publication

Cindy O'Shea

- HR, Risk and Corporate Governance
- GSBAA Finance Committee

Elizabeth Cullen

- HR, Risk and Corporate Governance
- National Public Information

Patrick Kennedy**Finance / Treasurer to GSBAA**

Darren Carrick of Whelan Dowling & Associates (Auditor) presented the draft Financial Statements for the year ended 31st October 2020 to the GSBAA at their meeting in December.

The General Service Board of AA is grateful to the members of AA for their contributions throughout the year. Their generosity permits the GSBAA to carry out its work and provide continued service to the Fellowship and the public.

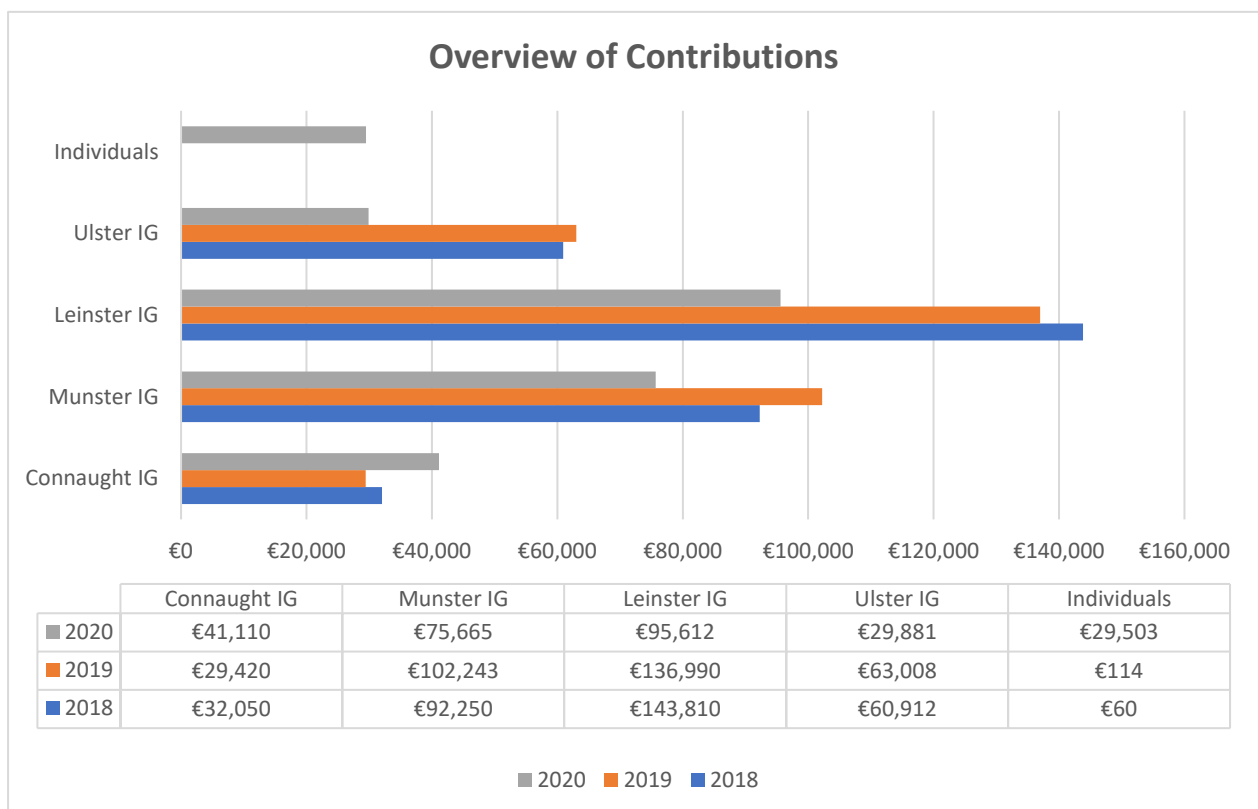
Financial Chart Overview

	2018	2019	2020
Contributions	€329,082	€331,775	€271,770
Sale of literature	€92,910	€106,946	€52,631
Sale of Road Back	€4,024	€2,772	€0
Annual Convention Surplus	€3,513	€3,438	€0
	€429,529	€444,931	€324,401
	2018	2019	2020
Overhead Expenses	€332,803	€335,362	€314,645
Stocks	€42,487	€42,445	€47,841
Debtors	€33,473	€28,851	€27,490

INCOME

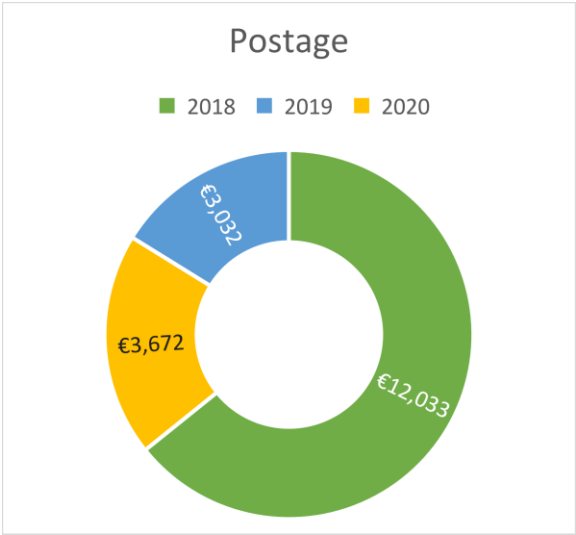
Following the closure of meetings due to COVID-19, 2020 saw a rapid and serious decline in contributions. While we responded quickly to the critical situation with the introduction of an online payment option, which continues to be an important addition to our income stream, rising from almost zero to €29,503. While substantial, this income is not sufficient to meet the shortfall from other revenue sources. Literature sales were down by almost 40%, and Tabletop Contributions fell by almost 20%.

The following chart shows the variances in income for the three financial years 2018, 2019 and 2020.



OVERHEAD EXPENSES

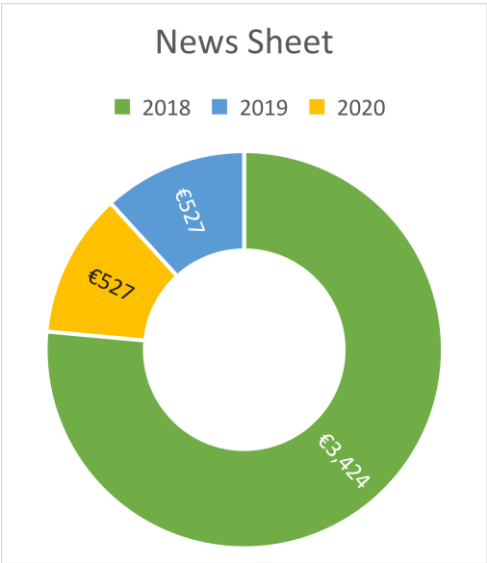
There was a decrease in the overhead expenses for the year ended 31/10/2020. A snapshot of expenditure shows the variances in expenditure compared to the prior two-year period.



AA mailboxes are issued for all levels of AA Structure for AA business within the Structure. This removes the need for members to use personal contact information to communicate AA related business with others and generates great savings on postage costs for the Fellowship. Whilst this has been embraced by many, there are still numerous AA Groups, Areas and Intergroups that are not supporting this facility.

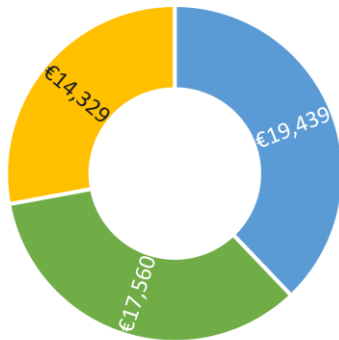
If necessary, contact GSO for guidance on how to set up the AA mailboxes.

The AA News Sheet continues to be published online via the AA website. As a result of this, substantial savings were made in producing the News Sheet and the postage costs associated with distributing copies to groups. It is also emailed to all AA mailboxes.



Conference

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020



The General Service Conference was held in the Tullamore Court Hotel, 6th – 8th March 2020. The Reconvened Conference would normally be held in May but due to the unforeseen impact of Coronavirus COVID-19 restrictions the Reconvened Conference was postponed until November 2020. This Conference was held online with due consideration been given to the Government restrictions at the time. The knock-on effect of this meant savings for GSBAA. As the meeting was held just outside of the financial

year end 31st October 2020, the reduction in costs will be reflected in next years audited accounts.

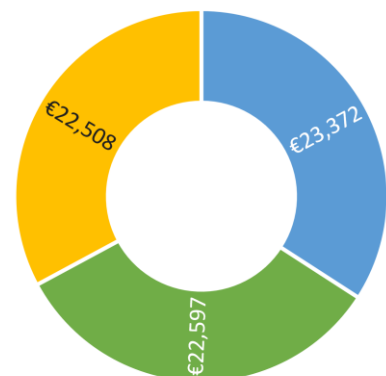
The GSBAA met ten times throughout the year. GSBAA business was conducted despite restrictions around the pandemic. The directors held online as required.

The Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) 2021 compliance requirements continued to be high on our agenda to ensure we were on track for the 2021 CRA deadline.

The GSBAA engaged professional support and advice from external experts when necessary. The GSBAA is pleased to announce that the relevant policies are now in place in line with the CRA 2021 code.

Board Expenses

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

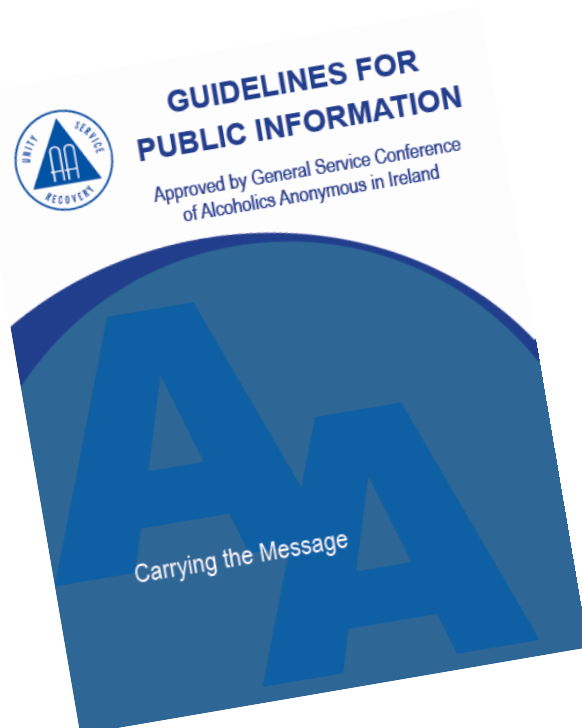


Patrick Kennedy

Public Information Report

While there were a number of plans for National PI initiatives for 2020, these were mainly sidelined because of the rapidly changing situation throughout the year, due to COVID-19 and the need to respond to this quickly and proactively.

It is fair to say that compared to other years, we were inundated with requests for interviews and information. During the course of the first COVID lockdown there were a number of interviews with RTE Television where the relevant AA updated



information was provided without the need to appear on TV. AA was acknowledged as the source of the information. We were also asked to give advice to members who were unable to access online information. This, too, was provided within the guidelines of the Fellowship, and not as experts on alcoholism. I have lost count of the number of regional radio interviews that were given, from the four corners of Ireland. These mainly took the form of question and answer sessions, with AA advice added and GSO telephone number announced a number of times during interviews. Radio interviews included RTE Radio 1, Newstalk (Sean Moncrieff, the Breakfast show), Waterford Local Radio, Cork, Galway, Donegal, and numerous others. We were also contacted by a number of national newspapers

such as the Irish Times, Mirror, Herald, Independent, Examiner, Irish Times Magazine etc. So, while this was not the PI trajectory we had planned, we took full advantage of the opportunities that we were presented with and are confident that the AA name and services was spread far and wide across the entire country.

In other areas, our director Liz Cullen has been in ongoing correspondence with the HSE at their highest level. We have been asking questions concerning the HSE published policies around alcohol misuse. Needless to say, this has been a slow process and is still ongoing. We continue to hope there will be some useful answers from the HSE in the near future.

In another interesting development, we had a number of telephone conversations with Mr. Frank Feighan, T.D., the Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drug Strategy. We have also developed an ongoing conversation with Mr. Jim Walsh, Principal Officer at the Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit at the Dept. of Health. These discussions are ongoing and also serve to raise the AA profile at the public level. Following one of these discussions, we will be shortly inviting the Minister of State to visit GSO in his official capacity.

Hopefully, the coming year will be easier to navigate and new National PI initiatives which are in the pipeline can be put into operation.

Pat Kennedy

AA Website Report - www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

This year, 2020 has been an extremely eventful and trying year for the worldwide fellowship of AA, and AA Ireland is no exception. To say that we were presented with some problems would be an understatement. I am happy to report to you that our senior office assistant, Bridget, who, along with myself, shares the responsibility for the website has been exemplary in meeting the challenges presented by the unexpected and unprecedented COVID-19 emergency. At all times helpful and efficient, I acknowledge that without her input, the entire website project would have fallen hopelessly behind. So many new challenges have been met and dealt with this year, 2020, that it is hard to remember them all. Here are some of the changes since the last report:

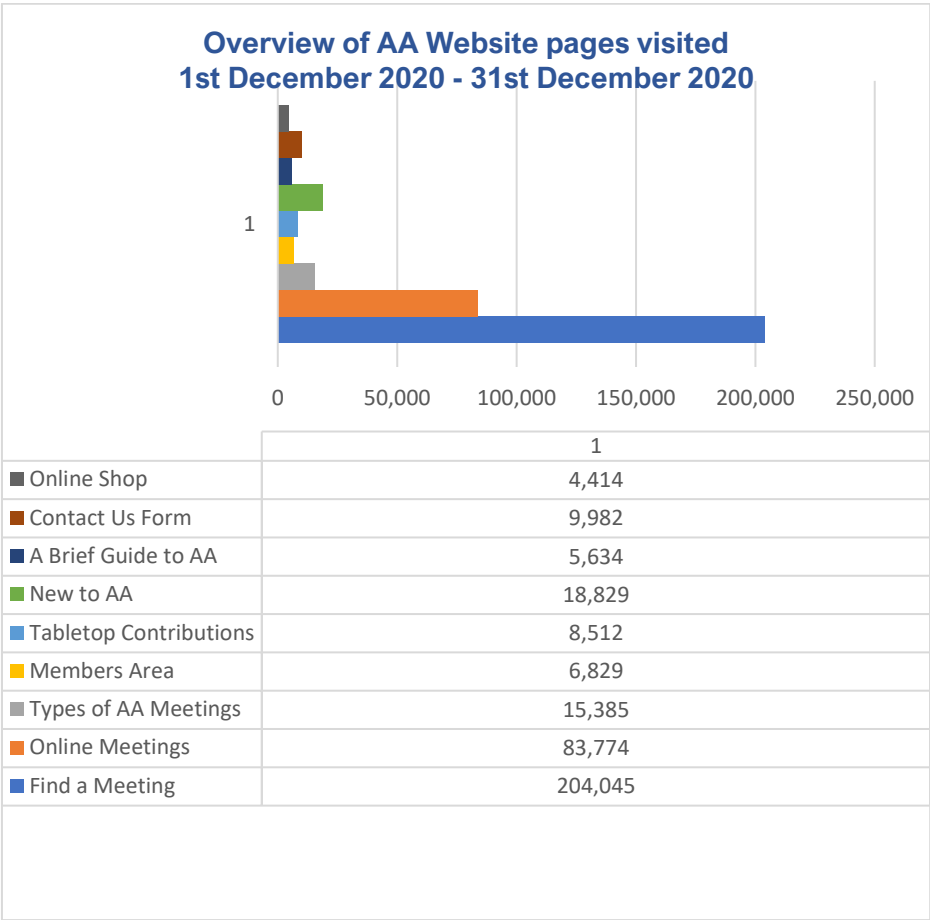
- Added “The Road Forward” PowerPoint presentation to the Archives section.
- “Search by Time” option added to meeting information.
- Major reduction in cost of Google mapping for meetings by reducing area shown on map to include only local radius. Users must now select larger map option.
- eMagazines page launched.
- Meeting section removed due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Updated page for COVID-19 added to members area. Amended weekly or as necessary.
- Direct contributions option launched.
- New Online Meetings page launched.
- “Physical Meetings” page reactivated.
- Contributions option updated to include personal or group contributions.
- Introduced new fields for inclusion of online groups and their meetings.
- Introduced Online Meetings to the main meetings section, while keeping the Online Only option still available.

While these changes and updates are ongoing, we have also begun the process of redesigning the website. The rate of change and improvements in technology are such that the general recommendation is for annual updates, involving layout, change of colour, fonts and so on. The AA website homepage has become

“crowded” and therefore difficult to read and follow. We hope to have this work completed later in the year.

No doubt there will be many more new challenges ahead, and I am confident that we will continue to meet them in a timely and efficient manner.

Pat Kennedy, Leinster Trustee and Website Administrator.



Martin Crowley

News Sheet – AA Publication

I commenced my role in compiling the AA News Sheet in April 2020, the first edition been published in April/May coming at a challenging time for all, given that we were in the early stages of what was to become a global pandemic. I immediately turned to AA Literature in search of items to include in this issue attempting to keep in mind the purpose of the AA News Sheet 'An Aid to Service' I was drawn quite quickly to the quote from our co-founder *"Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination."* -- **Bill W.**

At this point all physical AA Meetings had been suspended on Government/Public Health advice.

I became aware that many AA members were staying home and finding ingenious ways of staying in touch through online methods. This was new to me; indeed, I was to discover this mode of communication was new to lots of people within the AA fellowship, and yet for a long number of years AAs were in regular contact by telephone and text messaging services. But

what was this innovative technique called virtual online meetings? I was soon to discover that "Carrying the Message" in whatever format is the basic service that our Fellowship gives; it is our principal aim, and the main reason for our existence. This can also be said of our News Sheet a bi-monthly publication. The editorial pages of this publication are used by the General Service Board to update the Fellowship on current happenings of note as well as aspects of AA Service. The



News Sheet is about communication primarily - an essential element in the growth and development of our Fellowship, however it has also been a vehicle for the AA Fellowship to share ideas and reports on various aspects of AA service throughout the Structure that has proved effective in carrying our message of recovery to the professionals, the public and more notably the still-suffering alcoholic. Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength and hope. We carry the message of recovery first and foremost in the rooms of AA. Here we find varying degrees of wellness and unwellness at any given time. Members well drilled in the AA program through regular attendance at meetings are usually well equipped to pass our message on to the still suffering alcoholic.

We will continue to communicate via the AA News Sheet. It is available to download from our National AA Website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie under eMagazines on the homepage. We will of course also continue to email copies to all AA Group Mailboxes throughout the island of Ireland.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues on the General Service Board for their guidance, assistance, and support since taking up my role as director with responsibility for the AA News Sheet.

Martin Crowley

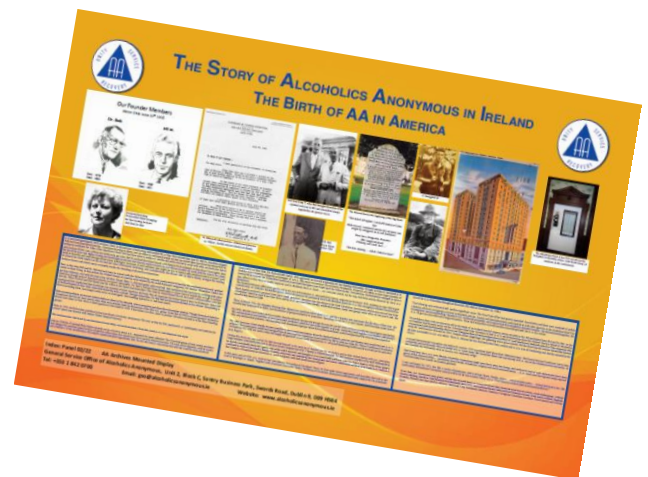


Brian Fitzpatrick

National Archives

2020 has been a non-event in relation to archives. We had hoped to complete digitisation of all archives in 2020, efforts to enlist help from within the fellowship are ongoing. The Archivist resigned during the year and I would like to thank her for her service along with wishing her well in the future.

The Archivist position will also be filled in early 2021. I would like to thank members for their interest in this position and for their patience while awaiting interview.

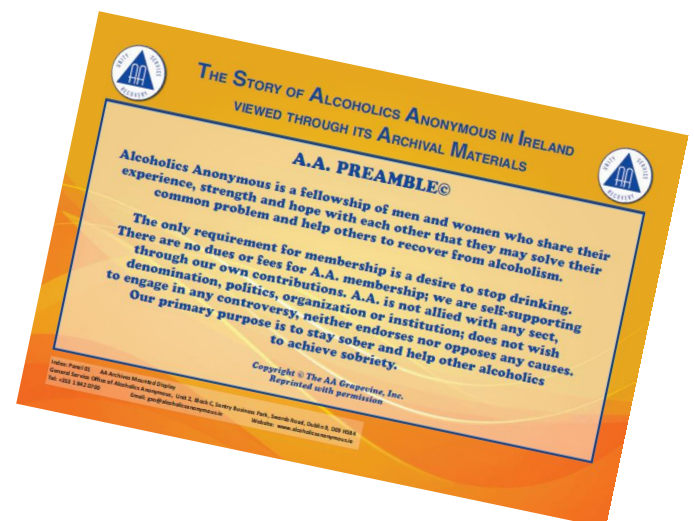


Work on a new Archives display is underway but will be completed in early 2021.

In the coming year we are hoping to upload new content from our archives to our website so please keep checking for new content.



Brian Fitzpatrick
Director/Ulster AA Trustee

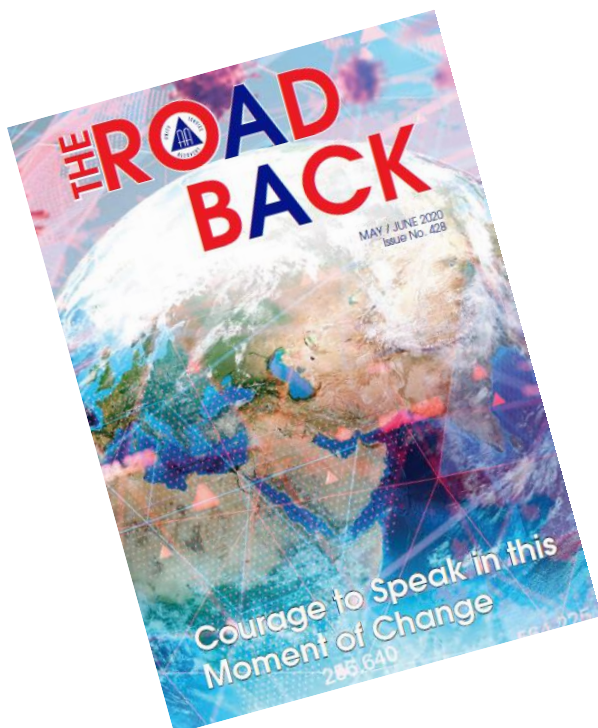


Patrick Kennedy

The Road Back – AA Publication

For the Road Back magazine, 2020 has been a year of change. We have brought the preparation and editing of the magazine within GSO, where it has become very much a team effort. This teamwork has greatly reduced the load that was previously placed on a single Trustee/Director. It has also served to make the magazine articles and, hopefully, interesting.

The Road Back magazine continues to be available in hard copy, while also free to all members to view online.



Feedback is scant and it is difficult to estimate how these changes have been received throughout the fellowship. Contributions in the form of personal stories and anecdotes are few and far between. Only three new personal stories were received during 2020. Two of these related to the current COVID-19 crisis, while one was a personal history from a member of the Travelling Community.

Contributions are encouraged but are not coming forward. Perhaps some different form of participation is called for. It is difficult to see how we can change this long-standing history of expecting 'someone else' to write our stories. The editorial team borrow stories from other AA publications worldwide and these are usually

interesting in themselves, but they are not local. Perhaps this is something the Editorial Team can focus on in the future.

Thank you.

Pat Kennedy



Cindy O'Shea and Elizabeth Cullen

Corporate Governance

The current non-AA member Directors are Cindy O'Shea who joined the Board in 2020 and Elizabeth Cullen who joined the Board of Directors in 2019. During this period Diarmuid McKeown resigned from the Board after a period of 18 months and a letter of thanks for his contribution was sent on behalf of the Board and the Fellowship.

For reference, the Board consists of seven Directors, four AA members and three who are non-AA members. The AA member Directors are long standing members of AA and are well known not just to their fellow members in their provinces but to

the Fellowship throughout Ireland. The non-AA member, (known as Non-Alcoholic Trustees - NATs) Directors are selected for their expertise in governance matters. The role is voluntary and unpaid, save for the reimbursements of expenses. The role that was originally envisaged for the non-AA member Directors to provide an outside and independent voice and viewpoint and to safeguard the assets and reputation of AA - remains critically important. There is one vacant space that



the Board is currently recruiting for.

The induction process for new NATS is excellent and of high quality comprising a half days meeting at GSO. A Directors handbook is given to all new Board members who are clearly briefed on the organisation as well as Board members roles and responsibilities, and the varying but intertwined roles of the Board and the Fellowship.

The 2020 period was one of intense activity in response to the challenges raised by Covid 19 and the attached Government restrictions. This placed numerous responsibilities on the Board to ensure the safety of staff while maintaining the work of the General Service Office and of the General Service Board of Alcoholics

Anonymous. The Board migrated all meetings to an online alternative and were able to continue the work without interruption. This necessitated additional meetings as decisions needed to be amended and changed in line with ever changing demands and regulations placed on businesses during this unprecedented pandemic context. The Board worked effectively and efficiently throughout and in many ways this enabled the Board to build a strong dynamic and team spirit during what was a very difficult period.

The chief focus during the 2020 frame was the review and development of the requirements of the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) to be fully compliant with the recommended Governance Code. Guided by the Board/Company Secretary, the GSBAA and consultant Gerry Egan of Gerry Egan Consulting the Board takes the obligation of meeting its responsibilities under Company Law seriously. Following from last year's Annual Report our paperwork was reviewed by Gerry Egan who found us to be 80 percent compliant, but we had some work to do to be fully in line with best practice and guidelines of the Irish Charity regulator. The Board divided the work and we each took responsibility for an aspect of the 6 Governance principles. The NATs took on the responsibility for HR and reviewed and updated a number of documents chiefly focused on the Employee Handbook, but were also involved in a review of the Constitution, Health and Safety, Codes of Conduct etc. The exercise was concluded towards the end of the year when the new and updated documents were ratified by the Board.

As part of this process the Board were involved in the development of a strategic plan to focus the work of the Board as well as developing aspirations for the organisation into the future. Many of the items highlighted related to better communication and functioning within the Board and within structure so that we could ensure that information was flowing more effectively throughout the island of Ireland. We shared this document with Conference, so that we could get broad agreement that we were reflecting the relevant needs of the fellowship at present. This consultation was important to us in determining that we reflect the needs of members and can build on these for the next 3 years.

As part of the Board, we have all been impressed by the efficiencies of the Board Secretary, Operations Manager and Office Committee which have resulted in the smooth running of the General Service office under extremely challenging

conditions this year. We would like to commend them for their professional input and dedication to ensuring that we continued to operate throughout to a high standard.

Finally, we as Non-AA Members of the Board wish to assure the Fellowship of our commitment to ensuring the integrity of the organisation and to working to promote opportunities to the 'still suffering alcoholic' to find timely and accessible support throughout Ireland.

Cindy O'Shea and Elizabeth Cullen

Office Management Committee Report



The Office Management Committee comprises the Leinster Trustee/Director, the Operations Manager and the Board/Company Secretary. Over the preceding 12- month period the committee met on a fortnightly basis. These meetings usually had an agreed agenda, but also allowed for any matters arising between meetings. During Covid-19 some meetings were held online.

- Road Back Magazine. The work of putting this valuable AA publication fully online was completed in 2020. Hard copies continue to be available on request to GSO. Contributions, in the form of personal stories, anecdotes, AA in-jokes, information on upcoming events and so on are invited from members and are welcomed by the editors.
- A review and update of General Service Handbook for Ireland was completed. This was presented to the General Service Conference of Ireland and approved for sale and distribution.
- A review of the GSBAA Governance folder was carried out. This mainly related to new charity regulation. This is a necessary requirement to keep GSBAA updated with changing regulations that may impact on the operation of the company.
- The Office Committee removed unsaleable literature, pamphlets etc. from stock, and this is reflected in the annual accounts. These items were made freely available to the various service arms of the fellowship for distribution in prisons etc.
- The Office Committee was kept extremely busy with the ever-changing Public Health/Government Guidelines in relation to Coronavirus Covid-19 and informing members via the National AA Website, and AA Mailboxes.

- GSBAA completed its Strategic Plan which was endorsed by the General Service Conference.
- Amendments were made to the GSBAA Company Constitution in 2020.
- GSO staff worked from home during the two periods of lockdown. A Return-to-Work Safety protocol was prepared and successfully implemented. Staff are to be thanked for their adherence to these requirements.
- An updated Health & Safety policy was implemented, and a Director was given responsibility for Health & Safety matters.
- Work has begun on the development of a National AA Helpline. This is already being run on a trial basis and will be fully operational in the near future. Manned voluntarily by members, the National Helpline will be a great addition to AA's services. It will also ease the workload on our staff and make more time available to them to take on and complete other work.

Pat Kennedy, Tony O'Carroll and Barbara Counihan

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