



# **General Service Conference Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland**

**7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Carlton Hotel, Santry, Dublin**

**Draft Minutes**

[www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

DRAFT

## Contents

Decisions agreed at Conference Meeting 2025 .....	3
Draft Agenda .....	4
Opening of Conference by Board Secretary .....	6
1. Introduction and Roll Call.....	6
2. Election of Chairperson of Conference .....	8
3. Adoption of Agenda and other urgent business in accordance with Article 7 of the Conference Charter, page 57, 2024 edition Service Handbook .....	8
4. Adoption of 2024 Conference Minutes and Matters Arising .....	8
5. Introduction of new Trustees/Retiring Trustees .....	8
6. Motions to Conference (Drawing of tables).....	9
7. Finalising Items from previous Conference Meetings.....	9
8. Motions to Conference .....	12
9. National Public Information Report (Taken as Read) .....	25
10. Conference Delegates Reports. (Taken as Read) .....	26
11. WSD Report (Taken as Read) .....	26
12. GB Observers Report .....	26
13. All-Ireland 2024 Report .....	26
14. All-Ireland 2025 .....	26
15. Invitation to AA GB to attend Conference 2026 .....	27
16. Election of GB observers.....	27
17. Election of Chairperson for Conference 2026. ....	27
18. Conclusion .....	27
Appendix A - Review the Motions to Conference Process.....	28
Appendix B - Motions to Conference .....	32
Appendix C - National Public Information Report.....	38
Appendix D - Conference Delegates Reports .....	44
Appendix E - 28 <sup>TH</sup> World Service Meeting.....	63
Appendix F - Fifty Eighth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous – Great Britain – 12-14 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 .....	109
Appendix G - All Ireland Convention 2024 Report.....	120

## **Decisions agreed at Conference Meeting 2025**

- A. The submission of motions to Conference process has changed. Full details are available under Item 7B in these minutes.
- B. A number of changes were made to the Board/Company secretary position, including the qualifications. Full details of this are available under Item 7C of these minutes.
- C. It was agreed that all Conference members have full voting powers at any meeting of Area committees or Intergroups anywhere in Ireland at which they are in attendance.
- D. Special Interest meetings may be listed on the AA website.
- E. Sub-committee of Conference to be set up for "Encouraging members into Service"
- F. Sub-committee of Conference to be set up to examine "Is the current Structure fit for purpose?"
- G. New Public Information pamphlet was agreed.



## General Service Conference of AA in Ireland 2025

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March to Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### Draft Agenda

#### **FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2025 7.45PM – 10.00PM**

1	Inventory Meeting Introduction	8.00pm
2	Roll Call	
3.	Inventory Meeting of Conference	
	Close	10.00pm

#### **SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2025 9.30AM – 5.00PM**

1.	Opening of Conference and Roll Call	9.30am
2.	Election of Chairperson of Conference	
3.	Adoption of Agenda and other urgent business in accordance with Article 7, page 57 of 2024 Edition Service Handbook	
4.	Adoption of 2024 Conference Minutes and matters arising	
5.	Introduction of new Trustees/Retiring Trustees	
6.	Motions to Conference (Drawing of Tables)	
7.	Finalising Items from Previous Conference Meetings 1. Literature (Big Book in Irish) 2. Review of Conference Motions Process	
	Tea/Coffee Break	11.15am – 11.30am
8.	Motions to Conference (Each table write reports to present to the full meeting of Conference)	11.30am – 1.00pm
	Lunch	1.00am – 2.00pm
8.	Motions to Conference (Decisions on Motions)	2.00pm – 3.30pm
	Tea/Coffee Break	3.30pm – 3.45pm
9.	National Public Information Report (report taken as read)	3.45pm – 4.15pm
10.	Conference Delegates' Report – (reports taken as read)	

11.	World Service Delegates' Report (reports taken as read)	
12.	GB Observers Report (report taken as read)	
13.	All Ireland Convention 2024 Report (report taken as read)	
14.	All Ireland 2025 Update	
15.	Invitation to AAGB to attend General Service Conference	
16.	Election of Observer to GB Conference (11 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2025)	
17.	Election of Chairperson & Alternate Chairperson to Conference 2026	

**SUNDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025 10.00AM**

18.	Conclusion of Conference (If required)	10.00am
-----	---	---------

## Opening of Conference by Board Secretary

### 1. Introduction and Roll Call

Anthony McN. (Board Secretary) 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. Anthony read from page 49 of the General Service Handbook 'Why Do We Need a Conference?'

Anthony then performed the roll call.

<b>Connaught</b>		<b>Munster</b>	
Trustee	Sean C.	Trustee	Tony O'C.
Alternate Delegate	Sheelagh McN.	Delegate	Linda D.
Delegate	Monica McE.	Delegate	Michael D.
Delegate	Adrienne M.	Delegate	Thomas K.
		Delegate	Audrey M.
I/G Secretary	Vibhishana C.	I/G Secretary	Eoghan O'T.
<b>Leinster</b>		<b>Ulster</b>	
Trustee	Moirá S.		
Delegate	Deirdre S	Delegate	Donal Q.
Delegate	Robbie McM	Delegate	James McK.
Delegate	Jenny K.	Delegate	Brian D.
I/G Secretary	Anyá S.	I/G Secretary	Joanne M.
<b>Other</b>		<b>Observers</b>	
Board Secretary	Anthony McN.	Justin T.	GB Observer
		Andrina C.	GB Observer
WSD	John T.		
WSD	Tom D.	Mallory M.	YPLO Observer
Non AA Member Director/Trustee	Maire McGrath	Emmet O'H.	Outgoing Trustee
Non AA Member Director/Trustee	Diarmuid McKeown	Michael Gibson	GSO
<b>Apologies</b>	Joseph M. (Connaught)		

DRAFT



## **2. Election of Chairperson of Conference**

The Board Secretary explained to Conference that the previously elected Conference Chairperson had been appointed as a Trustee since the last Conference meeting. The elected Alternate Chairperson had declined to take on the role. Therefore, in line with our Conference charter, the meeting should appoint a Chairperson from the floor of Conference.

Emmet, as outgoing Leinster Trustee, and an observer, asked for permission to speak. He told the meeting that John T had been elected to chair Conference 2024 but had been unable to take up the role as he had been proposed to stand for election for WSD. He felt that John would be an excellent choice as Chairperson and would like to propose him. This was seconded by Sean C.

John was duly elected and thanked the meeting. He proceeded to welcome everyone to the meeting.

## **3. Adoption of Agenda and other urgent business in accordance with Article 7 of the Conference Charter, page 57, 2024 edition Service Handbook**

The Agenda was proposed by Tony O'C, seconded by Audrey M.

## **4. Adoption of 2024 Conference Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes were proposed by Tom K and seconded by Joanne M.

## **5. Introduction of new Trustees/Retiring Trustees**

The Chair of GSBA, Tony O'C introduced the new Connaught Trustee, Sean C, and welcomed him. Sean is replacing James O'S. Tony also thanked James for his many years of dedicated Service.

The outgoing Leinster Trustee, Emmet, spoke about his time on the Board and at Conference. His motivation has always been to try to do the right thing. Emmet then introduced Moira S. as the new Leinster Trustee. He spoke about Moira's many years of tremendous Service in the Fellowship, both at home and abroad and said that he had no doubt that she would make a very valuable contribution to the Fellowship over the next 4 years. He wished her well.

## 6. Motions to Conference (Drawing of tables)

It was put to the floor that Conference would again deal with motions using breakout tables, as has happened in recent years. The Board Secretary had prepared names for 3 breakout tables, with each to discuss 3 of the 9 motions before Conference for decision. He had split the Conference onto tables based on province, position and gender, in order to give a good balance to each table.

A discussion followed where a few members felt that all of the motions should be heard in full by all of the members of Conference, while others felt that breakout tables were better, that they gave more members an opportunity to speak and they have been a good experience in recent years.

After an open discussion, a proposal was put forward by Mick D. that all of the motions should be debated and voted on by the full meeting of Conference. This was seconded by Audrey.

A counter proposal was put forward by Sean C. that we proceed using breakout tables. This was seconded by Moira S.

The counter proposal was voted on first.

18 members voted in favour of using breakout tables.

5 members voted against.

**It was decided that breakout tables would be used.**

A draw was then made to decide which tables discussed which motions (Further information on this at item 8 on the agenda (below))

## 7. Finalising Items from previous Conference Meetings

### A. Literature (Big Book in Irish)

Emmet spoke about this as he had been dealing with it. Since Conference agreed last year to translate some of the Big Book into Irish, he had been pointed in the direction of AA's World Services. He had spoken to a number of people there. The process is moving forward but it is slow.

### B. Review of Conference Motions Process

A subcommittee agreed at Conference 2023 had brought a report to Conference 2024 recommending a number of changes to how we submit motions to Conference and how decisions are made on those motions. Conference 2024 had decided that this topic was too important for the meeting to decide on without getting the views of the Fellowship as a whole. It had been agreed that the report would be brought back to the Intergroup and Area committees for discussion to get the views of the wider Fellowship and that a decision could then be made at Conference 2025. The report from the subcommittee was also published in the Road Back magazine during 2024.

Moira S. had been on the original subcommittee, and she explained the thought process involved in preparing the original report. She read out the report, including the recommendations. She said that motions should be given every opportunity to be properly heard, discussed and decided on. She spoke about the experiences of various committee members who had attended the GB Conference in York and how their system seemed to be more inclusive of the Fellowship. We need to be moving towards something similar. Moira also said that the dates for submitting motions which were proposed in the report would probably need to be changed, for the first year at least.

A lengthy discussion followed. Here are some of the views expressed.

Robbie M – Some motions coming to Conference should not come to conference as the motions are unsuitable.

Audrey M. – publishing the motions in the Road Back is a great idea, members of the Fellowship can then see what motions will be coming up at Conference. She had reservations about the proposed 3 year cooling off period whereby a motion which was unsuccessful at Conference could not be resubmitted for 3 years.

Sheelagh M. – There should be guidance given to groups on how to write motions.

Tom K. – GB have a format for how to write motions correctly. He said that he was in favour of some parts of the report, against other parts, he felt that we had to accept the report in full or reject it. He felt that we couldn't implement some of it. It should be all or nothing. We are a quarter the size of GB.

Anthony McN. – there seems to be an appetite for change in relation to how we deal with motions.

Robbie M – The Road Back is a great vehicle for communicating motions to the Fellowship.

Sean C. – We can make changes to the report. We have heard how the Fellowship feel and we can implement change in line with those feelings. Breakout tables ensure that motions get properly discussed.

Brian D. – Thanked Moira and the subcommittee. The report was widely discussed in Ulster. He said that Conference members are more likely to express their views and the views of those they represent at a breakout table than in front of the full meeting of Conference.

James McK. – Agreed that this report has been extensively discussed.

Audrey M. – Could we produce an educational piece for groups?

Monica M. – Thanked Moira and the committee. Subcommittees and breakout tables are essential to the workings of Conference. We need to be able to be productive in what we do.

Linda – She thought that the document would be given a "yes" or a "no". She didn't think that it could be amended.

The Board Secretary suggested that it might be helpful to see what Conference could actually agree on. Tony O'C agreed with this. There seems to be a general feeling that change is needed and that we need to move forward. He said that there seems to be broad agreement on the following

- Guidelines in relation to the submitting of motions be produced and distributed.
- The motions submitted to Conference should be published in the Road Back magazine, in advance of the relevant Conference meeting.
- Motions should be submitted to the Board Secretary in the usual way by 1<sup>st</sup> November every year.
- That breakout tables would be used at Conference to discuss motions.

**These were agreed by the meeting, by consensus, with no objections.**

Following this, there was a further short discussion about the following recommendation from the report.

- *The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects: All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board. All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference. The General Service Board should take any necessary action.*

The Chair called for a vote on this recommendation.

16 members voted in favour of accepting this recommendation.

4 members voted against.

2 members abstained.

**This recommendation was carried.**

Then there was a further discussion on both anonymising motions and if there should be a subcommittee to decide on whether motions submitted should be accepted, in advance of Conference. There was a general consensus that the subcommittee would not be put in place, for the moment. But this could be revisited in the future.

The Chair called for a vote on the recommendation of anonymising motions before they were presented to the Fellowship and to Conference.

17 members voted in favour of accepting this recommendation.

4 members voted against.

1 member abstained.

**This recommendation was carried.**

**(The original report by this sub-committee is attached as Appendix A)**

### C. Board/Company Secretary

The Board Secretary outlined that as the Company EGM had made changes to the Constitution, we needed to make changes to the Service Handbook so that the two documents didn't give conflicting information. He said that we would have to remove the line ' *The Secretary will serve on a voluntary basis and without salary*'. He also said that as his replacement could be hired as an employee after he rotated out of Service, if we are advertising the position it will cause problems to state that prospective candidates MUST have 10 years continuous sobriety. This could possibly be seen as discriminating against an applicant who isn't an alcoholic.

After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed by consensus that ' *The Secretary will serve on a voluntary basis and without salary*' would be removed from the Service Handbook. It was further agreed that the qualifications for this role should be changed to "preferably have" rather than "required to have"

It was also agreed that this changing role needs to be clearly explained to the Fellowship as a whole. We need to communicate this.

### D. WSD Role

The Board Secretary brought an item to the attention of the meeting. In previous Service Handbooks, it was clearly stated that all members of Conference were entitled to have a voice and a vote at Area and Intergroup meetings. This had been discussed and agreed at various meetings of Conference over many years. But in the latest editions of the Service Handbook, it was stated that Conference Delegates had a right to a vote at Area and Intergroup meetings throughout the country. He felt that this was unclear and was probably worded incorrectly when the new Service Handbook was being drafted. It was agreed by consensus that the wording in the Service Handbook should be amended and that the term "Conference members" should replace "Conference Delegates".

## 8. Motions to Conference

The following Tables were agreed along with the motions they would discuss

**Table 1**

Moir S	Leinster
Sheila McN	Connaught
Robbie McM	Leinster
Joseph M	Connaught
Tom K	Munster
Brian D	Ulster
Eoghan O'T	Munster
John T.	WSD
Andrina C	GB Observer

**Table 1 will discuss motions 6, 7 & 8**

**Table 2**

Sean C	Connaught
Monica McE	Connaught
Deirdre S	Leinster
Linda D	Munster
Michael D	Munster
Donal Q	Ulster
Joanne M	Ulster
Tom D	WSD
Diarmuid McKeown	NAT

**Table 2 will discuss motions 1, 2 & 9**

**Table 3**

Tony O'C	Munster
Adrienne M	Connaught
Jenny K	Leinster
Audrey M	Munster
James McK	Ulster
Anya S	Leinster
Vibhishana C.	Connaught
Justin T	GB Observer
Maire McGrath	NAT

**Table 3 will discuss motions 3, 4 & 5**

The meeting then split into discussion tables to write recommendations on each motion to present to the full meeting of Conference. When the full meeting resumed, it was agreed to deal with motions 4 & 6 first, as they were very similar and both were seeking to overturn a decision of Conference 2024.

**Motion No. 4**

*Farranree Group – Cork City Area*

*That the decision of Conference 2024 to rescind the 1989 decision that "The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of specialist meetings which might*

*exclude, or might appear to exclude, any individual who has a desire to stop drinking", should not be allowed.*

*We feel this would threaten the spirit of AA as a whole and contradict our principles of recovery.*

*Therefore, we propose that the Conference 2024 decision be rescinded, and the 1989 decision remains in place.*

*This motion was passed at the Group Conscience of the Farranree Group held on the 11/05/2024.*

- 1. If you divide you conquer.*
- 2. Conference may have the keys to AA but we the groups give them the keys*
- 3. Traditions are the box that holds the steps/AA Programme. The traditions are what keeps AA alive. If the traditions are jeopardised as outlined above, we run the risk of jeopardising the AA programme and AA as a whole.*
- 4. AA works the way God created it 80 years ago. To make such a change will be detrimental to our unity and survival.*
- 5. First tradition based on unity. If the 1989 decision is rescinded the principle of unity in AA will be diluted.*
- 6. The 3rd tradition-only requirement is a desire to stop drinking - this is specifically given so that people are free to be a member notwithstanding their background. We should never have to fit any other requirement than this to attend a meeting.*
- 7. Tradition 4 - autonomy of the group - if the 1989 decision is rescinded it will affect AA as a whole and weaken this tradition if not completely diminish it.*

*If a person is feeling uncomfortable in a group because of their gender or sexuality etc this is something that should be aired at group conscience level just the same as issues are raised*

James McK presented the recommendations of Table 3

- On the back of last year's discussion the members at the table feel last year's decision was the right decision.
- We are aware of strong voices for and against, some of which is based on personal values and prejudice.

**Our recommendation is to not pass this motion**

## **Motion No. 6**

*Presentation Group – Kerry Area*

*Proposes the reinstatement of the 1989 General Service Conference decision that:*

*“Alcoholics Anonymous does not approve of specialist meetings that might exclude or appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking”*

*Reason*

*This proposal is based on the belief that specialist meetings are contrary to the following AA Traditions:*

*Tradition 3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.*

*Specialist meetings imply that there may be additional requirements for membership beyond the desire to stop drinking, which contradicts this Tradition.*

*Tradition 5. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.*

*AA is focussed on helping all alcoholics stay sober. Specialist meetings could give the impression that only certain categories of alcoholics are welcome, potentially excluding others who do not fit into those specific categories.*

*Tradition 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*

*Race, creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, social status, professionalism and drug use are all considered outside issues. By creating specialist meetings, AA risks forming opinions on these issues, which could draw Alcoholics Anonymous into public controversy.*

Moira presented the recommendation of Table 1 on this motion.

The committee took some time looking at the motion and after consideration felt that motion could not be dealt with because the statement is still in the General Services Handbook. It will be Monday after Conference unless there is a counterproposal that is passed at this Conference.

## **Our recommendation is to not pass this motion**

Following these presentations, a lengthy discussion took place, after which the Chairperson called for a vote on both recommendations which were that motions 4 & 6 should not be successful.



19 members voted to accept the recommendations

3 members voted against the recommendations

2 members abstained

**Both Motion 4 and Motion 6 were unsuccessful and did not pass.**

What this means is that a number of motions from Conference 2024 which were passed by a two thirds majority but which were not unanimous, will now become the policy of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland. These motions asked for the removal of the paragraph below from the Service Handbook

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

## **Motion No. 1**

*Salthill Zoomers – Galway Area*

*Whereas, at the 2024 General Service Conference of Ireland, held on 08-10 March 2024, there were twelve versions of the same motion to rescind the 1989 decision in relation to specialist meetings considered, and that these motions failed to pass with the required  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority and are therefore vulnerable to be rescinded at the next General Service Conference, the Salthill Zoomers Group has requested the Connaught Intergroup to forward the following motion to the 2025 General Service Conference of Ireland:*

*Motion Title: Rescind the 1989 Decision in Relation to Restrictions Against Specialist Meetings. At the Group Conscience of the Salthill Zoomers Group (Group C199, listed by GSO as Galway City Good Morning Salthill) held online on 29 October 2024, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.*

*Motion: That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland, remove the following statement from page 22 of "A Service Handbook for Ireland," commonly known as the Green Handbook, that reads: "Specialist Meetings... The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking (Conference 1989)."*

*Reasons:*

*Tradition Three: The wording of this statement is in direct conflict of Tradition Three (Long Form), which states that AA membership should never depend upon conformity. "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation." Every meeting has the right to define itself as directed by its Group Conscience, even if that group seems to*

*deviate from the format followed by a majority of the groups in Ireland, and no meeting or group has to appeal to the General Service Conference for "approval," as long as they have no other affiliation as a group.*

*Tradition Four: This statement assumes that the General Service Conference has authority to exclude from membership groups that follow a group conscience that varies from the majority opinion of the Conference, in violation of Tradition Four, which states that each AA group is autonomous and should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. This means that each group is free to choose an individual name, even if that group wants to be called an "LGBT Group," or an "Old Men's Group." Similarly, each group may follow its own format, as determined by its Group Conscience, even if that includes discussing "Women's Topics," or "Young People in Recovery." No group needs to submit its Group Conscience to the General Service Conference for approval.*

*Concept Twelve, Warranty Six: This statement violates the promise of this Warranty, which states that the General Service Conference will inflict no penalty on any group for nonconformity to A.A. principles. Warranty Six states that each A.A. group may conduct its internal affairs as it wishes — it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.*

*Respectfully Submitted, Salthill Zoomers Group of Alcoholics Anonymous*

Joanne gave the presentation on behalf of Table 2.

After a group discussion with input from each individual we recommend that Conference do not pass this motion as this has already been addressed at Conference 2024 – the outcome of which is minuted. "This motion was passed by a two thirds majority and therefore will become Conference policy after the expiry of one year unless rescinded by notice of a motion in the meantime". This has already been decided and is in effect.

**After a short discussion it was agreed that this motion was now obsolete and could not be passed.**

## **Motion No. 2**

*Tir na nÓg Group – Galway Area*

*Motion Title: Change the wording in the Service Handbook in order to recognise the autonomy of each individual group to utilise whatever format suits the group best. At the Group Conscience of the Tir na nÓg Group (C189) held online on 18 November 2024, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.*

*Motion: That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland, remove the following statement from page 22 of the Service Handbook: Big Book Study Movement Closed Meetings which use unapproved literature or tapes are outside our structure in Ireland.*

*Reason: Tradition Four states that every group in AA is autonomous and should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. This means that each group is free to decide what format it will use for its meetings. A group might decide to include a reading of scripture or to play a guided meditation tape at the beginning of an Eleventh Step Meeting. Another group might choose to utilise an archival recording of a pioneering member of AA as the "Top Table" share to lead off a meeting. The General Service Conference does not have the authority to dictate to any group what format it may adopt for its meetings.*

*Tradition Three states that any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. When the General Service Conference chooses to excommunicate any group, casting them outside the structure of AA, based on the meeting format, they are violating this Tradition. The group is a part of AA as soon as they say they are, providing that, as a group, they do not have any other affiliation. That means that they may read any text, or none, and they can include recorded material from any modality into the meeting, if they so choose in their group conscience, and still call themselves an AA meeting.*

*Finally, the Fifth Warranty reminds us that Conference will not take any action which is punitive. AA does not find it necessary to punish members, even if they violate the law. Refusing to acknowledge a Group's members, casting them outside of AA Structure because of their meeting format is clearly a punitive action. The bottom line is that the General Service Conference does not have the authority to determine that any AA meeting is outside of structure. Therefore, this sentence has no place in the General Service Handbook.*

*Yours in Fellowship, the Tir na nÓg Group*

Joanne presented the recommendations of Table 2

After a group discussion with input from each individual this table recommends that Conference do not pass this motion. We suggest that the following wording be used to replace this paragraph heading and first sub-paragraph on page 22.

*Big Book Study Closed Meetings*

*The General Service Conference of Ireland has agreed that Big Book Study Closed Meetings only use approved AA materials, literature, etc.*

The committee feels that this language is more appropriate.

A lengthy discussion followed whereby the general consensus was that the Big Book study group movement was outside of the Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Chair called for a vote on the motion itself rather than the recommendations of the Table.

0 delegates voted in favour of the motion.

22 delegates voted against the motion.

There were 2 abstentions.

**This motion was not successful.**

### **Motion No. 3**

*Passage West Group – Cork City Area*

*That Article 9 (Decisions at Meetings of Conference – Decisions of Conference) of the Service Handbook of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland (Page 59. 2024 Edition) be amended as follows by insertion of text in bold.*

*The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects:*

*All items or motions passed unanimously become Conference policy immediately, where such items or motions have originated from a group and have passed via Area and a Provincial Intergroup to Conference, and are shall be recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.*

*All items or motions that have not originated from a group and have not passed via Area and a Provincial Intergroup to Conference, whether passed unanimously or by a two-thirds majority shall be are recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year*

*All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority where such items or motions have originated from a group and have passed via Area and a Provincial Intergroup to Conference, shall be recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year.*

*All items or motions, regardless of origin, receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference.*

*The purpose of this motion is to recognise the primacy of Groups within the AA structure, and in particular their "Right of Participation" as set out in Concept IV and "Right of Appeal" as set out in Concept V, while also recognising the "Right of Decision" we have endowed to our trusted servants in the Conference structure in Concept III.*

*What will this change how we do things currently? Currently if a motion or proposal for change does not come from a Group via an Area and Provincial Intergroup and is passed unanimously, it becomes Conference policy immediately and is recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.*

*If this motion is passed by Conference, it will mean that any motion or proposal not originating from a Group, even if passed unanimously will be recommended but will not become Conference policy for one year. This will provide Groups with the opportunity to introduce a motion to rescind the decision or introduce a motion offering an alternative solution.*

James presented the recommendations of Table 3.

- This morning's work in relation to motions covers a lot of this, e.g. publication of motions in The Road Back
- We recognised the sentiment of what was being requested, and understand the purpose behind it, in relation to the primacy of groups in AA
- There is always a right of repeal by the groups
- There is the right of decision of conference

Our recommendation is to not pass this motion

Mick D and Tom K spoke out against the recommendations of the Table, that they disagreed.

Moiria said that the motion was difficult to understand. Audrey agreed with this.

Jenny agreed with the Table's recommendations.

Vibishna said that Conference has the right to make decisions.

The Chair call for a vote on the Table's recommendations.

17 delegates voted to accept the recommendations.

4 voted against

There were 2 abstentions

**This motion was not successful.**

## **Motion No. 5**

*Waterford New Beginnings AA Group – Waterford Area*

*Reverse the decision that phone responders keep to hand the contact details of other organisations such as the Samaritans etc.*

*We suggest that Conference Members were informed that this is a legal requirement and as such, dictated their decision. No legal or legislative documentation, or guidelines with regard to legal requirements, were provided to the Fellowship.*

James presented the recommendations of Table 3

- The guidance on page 35 of the Service Handbook states that members **should** have numbers to hand, there are no punitive measures indicated if they do not have them
- As we are dealing with vulnerable people, we have a moral responsibility to have contacts available for those who might need it
- We've examined the regulations that we could find today, and we see that any board driven or charity driven responders would be obliged to follow the regulations in relation to providing other support services.
- We would recommend singular training to be provided to all the fellowship who are acting as telephone responders

In conclusion, our recommendation is to not pass this motion

We provided the following supporting documentation: -

In Ireland, while there isn't a specific statutory law explicitly detailing a duty of care for charities towards vulnerable individuals, several legislative frameworks and guidelines collectively establish such responsibilities:

1. **Charities (Amendment) Act 2024:** This Act outlines the general duties of charity trustees, emphasising principles such as acting in good faith, responsibly advancing the charity's purpose, avoiding conflicts of interest, and exercising due care, skill, and diligence. While it doesn't explicitly mention vulnerable persons, these duties inherently encompass protecting and safeguarding all beneficiaries, including those who are vulnerable. *Irishstatuebook.ie*

2. **Safeguarding Guidance by the Charities Regulator:** In February 2020, the Charities Regulator published specific guidance documents to assist charities in safeguarding vulnerable individuals. These guidelines provide an overview of safeguarding principles, key legislative requirements, and relevant national policies to ensure that charities implement adequate protections for children and vulnerable adults. *Charitiesregulator.ie*

3. **Health Service Executive (HSE) National Policy:** The HSE's "Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and Procedures" mandates that all service providers, both statutory and non-statutory, uphold a "No Tolerance" approach to any form of abuse. This policy underscores principles like respect for human rights, a person-centered approach to care, promotion of advocacy, and empowerment of individuals. While primarily directed at health and social care providers, charities offering

services to vulnerable adults are expected to align with these safeguarding standards. *HSE.ie*

In summary, although there isn't a singular law explicitly imposing a duty of care on charities towards vulnerable individuals, the combination of trustee duties under the Charities (Amendment) Act 2024, the Charities Regulator's safeguarding guidance, and the HSE's national policy collectively establish a framework that obligates charities to protect and promote the welfare of vulnerable persons.

The Chair called for a vote

21 delegates voted to accept the Tables recommendation.

1 voted against

There were 2 abstentions.

**This motion was not successful**

## **Motion No. 7**

*Midleton Owenacurra – North and East Cork Area*

*November 2024*

*To Whom it may Concern*

*The Midleton Owenacurra AA Group Conscience have discussed and given a lot of time to making a decision, under the guidance of a loving God, to take some action regarding an issue that has been spoken about and causing problems within the AA structure, in recent years.*

*We as an AA Group have no confidence in the structure that does not appear to have respect for the Traditions.*

*The issue our Group feels are not in accordance with the Traditions are: The decision of Conference to accept Area's involvement to pay the insurance of AA Groups. Tradition 7 – Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting.*

*Our Leaders are but Trusted Servants, they do not govern.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Secretary of Midleton Owenacurra Group of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

Moira presented the recommendations of Table 1.

The committee feel that the Insurance Policy is the responsibility of Areas and as such Conference would be interfering with the autonomy of the groups to advise or comment here.

For information purposes, in the Decisions of Conference booklet **Page 31**

**1986:** The decision of conference was that it was group decision regarding insurance and that the Conference should not be involved.

**1989** *'each group being autonomous are completely responsible for the provision of its own insurance'.*

The Table recommended that this motion should not be passed.

Linda said that one group in particular was adamant that this insurance should not exist.

The Chair called for a vote.

24 delegates voted to accept the Table's recommendation

0 voted against.

There were no abstentions.

**This motion was not successful**

## **Motion No. 8**

*Cork City Grattan Street – Cork City Area*

*Motion: - That the YPLO position to be "discontinued".*

*We must never waver from Tradition 5.*

*"Each Group has but one primary purpose to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers".*

*This tradition must be adhered to by all members of AA, including all service committee members of AA.*

Moirá presented the recommendation of Table 1.

The committee discussed the YPLO position and felt strongly that the structure for the YPLO needs to be reviewed. We had in attendance a YPLO who gave us very valuable feedback on her role. She has 9 areas in her province to cover and this must be reviewed. The YPLOs need support at Area and Intergroup level. One person cannot do the job. It is felt that a YPLO at Group and Area level would help.

We do therefore have a recommendation to Conference that the role be incorporated into the structure more thoroughly.

At the moment, on Page 66 of GS Handbook there is a skeletal outline of this service position in Conference Decisions. But there needs to be a clear summary of the roles and duties of the YPLO. This should be clearly defined and included in the main body of the Handbook to give a clear understanding to the fellowship of the role. We do have the GB leaflet **The YPLO Starter** pack as a reference point.



We noted that many of the people interested in PI are young people. Also this role is currently highlighted in the PI and we encourage more collaboration between PI and YPLO especially when it comes to speaking in schools.

The table recommended not to pass this motion.

A discussion followed about this motion. The general consensus was that YPLO was a good initiative but that the responsibilities needed to be better defined. The YPLO subcommittee are currently working on this.

It was pointed out that Jenny had started out as a YPLO and was now a full member of Conference. This is an example that YPLO is working.

The Chair called for a vote.

20 delegates voted in favour of accepting the Table's recommendations.

0 voted against

There were 4 abstentions.

**This motion was not successful.**

## **Motion No. 9**

*Waterford On Awakening (Online) – Waterford Area*

*Motion*

*That the double-sided 'Primary Purpose Card' be available to order as Literature by Conference. This will allow Groups to read out as an opening statement at (closed) and open AA meetings.*

*To also include as a suggestion in the General Service Handbook that the card is read out in meetings.*

Joanne presented the recommendations of Table 2

After a group discussion with input from each individual this table recommends that Conference do not pass this motion as the statement referred to is already freely available to download from the AA website. We suggest further that it should be up to individual groups to choose to read it out at closed meetings, or not.

The Chair called for a vote.

23 delegates voted to accept the recommendations of the Table.

1 voted against.

There were no abstentions.

**This motion was not successful**

**(All motions to Conference are attached at Appendix B)**

### **Subcommittees of Conference**

Following the conclusion of the motions, the Board secretary asked for guidance from Conference about a topic which had been strongly suggested at an inventory meeting of Conference on the previous evening. From that meeting he felt that there was a strong feeling that 2 new individual subcommittees of Conference should be set up, namely;

#### **A. Encouraging members into Service**

#### **B. Is the Structure in Ireland fit for purpose?**

Diarmuid proposed that we set up a subcommittee on the Structure. This was seconded by Tony O'C.

Tony proposed that we set up a subcommittee on encouraging members into service. This was seconded by Brian D.

These were agreed by consensus and there were no objections.

## **9. National Public Information Report (Taken as Read)**

Maire presented the Report on behalf on the Sub-committee. She thanked the sub-committee members – Brian, Diarmuid, Tony, Mags and Jenny.

She spoke about the work carried out by the sub-committee. They had carried out a review of our current literature and had brought forward a new pamphlet "for professionals" to replace an older pamphlet with a similar name.

Audrey was disappointed that there was no mention of the Traditions in this proposed new pamphlet.

Tony replied that the pamphlet was only for professionals, not for members.

Maire added that PI was linked to our 3 year strategic plan and was of huge importance. We need to target channels where we can reach people who need our help.

Tom D said that there had been more done in PI over the last 6 months than in the last 10 years.

Justin T (GB observer) said that the pamphlet was a really nice piece of work and joked that they would be interested in "nicking" it.

The pamphlet was accepted by the meeting by consensus. There were no objections.

The topic of using social media in PI was raised and a discussion followed. No decisions were made in regard to this.

**(Full Report at Appendix C)**

## **10. Conference Delegates Reports. (Taken as Read)**

Mick D had a query about how AA seems to be made welcome in some hospitals but not in others. He wondered if other Intergroups had similar problems.

James said that they had had a similar experience in Ulster but there was nothing they could do. It's the hospitals' decision.

Linda queried why the Leinster Delegates report did not give as much detail as other delegates had.

**(Conference Delegates Reports at Appendix D)**

## **11. WSD Report (Taken as Read)**

Tom D said that he had learned a lot at the World Service Meeting. Tom and John had brought back a number of items from other countries. Our Service Handbook had been very highly received. He spoke about the plain language Big Book.

John T. thanked Tom for his support. He said it was great to see the co-operation between countries. Getting members into Service is a worldwide problem.

**(Full Report at Appendix E)**

## **12. GB Observers Report**

The report was given by Tom K. Both Anya and he had been treated very well by the people in York.

Anya mentioned the Cochrane report which had been discussed in York.

**(Full Report at Appendix F)**

## **13. All-Ireland 2024 Report**

The report was given by Emmet.

Mick D. said that there seemed to be an accounting error in the report. Emmet said that this would be rectified and an updated report would be submitted to the Board secretary.

**(Full Report at Appendix G)**

## **14. All-Ireland 2025**

Sean C said that he was very honoured to Chair the committee for this convention, which will be held in the Clayton Hotel in Sligo from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> April.

He added that everything is organised, the hotel is fully booked out. They were looking forward to a great weekend.

## **15. Invitation to AA GB to attend Conference 2026**

It was proposed by Tony O'C that we again invite 2 GB observers to attend our Conference in 2026. This was seconded by Tom.

Justin T thanked everyone for a really special weekend which he had thoroughly enjoyed. He had previously attended our Conference in 2021 when it had been held online. He has met a number of people again this weekend that he had met before. It's beneficial to both countries to exchange ideas.

Andrina thanked everyone for a lovely weekend.

## **16. Election of GB observers**

James McK was proposed by Tony O'C and seconded by Deirdre.

Jenny K was proposed by Maire and seconded by Anya.

James and Jenny will attend the GB Conference in York from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> April.

## **17. Election of Chairperson for Conference 2026.**

After a brief discussion, it was agreed by consensus that Deirdre S would be the Chairperson for Conference 2026. Robbie McM will be the alternate Chair.

## **18. Conclusion**

John T. thanked everyone for a very productive Conference meeting. It was agreed that Conference 2026 will be held on the weekend of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026. Venue to be decided. The meeting closed with the serenity prayer.

## Appendix A - Review the Motions to Conference Process

### Subcommittee Report and Recommendations

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

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

Areas that we identified for improvement are:

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

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

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

**A. Conference continues to use the 2023 format and formalise it as follows:**

- Each subgroup to Conference is balanced with at least one representative from each province and one trustee.
- WSD's, NAT's and Observers will be evenly distributed between subgroups where reasonably possible.

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

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

**To facilitate these improvements, we suggest the following changes:**

- Motions for discussion at the General Service Conference be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> August each year to the Board secretary in the normal manner, through the structure.
- The Board Secretary anonymise the motions and submit all motions to the Conference Motions Subcommittee before 21<sup>st</sup> September.
- The Conference Motions Subcommittee meet and review all motions.

- All suitable motions are published in advance of Conference in *The Road Back* (Nov/Dec) to ensure the widest transparency across the fellowship. This will also have the benefit of encouraging members to submit motions through their groups.
- If a motion is considered unsuitable for Conference, full details are provided to the group before the year end.
- The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects: All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority become Conference policy immediately and are recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board. All items or motions receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference. The General Service Board should take any necessary action.
- The Service Handbook be updated to reflect the agreed changes.

DRAFT



## Appendix B - Motions to Conference

### Motion No. 1

Salthill Zoomers – Galway Area

Whereas, at the 2024 General Service Conference of Ireland, held on 08-10 March 2024, there were twelve versions of the same motion to rescind the 1989 decision in relation to specialist meetings considered, and that these motions failed to pass with the required  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority and are therefore vulnerable to be rescinded at the next General Service Conference, the Salthill Zoomers Group has requested the Connaught Intergroup to forward the following motion to the 2025 General Service Conference of Ireland:

Motion Title: Rescind the 1989 Decision in Relation to Restrictions Against Specialist Meetings. At the Group Conscience of the Salthill Zoomers Group (Group C199, listed by GSO as Galway City Good Morning Salthill) held online on 29 October 2024, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion: That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland, remove the following statement from page 22 of "A Service Handbook for Ireland," commonly known as the Green Handbook, that reads: "Specialist Meetings... The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of Specialist Meetings which might exclude or might appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking (Conference 1989)."

Reasons:

Tradition Three: The wording of this statement is in direct conflict of Tradition Three (Long Form), which states that AA membership should never depend upon conformity. "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation." Every meeting has the right to define itself as directed by its Group Conscience, even if that group seems to deviate from the format followed by a majority of the groups in Ireland, and no meeting or group has to appeal to the General Service Conference for "approval," as long as they have no other affiliation as a group.

Tradition Four: This statement assumes that the General Service Conference has authority to exclude from membership groups that follow a group conscience that varies from the majority opinion of the Conference, in violation of Tradition Four, which states that each AA group is autonomous and should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. This means that each group is free to choose an individual name, even if that group wants to be called an "LGBT Group," or an "Old Men's Group." Similarly, each group may follow its own format, as determined by its Group Conscience, even if that includes discussing "Women's Topics," or "Young

People in Recovery.” No group needs to submit its Group Conscience to the General Service Conference for approval.

Concept Twelve, Warranty Six: This statement violates the promise of this Warranty, which states that the General Service Conference will inflict no penalty on any group for nonconformity to A.A. principles. Warranty Six states that each A.A. group may conduct its internal affairs as it wishes — it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.

Respectfully Submitted, Salthill Zoomers Group of Alcoholics Anonymous

## **Motion No. 2**

Tir na nÓg Group – Galway Area

Motion Title: Change the wording in the Service Handbook in order to recognise the autonomy of each individual group to utilise whatever format suits the group best. At the Group Conscience of the Tir na nÓg Group (C189) held online on 18 November 2024, the group agreed that this motion should be brought to the General Service Conference of Ireland.

Motion: That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland, remove the following statement from page 22 of the Service Handbook: Big Book Study Movement Closed Meetings which use unapproved literature or tapes are outside our structure in Ireland.

Reason: Tradition Four states that every group in AA is autonomous and should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. This means that each group is free to decide what format it will use for its meetings. A group might decide to include a reading of scripture or to play a guided meditation tape at the beginning of an Eleventh Step Meeting. Another group might choose to utilise an archival recording of a pioneering member of AA as the “Top Table” share to lead off a meeting. The General Service Conference does not have the authority to dictate to any group what format it may adopt for its meetings.

Tradition Three states that any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. When the General Service Conference chooses to excommunicate any group, casting them outside the structure of AA, based on the meeting format, they are violating this Tradition. The group is a part of AA as soon as they say they are, providing that, as a group, they do not have any other affiliation. That means that they may read any text, or none, and they can include recorded material from any modality into the meeting, if they so choose in their group conscience, and still call themselves an AA meeting.

Finally, the Fifth Warranty reminds us that Conference will not take any action which is punitive. AA does not find it necessary to punish members, even if they violate the law. Refusing to acknowledge a Group's members, casting them outside of AA Structure because of their meeting format is clearly a punitive action. The bottom line is that the General Service Conference does not have the authority to determine that any AA meeting is outside of structure. Therefore, this sentence has no place in the General Service Handbook.

Yours in Fellowship, the Tir na nÓg Group

### **Motion No. 3**

Passage West Group – Cork City Area

That Article 9 (Decisions at Meetings of Conference – Decisions of Conference) of the Service Handbook of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland (Page 59. 2024 Edition) be amended as follows by insertion of text in bold.

The decision of Conference resulting from any vote or any motion or item before Conference shall have the following effects:

All items or motions passed unanimously become Conference policy immediately, where such items or motions have originated from a group and have passed via Area and a Provincial Intergroup to Conference, and are shall be recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.

All items or motions that have not originated from a group and have not passed via Area and a Provincial Intergroup to Conference, whether passed unanimously or by a two-thirds majority shall be are recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year

All items or motions passed by a two-thirds majority where such items or motions have originated from a group and have passed via Area and a Provincial Intergroup to Conference, shall be recommended and unless rescinded by notice of motion, become Conference policy after the expiry of one year.

All items or motions, regardless of origin, receiving only a simple majority are recommendations and shall be further debated at the next General Meeting of Conference.

The purpose of this motion is to recognise the primacy of Groups within the AA structure, and in particular their "Right of Participation" as set out in Concept IV and "Right of Appeal" as set out in Concept V, while also recognising the "Right of Decision" we have endowed to our trusted servants in the Conference structure in Concept III.

What will this change how we do things currently? Currently if a motion or proposal for change does not come from a Group via an Area and Provincial Intergroup and is

passed unanimously, it becomes Conference policy immediately and is recommended in trust to all Groups, Area Committees, Intergroups, Conference and Board.

If this motion is passed by Conference, it will mean that any motion or proposal not originating from a Group, even if passed unanimously will be recommended but will not become Conference policy for one year. This will provide Groups with the opportunity to introduce a motion to rescind the decision or introduce a motion offering an alternative solution.

#### **Motion No. 4**

Farranree Group – Cork City Area

That the decision of Conference 2024 to rescind the 1989 decision that "The General Service Conference of Ireland does not approve of specialist meetings which might exclude, or might appear to exclude, any individual who has a desire to stop drinking", should not be allowed.

We feel this would threaten the spirit of AA as a whole and contradict our principles of recovery.

Therefore, we propose that the Conference 2024 decision be rescinded, and the 1989 decision remain in place.

This motion was passed at the Group Conscience of the Farranree Group held on the 11/05/2024.

8. If you divide you conquer.
9. Conference may have the keys to AA but we the groups give them the keys
10. Traditions are the box that holds the steps/AA Programme. The traditions are what keeps AA alive. If the traditions are jeopardised as outlined above, we run the risk of jeopardising the AA programme and AA as a whole.
11. AA works the way God created it 80 years ago. To make such a change will be detrimental to our unity and survival.
12. First tradition based on unity. If the 1989 decision is rescinded the principle of unity in AA will be diluted.
13. The 3rd tradition-only requirement is a desire to stop drinking - this is specifically given so that people are free to be a member notwithstanding their background. We should never have to fit any other requirement than this to attend a meeting.
14. Tradition 4 - autonomy of the group - if the 1989 decision is rescinded it will affect AA as a whole and weaken this tradition if not completely diminish it.

If a person is feeling uncomfortable in a group because of their gender or sexuality etc this is something that should be aired at group conscience level just the same as issues are raised

### **Motion No. 5**

Waterford New Beginnings AA Group – Waterford Area

Reverse the decision that phone responders keep to hand the contact details of other organisations such as the Samaritans etc.

We suggest that Conference Members were informed that this is a legal requirement and as such, dictated their decision. No legal or legislative documentation, or guidelines with regard to legal requirements, were provided to the Fellowship.

### **Motion No. 6**

Presentation Group – Kerry Area

Proposes the reinstatement of the 1989 General Service Conference decision that:

“Alcoholics Anonymous does not approve of specialist meetings that might exclude or appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking”

Reason

This proposal is based on the belief that specialist meetings are contrary to the following AA Traditions:

Tradition 3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Specialist meetings imply that there may be additional requirements for membership beyond the desire to stop drinking, which contradicts this Tradition.

Tradition 5. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

AA is focussed on helping all alcoholics stay sober. Specialist meetings could give the impression that only certain categories of alcoholics are welcome, potentially excluding others who do not fit into those specific categories.

Tradition 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Race, creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, social status, professionalism and drug use are all considered outside issues. By creating specialist meetings, AA risks forming opinions on these issues, which could draw Alcoholics Anonymous into public controversy.

### **Motion No. 7**

Midleton Owenacurra – North and East Cork Area

November 2024

To Whom it may Concern

The Midleton Owenacurra AA Group Conscience have discussed and given a lot of time to making a decision, under the guidance of a loving God, to take some action regarding an issue that has been spoken about and causing problems within the AA structure, in recent years.

We as an AA Group have no confidence in the structure that does not appear to have respect for the Traditions.

The issue our Group feels are not in accordance with the Traditions are: The decision of Conference to accept Area's involvement to pay the insurance of AA Groups. Tradition 7 – Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting.

Our Leaders are but Trusted Servants, they do not govern.

Yours Sincerely

Secretary of Midleton Owenacurra Group of Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **Motion No. 8**

Cork City Grattan Street – Cork City Area

Motion: - That the YPLO position to be "discontinued".

We must never waver from Tradition 5.

"Each Group has but one primary purpose to carry it's message to the alcoholic who still suffers".

This tradition must be adhered to by all members of AA, including all service committee members of AA.

### **Motion No. 9**

Waterford On Awakening (Online) – Waterford Area

The Motion

That the double-sided 'Primary Purpose Card' be available to order as Literature by Conference. This will allow Groups to read out as an opening statement at (closed) and open AA meetings.

To also include as a suggestion in the General Service Handbook that the card is read out in meetings.

## Appendix C - National Public Information Report

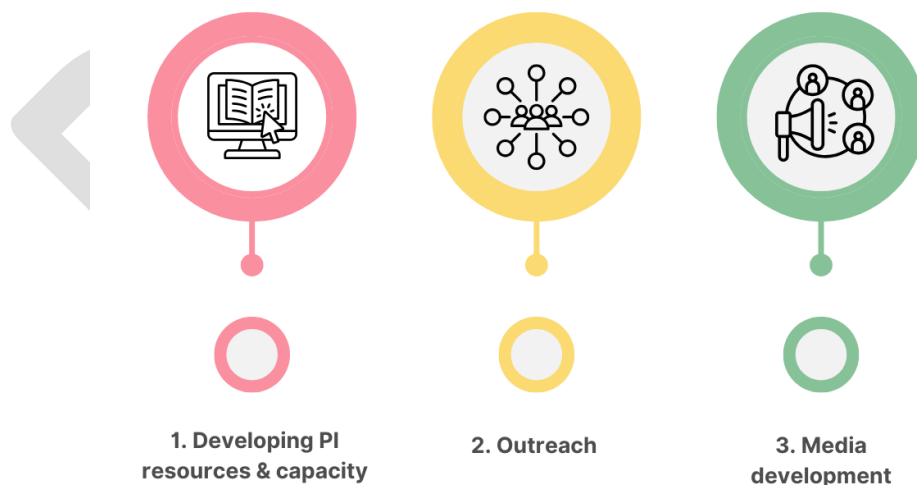
### I. Context – the role of the National PI Subcommittee

The National PI Subcommittee aims to establish how we, working in cooperation with AA groups, areas, and intergroups, can effectively carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers in the community.

We seek to increase public awareness of AA in its programme for sobriety to ensure that it is freely available and accessible to all who seek help.

### II. A summary of our work in 2024 and focus for 2025

In the report sections outlined below, we will summarise our work in 2024 and give a flavour of our focus for 2025.



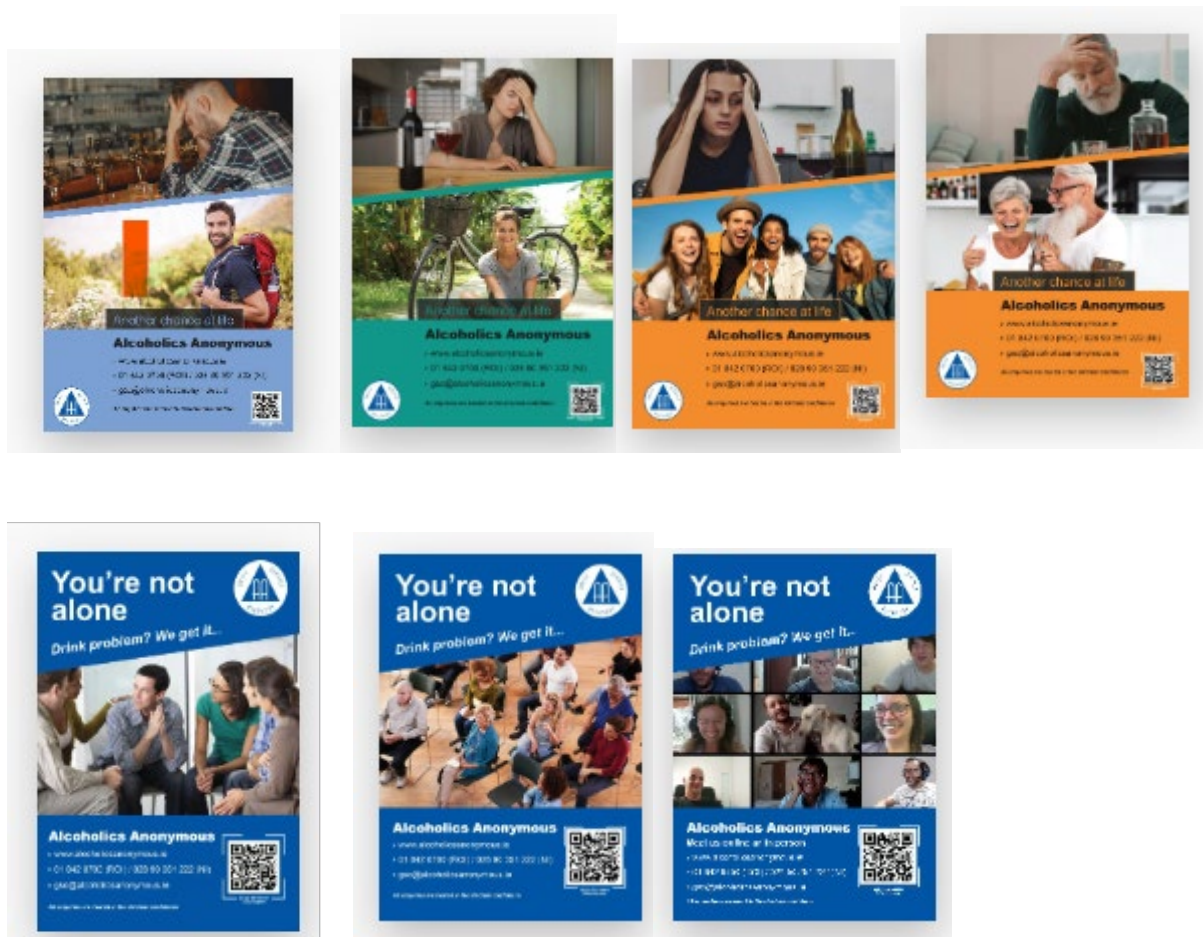


## 1. Developing PI resources and capacity

### 1.1 PI resources for AA groups

Based on feedback from delegates at the 2024 Conference, the National PI Subcommittee added to its suite of poster resources for AA Ireland.

The suite of posters (all illustrated below) was added to the AA Ireland website as a downloadable resource for all groups. A selection of meeting posters was also designed to be customised for local use by AA groups.





## 1.2 Supporting PI capacity building

To support and encourage PI service, the National PI Subcommittee developed an educational presentation that unpacks all aspects of PI and the resources available to spread the AA message. This resource is now available for all groups on the AA Ireland website.

*The Road Back* also featured a dedicated article spread unpacking PI for the Fellowship in the [October – December 2023 edition](#).

Members of the Subcommittee have been working to connect across all Intergroups to present on PI. In 2024, members offered all Intergroups and hosted dedicated PI awareness sessions for members. We are set to deliver our final PI awareness-raising Intergroup session in 2025.



## 2. Outreach

### 2.1 Refreshing information resources for professional communities

A National Subcommittee focuses on connecting with professional stakeholder communities nationally.

We identified the need to revamp and modernise AA Ireland's information leaflet, targeted at professionals vital to relaying the AA message. This sample has been provided for delegate review at the 2025 Conference.

## 2.2 Connecting with professional and stakeholder communities

In June 2024, led by Ulster members, AA Ireland organised an awareness-raising event for the NI Assembly in Stormont, co-sponsored by MLAs Robin (DUP and Paul (Sinn Fein).



The event aimed to highlight in detail what AA offers, how it works, and its impact on elected representatives at the national legislature level.

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

An ongoing focus for 2025 will be to identify ways we can raise awareness of AA Ireland with professional communities, which will include identifying opportunities for:

- AA features in publications for professional communities.
- Presentations to professional communities.
- Exploring where we can connect with the training of future professionals



## 3. Media development

### 3.1 Broadcast media campaigns in 2024

Identifying and responding to media opportunities, which enable us to build an understanding of what AA does to reach more people, remains a core focus of our national PI work.

The *One Minute to Change Your Life* animated film available on our AA website was screened on television for two weeks in late December/early January.

This year, we extended the TV campaign to cover NI and ROI, with the campaign running on both UTV and Virgin media.

Other national print media coverage in 2024 facilitated by Ulster members included a powerful personal testimony feature article in the *Irish News* about how AA changes lives ([click here to access](#)).

A specific aim is to increase national media articles/coverage of this type for 2025.

### 3.2 Developing national social media

In 2024, we regularly posted to @AlcoholAnonyIE on X (formerly known as Twitter) as an initial step in developing AA Ireland's social media platforms.

Our work in 2025 will focus on developing a social media plan and capacity to expand our online presence and reach.

## 3.3 Updated Professionals Leaflet

### How to Help



- Offer to assist the person in contacting Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) through the telephone listing or by finding AA meetings, with information readily available on the AA website.
- Encourage the individual to attend an AA open meeting to learn more about the Fellowship and discover how they can recover from alcoholism using the 12-step program.
- Clarify that AA does not label anyone as an alcoholic, but through working with a sponsor and completing the 12-step program, individuals may come to understand their relationship with alcohol.
- Suggest that the person speaks with someone from Alcoholics Anonymous to gain a deeper understanding of the problem and explore the solutions that helped them overcome their alcoholic drinking.
- Recommend acquiring an understanding of AA by attending open meetings and reading AA literature, including the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which provides detailed guidance on the 12-step programme.
- Provide AA literature to the person who may be struggling with alcohol and collaborate with other professionals to help them understand the needs of the alcoholic and the support that AA can offer.



### How to Join

Simply attend a local AA group meeting. Guided to AA by a friend, a relative or professional, the decision to join is up to them alone. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.



All enquiries are treated in the strictest confidence

Ro: 01 842 0700  
Nt: 028 90 351222  
gs@alcoholicsanonymous.ie  
national@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

[www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)



**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**  
Cooperating with the Professional Community



### How AA Works



Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a Fellowship dedicated to helping individuals who have a desire to stop drinking. This desire is the only requirement for membership. AA is available throughout the island of Ireland, with approximately 750 AA groups, including online meetings, serving between 15,000 and 20,000 members.

#### KEY ASPECTS OF AA

**Nonprofessional Approach:** AA is not a professional organisation. It doesn't employ doctors, employers, counsellors, or psychologists. Instead, it is a Fellowship where members help each other recover from alcoholism. There is no official authority controlling local groups, and AA refuses no one who wishes to join.

#### MEMBERSHIP

Becoming a member of AA is as simple as having a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees. AA is fully self-supporting through its members' contributions.

Membership is voluntary—you're a member if you choose to be. While regular meeting attendance is encouraged as part of the recovery process, you are free to come and go as you please.

#### HOW AA WORKS

AA members share their personal experience—what life was like before, what happened to change their course, and what life is like now with a programme of recovery.

that has become a way of living that continues for our lifetime. This sharing is a powerful tool for recovery, offering hope and practical insights to those who are still struggling.

The AA program provides a pathway to lasting recovery and a new way of living without alcohol.

#### THE AA PROGRAMME

The core of AA's programme is the Twelve Steps, a set of guiding principles that provide a framework for recovery and a life free from alcohol. The programme is not religious, and it is entirely up to each member whether they identify with any religious beliefs. There is no fiction within the Fellowship over such matters, as it is considered a personal affair.

#### THE ROLE OF A SPONSOR

In AA, a sponsor is someone who has recovered from alcoholism through the Twelve Steps and now offers guidance and support to others seeking help. Sponsorship is a crucial element of AA's recovery process, providing assistance and encouragement.

Through AA I am becoming a better version of myself  
AA Member

### Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Cooperation with Professionals

#### OUR COMMITMENT TO WORKING TOGETHER

At Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), we have always valued cooperation with the professional community. From our inception, our aim has been to expand and strengthen communication with professionals who, like us, are dedicated to helping individuals with drinking problems. Together, we share a common purpose to support those struggling with alcoholism in their journey to stop drinking and build healthy, productive lives.

AA offers a wealth of personal experience with alcoholism and serves as an ongoing support system for recovering alcoholics. Our Fellowship operates through local groups in hundreds of communities across Ireland and is part of a global Fellowship with members in more than 150 countries.

#### OUR SINGLE PURPOSE

AA's sole mission is to help people stay sober and help others achieve freedom from alcoholism through the Twelve Steps and practice outlined in the Twelve Steps. These steps, outlined in the *Big Book* of Alcoholics Anonymous, guide our programme of recovery. Carrying this message to other alcoholics is the primary purpose of every AA group.

Importantly, AA is not affiliated with any particular faith, sect, or denomination. We do not represent anyone, nor do we seek to make the world stop drinking. Our approach is one of understanding and tolerance. When new members join a meeting, they often feel immediate relief in knowing that we do not judge their past experiences with alcohol. We do not recruit members; instead, we welcome those who genuinely wish help, knowing firsthand the profound impact alcohol can have on their lives.

To be part of our Fellowship, you simply need a desire to stop drinking. Our membership is diverse, representing people from all walks

of life, regardless of occupation, political, economic, social, or religious backgrounds. Within AA, you will find a Fellowship, friendliness, and understanding that is truly remarkable.

#### HOW AA CAN ASSIST PROFESSIONALS

AA offers a range of services to support professionals working with individuals affected by alcoholism. These services are provided at no financial cost and include:

#### Health Sector

AA collaborates with GPs, hospitals, schools, and treatment centres. We provide presentations that inform about AA's work, offering insight into our recovery program and how individuals can recover using the Twelve Steps as outlined in the *Big Book*.

#### Prisons

AA members visit prisons to hold meetings with residents, providing support and introducing them to the principles of our programme.

#### Probation and Social Services

A team of AA members is available to meet with people on probation and guide them to AA meetings, offering a path to recovery.

#### Employers

AA offers talks to employers and individual contact sessions. These can be tailored for groups such as managers, supervisors, team leaders, or HR personnel, helping them understand alcoholism better.

#### Public Information

AA works with national and local media and media with various organisations to explain how AA functions and how we can be a resource.

#### Telephone Helpline

Available to anyone needing help or information, this service provides the initial contact between problem drinkers and AA.

#### WHAT AA DOES NOT DO

AA has a clear definition regarding its role and services. We do not:

- Select membership or engage in sponsorship outreach
- Keep attendance records or create histories
- Join counsels of social agencies or try to control members
- Make medical or psychological diagnoses or provide treatment
- Offer religious services or engage in alcohol education
- Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or other material services
- Provide letters of reference for courts, lawyers, social agencies, employers, etc.

#### ANONYMITY IN AA

Anonymity is a cornerstone of our Fellowship, ensuring that AA is governed by its principles rather than personalities. While we openly share our programme of recovery, we do not disclose the names of individuals in AA, nor do we keep any records of members. This commitment to anonymity helps us maintain a focus on recovery rather than personal promotion.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with professionals like you, united in our mission to support those seeking freedom from alcoholism.

#### CONTACT US

For more information or to access any of our services, please contact us through our website [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie) or by email [national@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:national@alcoholicsanonymous.ie) or by calling the telephone numbers on the back of this leaflet.

We are here to help and to work together toward a healthier, alcohol-free future.

"Sobriety rocks! I've woken every day with a sober head, determined to make the most of each day"

### Quotes from our Members

"Today I am filled with immense gratitude and pride as I share a significant milestone in my life. It is now close to 20 years since my last drink. The journey has been one of profound transformation, growth, and self-discovery."

"Love, warmth, laughter and joy have overwhelmed my day, because today was my AA anniversary. I have come to the end of my day and I'm sitting up in a lovely warm cosy bed feeling truly grateful and blessed for another day of sobriety. Thank you, AA."

"Today I can honestly say that coming to AA was the best decision that I ever made for me. My journey to sobriety is well and truly going in the right direction."

"AA for me has proven to be a life skills university. By accepting I am an alcoholic, admitting my powerlessness, I have received so much freedom and gifts in return. A Design for Living. A Fellowship growing and supporting me."

## **Appendix D - Conference Delegates Reports**

### **Mayo Area Report to Conference 2024**

There are 30 groups in Mayo. 55 physical and 24 On-line meetings held weekly.

Public Information are working hard organising posters for churches, Garda barracks, schools, clinics and hospitals etc. keeping everyone up to date with what's going on in AA. Posters are made by the new National PI committee, and can be obtained from general service office shop and are free apart from paying for postage. Great service. We are constantly trying to find better ways of getting the message out to the still suffering alcoholic. We hold open days on a regular basis 5/6 a year . We also hold a day of Gratitude 1<sup>st</sup> December last year (2024). These events are well attended with 100 to 125 members at each one. We have not been able to hold our regular convention in November because all the hotels in the mayo catchment area are fully booked with weddings and other events, hopefully that will change soon. A lot of the bigger schools in Mayo require members to go in and speak with the students about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. We try to get young members with a good knowledge of the program to do this so the students can identify with them. (limit the war stories) We also have a young person liaison officer (YPLO) in Connaught we can always call on for advice. All in all, Mayo Area is doing well, and we have a committed team of people willing to help out with whatever may occur. 12 step work. Phone Service responders. Secretaries. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of alcoholics anonymous to the still suffering alcoholic.(Trad 5)

John G. GSCD. Connaught Intergroup.

### **Connacht Conference Delegate Report 2024**

**Sean Clancy**

**Sligo/North Leitrim**

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

Meetings in the Sligo North Leitrim Area are generally going well, some with attendances increasing.

I had the privilege of attending Ulster Intergroup meeting in October 2024 with other members of Connacht and Munster intergroup and I would like to thank Ulster Intergroup for their welcome and on a very well-run meeting.

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

As mentioned in my report last year, and a big concern during this year again was the numbers of members attending area, many groups were consistently not represented. The area is committed to continue to look at ways of encouraging all groups to send at least one member to area. The concern at area is that attendance is low and that current members are in their positions longer than the suggested period.

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

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

I also had the privilege of serving on the Road Back sub-committee and I hope more members can help Kenny P, who is doing a great job as editor of the Road Back by forwarding their stories to him directly or through the subcommittee members.

PI has been making steady progress in Connacht during 2024 and we look forward to having PI committees in all 4 areas during this year and going forward.

I am currently the phone convenor for the Connacht telephone service, we have a small committee of members and would welcome new members to join. Full induction video for all new phone responders is available. Connacht Intergroup is working hard, through the PI committees to promote this phone number in the Province.

We are short of Intergroup Delegates and we are encouraging all areas to send their full quota of 4 members from each area to Intergroup.

I am now the Trustee for Connacht and I will serve out the remainder of James O S's term which will be 2025 and 2026. I am deeply honoured to have this service position and I will do my utmost to serve the fellowship as a Trustee and GSBAA Director, for the next 2 years.

I welcome new conference delegates in Connacht, Monica, Joe and Adreinne and I look forward to working with them and current conference delegate John over the coming year.

We are delighted to be hosting the All Ireland Convention this year in Connacht, the Convention will take place in the Clayton Hotel on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13. We look

forward to welcoming members from all over Ireland and further afield to this years All Ireland Convention.

I wish all outgoing, current and new conference delegates and Trustees the very best in 2025.

I look forward to attending this 2025 Conference in Santry as Connacht Trustee.

Yours in Service

Sean Clancy

## **Galway Area Report to Conference 2024**

### **Meetings**

Galway Area meetings are held every six weeks in the Galway Bay Hotel and online. Numbers in attendance of Area varies with many groups not represented by GSRs.

The majority of physical groups within Galway Area are operating well and attendance fluctuating. Some new groups have been set up in the last year. Online groups within Galway Area are, also continuing to receive good numbers.

### **Public Information**

The PI Convenor position is still available with current Area members working together to cover the position and help in whatever capacity is required.

In November, Galway Area held a Service Workshop Day to introduce the new PI material produced by GSO and to introduce to members some of the people in Service within the Galway Area such as Phone Convenor, Prison Convenor, Connacht YPLO and Connacht Trustee in an effort to encourage more members into Service Areas.

At this year's Convention we had a desk dedicated to showing some of the various types of PI posters, pamphlets and business cards available for groups to carry the message within their locality.

Advertisement for AA groups in Galway is by local newspaper and social media platforms.



## **Communications**

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

OPM's are via radio, press and social media platforms.

## **Group Insurance**

Galway Area has for the last number of years been providing a service to the rest of Connacht regarding Group Insurance. At our last Area meeting the decision has been taken by Area that Connacht Intergroup should be responsible for the financial element i.e. paying premium and all payments for Insurance next year will be made to Intergroup. The current cost to each group is €50 per annum.

## **Phone Service**

Galway Area continues to provide a localised phone service via a mobile phone **085 753 7100** which is publicised by PI committee. This is manned from 12 noon to 10pm 7 days a week. The **Phone Convenor** redirects all calls to the next responder for the coming week every Sunday. Persons wishing to do phone service are required to view a twenty-minute video plus a twenty-minute Power Point Presentation briefing on the 'Dos', 'Don'ts' and guidelines for safe and ethical phone service, before they are placed on the panel of responders. Responders are strongly advised to remove their personal or business identification from their personal mobile greeting (that would identify them or break their anonymity) before having the published number forwarded to their phone.

The total cost to Area for telephone is €180pa.

Analysis of calls:

Meeting information -70%, Help for self - 15% and Help for another – 15%.

**Positions** – Filling vacant positions has on-going challenges. Galway Area has now 3 delegates at Intergroup, a new Conference delegate. Currently no designated PI Convenor, however, a number of members are sharing in responsibility.

## **Convention**

The Galway Area held its annual convention in the Galway Bay Hotel from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Attendance was with good with 627 members registering. Numbers were down on previous year due to bad weather. There was a packed to capacity public meeting on Friday night. All meetings were well attended, themed marathon meetings running concurrently starting on the hour and half hour. Workshops, literature, and entertainment events were provided with large participation in all areas.



Advertising of the OPM at the convention and AA generally was published in local newspapers as well as posters mailed to all groups, and on social media platforms.

A full report will be submitted to next Area meeting by the Convention Committee at the February 2025 Area meeting.

Adrienne

## **Clare Area 2025**

Clare Area currently consists of 19 groups of which approx. 30% attend the business meetings of Clare Area.

This percentage of attendance is regularly attempted to be improved on by the Officers and attending GSRs and I would like to acknowledge their efforts.

All available group donations are sent to the area committee in as regular a manner as possible and they have decided that if a group is not present at the area meeting, then any donations from that group cannot be accepted from a third party and want GSO to follow suit and reject donations from groups who do so outside the structure, "Otherwise why have a Service Structure at all" .

Even with a small area attendance, the area has striven consistently to be represented at Intergruop with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of their allotted representational proportion regularly attending Intergruop meetings.

Other services within the Area such as Phone, Public Information and Institutions are recently renewed services (except for Phone) and are dealt with in a professional and compassionate manner.

Clare Area is currently finalising details to host A Day of Gratitude in October and will furnish details on the AA website in the coming months.

An informative discussion took place on the proposed Motions to Conference Process took place at the December meeting (after previously being furnished with the document) and was rejected unanimously and was deemed governmental if instigated.

"We are moving away from the Traditions and Concepts guiding Conference and making it more like a company meeting"

As this will be my last Conference representing the views of the Clare Area, I would like to thank the Area for all their assistance in my role and it has been both a pleasure and an honour to not only have worked with them but to have made new friends which I will treasure.

Tom K

## **Limerick City 2025**

In the previous 12 months Limerick City Area has overseen various changes in Area Officers, Intergroup Reps, Public Information Officers, Response Phone Officers and generally in Group GSRs.

All these changes are welcomed in the main as the fellowship acknowledges that change is good for our survival.

There are currently 17 groups in the Limerick City Area including a successful online group and all are generally represented at business meetings of the area.

Where funds are available to forward through the structure, they are consistently done so to the area committee.

There has been outreach to groups in Limerick County to assist them in the needs regarding the county area not functioning anymore.

While some tentative discussions have taken place, the Limerick City Area are of the opinion that this is a matter for each relevant group in the county and will assist where possible only when requested.

The decision on Limerick City Areas response has been delayed to the January 2025 Area meeting which takes place after the date for submission of this report and will therefore be communicated by the Conference Delegate at Conference itself.

On the matter of Conference Motions generally, the Area feels that the language when a motion fails to pass is derogatory and motions don't fail but fail to pass.

Also, an explanation of why any motion fails to pass or itself passes should be given with details outlining such.

This would ensure transparency and assist any future motions and dissemination of information, that Conference tells groups rather than communicate with them.

Tom K

## **Limerick County Area report Conference 2025**

At the April monthly meeting of Limerick County Area, the officers took the decision to finally close the Area committee immediately.

Through the previous nearly decade and a half, multiple efforts by numerous officers, GSRs, Conference Delegates and Trustees have proved fruitless in garnering support for the area committee and its work.

At this meeting a letter to each of the over 20 groups in the area was approved which outlined the decision and what the available remedies to the groups were and this letter was delivered to every group within the area.

As of this time, NONE of the remedies outlined have been taken up by ANY group and the validity of these groups to stay within the AA structure appears perilous.

This situation may come to a head more forcibly in March 2025 when things like group insurance policies come for renewal.

Tom K

## **REPORT ON AREAS (LEINSTER) FOR CONFERENCE 2025**

Leinster Intergroup consists of 14 area committees. Areas 3 & 4 are amalgamated. Some meetings have decided to go to bi-monthly to improve attendance, with the freedom to call a meeting sooner should there be a need. As the 4th conference delegate slot has remained vacant. The 3 Leinster GSCD's attend the regular, allocated, monthly area committee meetings in Leinster. We rotate annually within the areas that we attend. We also attend the General Service Conference. The purpose of attending at the area committee meetings is to act as a liaison between the Area committee, Intergroup meetings & Conference. We also offer support & assist the them where we can. Some areas are well attended & some areas are poorly attended.

Great to see some hospital and treatment centre meetings returning after much hard work and adjustment eg St Pats, The Rutland and JOG's.

In order to have up to date information on the AA website & in directories Group information sheets (GIS) must be completed with up to date Group information & forwarded to GSO.

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

1. The issues of fulfilling service roles from group to area and intergroup has worsened on last year, this is a huge concern for the continuation of our fellowship. There remains a difficulty in encouraging members to volunteer as GSR's to attend at the area committee. This something that urgently needs to be addressed.
2. The YPLO and Young persons reps is a service role that was nominated from the UK structure to encourage people into service, and it is great to see Area Reps coming in to encourage people to fill roles. We are urging areas to arrange service workshops and to speak to members about the importance of service.
3. Regular group conscience meetings should be held to discuss all issues related to the groups, which include contributions to the groups from the members & the forwarding of finance through the structure to intergroup. It is in the best interest of AA that all contributions made are properly accounted for.

## **PHONE SERVICE**

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

## **PRISON SERVICE REPORT**

All 13 meetings in prisons are running well, but the prison service committee has been in need of service and support this year. Our prison service conveynor, with the assistance of 2 GSCD's have been running prison service subcommittee meetings on the last Thursday of the month in Teach Mhuire in Gardiner Street at 7pm for those interested.

There are currently approx. 30 active members doing service, with 10 applicants due to be processed and a hope for more applicants in the year ahead.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICE**

Dennis T has taken on the role of Leinster PI Convenor, however we are continuing to try encourage members to take on PI at area level to support this service. The new posters are being sent to groups, and as the school talk request form had to be removed from our website, it is now available again.

## **Conference Delegate report for Kerry and North/East Cork**

Linda is my name, and I am an alcoholic I'm based near Tralee in Co. Kerry. My home group in the Faha/listry grassroots group of alcoholics anonymous (our meeting is on Friday nights at 8:30 if your ever in Kerry). I'm just beginning my second year as a conference delegate. It's been an enjoyable enough experience so far. I attended all Kerry Area meetings in the year. Been from Kerry it has been easier to keep up to date with the area, so I will start with Kerry Area Report

## **Kerry Area Report**

Kerry area is a progressive area. Our area meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month in the Brandon hotel in Tralee (same place our annual convention is on) for a number of years it's been in the same place. The area is well attended but by mainly the same faces and groups month on month. Those who do attend are members who

have held a number of service positions in the past and continue to do so. It's been difficult to get far away groups to attend but to be fair they do attend to give contributions and to opt in to the insurance scheme. On that Kerry area has a 100% subscription to the insurance. Groups are very good to pay into it. If groups don't then they aren't covered by it. The area does not chase groups to do it. We also have an Area Mobile phone which Rotates between groups. There has been a noticeable decline in calls too this line. Year on year we have trouble at an early stage with getting a meaningful convention committee in place. It was the closest year ever that we nearly cancelled it. There was no buy in from groups so theirs was no choice but to cancel it but on the night some members did come forward and great credit is due to them for hosting a very successful weekend with 360 lsh registration We indeed hope to run a Kerry Area convention later this year again in the Brandon hotel. I will have updates later in time. Our successful and growing public information group meet monthly before our area meeting. It's well attended and has a list of members that can be contacted to help at their exceptionally good schools talks throughout the whole county. With the growing confidence they plan a number of events this year to name one is to host a PI evening for invited Professional Bodies such as the HSE the Gardai local sports club officials and more. Officers of Kerry Area we are in the privileged position at the time of writing to have all positions filled. We also have 4 active Munster intergroup delegates, and the Munster intergroup treasurer is from Kerry. I'm personal very happy to see how well represented Kerry is at the Munster Intergroup. This year I hope to work with the Kerry area delegates in trying to get as many groups as possible attending Kerry area. Least we forget the importance of the GSR. While encouraging all members to actively participate in group conscience. Kerry area groups are privileged to have so many great secretaries throughout the years who produce great minutes which hopefully keep groups up to date. Kerry Area was brought one motion for consideration. Motion from Presentation Group Tralee Passed by area and intergroup. Presentation group Tralee proposes the reinstatement of the 1989 General Service Conference decision that: Alcoholics anonymous does not approve of specialist meetings that might exclude or appear to exclude any individual who has a desire to stop drinking.

## **North/East Cork Area Report**

Unfortunately, this report is not as encouraging as the former. There seems to be many challenges facing the area. Two mains one which are common across the country. Lack of attendance on a regular basis at area which directly leads to no uptake on vacant service positions. When a new member attends, they can often be pressured into taking on a role. Not ideal for all concerned. At the area then only one group is strongly represented. There seems to be a few issues at play when it comes to the Why, old timers who do not want the hassle and in turn are not encouraging the next generation to play their part. Secondly the geography of the area. Between top to bottom it's hard to find a common ground as to where we should have the area meeting. This takes place on the last Tuesday of the month. At present we have only a treasure and a

chairperson whose been on too long and no sectary with 7 months and only one Munster Intergroup delegate who is trying his best to encourage groups to come. Having said all that. North/East Cork played a massive role in running the Cork County Convention. unfortunately, it was very badly supported and with terrible weather not helping it ran a deficit and was down 100+ on previous year. we will continue this year to support the West Cork area with the running of the Cork County convention later this year. With the limited numbers of attendees at area we still manage to hold the area phone going. Like in Kerry area there has been a noted decrees in numbers availing of the phone at the local level. There is a dedicated member who continues to carry the PI message in the area. Putting up posters and answering PI queries as they come. we are fortunate to have the few messengers. I hope beyond hope that North/East Cork area can be saved. It does not look too good so far with the lack of want of service. I cannot understand it, as even the groups closest groups to the building where the meeting is on do not seem to care to attend. The 3 legacies are getting lost along the way. Insurance at area has always been a controversial topic. It was not handled the best at the start of the year which left us chasing some money and groups. There is a motion going forward by a group on such topic. Hopefully, there can be some consensus on the matter after that. I did not attend as many area meeting as I hoped over the year, but I hope to be better going forward. North/East Cork area was brought one motion for consideration. Motion passed at both area and intergroup The Midleton Owenacurra AA group conscience has discussed and given a lot of time to making a decision, under guidance of a loving god, to take some action regarding an issue that has been spoken about and causing problems within the AA structure, in recent years. We as an AA group have no confidence in the structure that does not appear to have respect for the traditions The issue our groups feels are not in accordance with the traditions are; The decision of conference to accept Area involvement to pay the insurance of AA groups Tradition 7 Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

Yours sincerely Secretary of the Midleton Owenacurra Group of Alcoholics Anonymous

On reflection of the last year as a conference delegate. I keep encouraging my areas to write motions on the topics they feel strongly about. AA is changing and the groups voice is so vital in its future. There seems to be plenty of talk but when it comes to putting it on paper it goes nowhere. Phone service in my areas has been getting quieter and quieter. Average of 3 or 4 calls a month. I put this down to when people google or search for help numbers it is the national number they get. Although the areas numbers are there, they are not easy to find. Service.....a topic that I find either hot or cold. It is all down to the lack of sponsorship. I rarely ever see any member bringing another member to an area meeting. Those in service can rarely sponsor another into their role before they leave. Once a member leaves the position it then falls on the area to get a replacement. Where possible having the right person for the right job would make things much smoother. Too often only one person comes along and before they know it, they have the job. If we can't fill a local groups service positions, then I don't think we have much hope at the next level. Munster Intergroup and namely Kerry Area have now won the bid for the 2026 All Ireland Convention in Killarney on the 17th 18th 19th of April. This is a big achievement for Kerry Area, and

we look forward to being a part of it. Kerry Area Convention and north/east Cork convention dates to follow. I look forward to again been of service wherever possible to those in my areas and to all members of alcoholics anonymous. It is great to have the support of my trustee and the other conference delegates.

Yours in service

Linda D

## **Cork City Area Report to Conference 2025**

At the end of December 2024, we have filled all the committee positions. We are still without an Area Secretary, and we have no Intergroup Delegates. A new Treasurer was elected in December, filling a position which had been vacant for 8 months. In general, many of the positions were vacant for much of the year.

### **Prison Committee:**

We have a very active prison committee. Currently, we hold one meeting a week in Cork Prison, and we hope to increase that number over the next few months.

### **Open Meeting:**

Cork City Area hosts an Open meeting on the first Tuesday of the month. Unfortunately, this meeting is poorly attended. It is under review at present and is co-operating with PI to improve the situation. The secretary is also looking at the possibility of changing the venue.

### **Hospital Committee:**

The hospitals in Cork are becoming increasingly opposed to hosting AA meetings. Psychiatric Units do not treat alcoholics, they refer them to treatment centres and see no need for AA meetings. Is this issue being faced by other areas? We hold 2 meetings a week in the Mercy University Hospital, but all other hospitals have stopped holding meetings. Weekly meetings are also held in the 2 treatment centres in our area.

### **Telephone:**

We have a Response telephone which is manned by a different group each month. This system works well in Cork and is overseen by the Telephone Secretary.

### **Public Information:**

We have been without a PI secretary for a lot of the year but have recently got a new secretary who has organized a committee who are addressing the work of Public Information. They will host a workshop at the mini convention this year.

### **Mini Convention:**

We hosted a very successful convention in 2024 at the Commodore Hotel in Cobh. The 2025 convention will be in the same location on the same weekend as our annual conference. The theme for this year's convention is "Personal recovery depends on AA unity".

Mick D.

### **West Cork Area Report to Conference 2025**

There are 15 groups in the West Cork Area, including one online group. The area meetings rotate between the different groups and most groups attend all the meetings. There are no hospitals in the area that require AA meetings and there are no prisons.

West Cork Area runs a telephone response where the phone is handed from one group to the next at the area meeting. This is very well coordinated between all the groups and is very successful.

Public Information has recently got a new secretary, and great work is being done to get the name of AA known to the public. Business cards have been distributed to doctors' surgeries throughout the area. These cards can be scanned, providing a direct link to the AA website.

The Cork County mini convention will take place in the Celtic Ross Hotel in Roscarbery this year. It is our first time using this hotel and we are delighted with the facilities, the price, and the beautiful location.

Overall, the area is operating very well. A largely rural area with a huge geographic spread; I am blown away by the commitment of the groups in carrying the message.

Mick D.



## Munster (Tipperary Area) Report

Tipperary Area Committee meet every 6 weeks in the Horse & Jockey Hotel, well-positioned off the M8. The Area meeting has seen a significant increase in Group GSRs attending over the past twelve months (70%). There is a regular cohort of young people (under 30 years), who have been sponsored to *'grow into service'*, which is encouraging for the continuity of *'carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers'* and protecting the welfare of the AA structure. The Officers are in their second year of service and have been enthusiastic in encouraging attendance at Area meetings.

One Intergroup Delegate has rotated out of service and currently four Intergroup Delegates are being sought.

A new phone was purchased and Groups rotate the phone, every 6 weeks.

A new PI Committee has been formed, following a presentation at Area by Tony O'C, Trustee in July 2024.

The Area Convention was held in the Talbot Hotel, Clonmel 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> August 2024, an enjoyable weekend was had by all those who attended. Theme was 'Love & Service'.

Tipperary Area make regular financial donations to Munster Intergroup.

Yours in fellowship,

Audrey, Conference Delegate

## Munster (Waterford Area) Report

Waterford Area Committee meets every 6 weeks and has been alternating between St Pauls' Group premises in the city and Lawlor's Hotel, Dungarvan, West Waterford. The purpose of alternating was to try and encourage more Group GSRs to attend the Area meeting. There is a large geographic area to travel to Area meetings. The chairperson and secretary are half-way through their two-year term. Treasurer has rotated out of service, having served a third year, due to nobody coming forward. One Intergroup Delegate attends Munster Intergroup.

The 2025 Waterford Area Convention is being held in Lawlor's Hotel, Dungarvan, 24<sup>th</sup>– 26<sup>th</sup> January, arrangements having been finalised at the Area meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January – all are welcome!

PI have requested literature to distribute around public buildings in the city and council.

The phone is always manned and the rotation system works very well.

Groups' attendance has fallen in the past six months, to approximately 30% and the Intergroup Delegate and Officers have reached out to encourage more GSRs to attend.

Area are considering holding Inventory and this will be discussed further at the next Area meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

Waterford Area make regular financial donations to Munster Intergruop.

Yours in fellowship,

Audrey, Conference Delegate

## **GSCD Report Conference 2025**

### **Ulster Delegate 3**

This is my second year as a GSCD for Ulster Intergruop. During my time this year I have visited all nine Areas of Ulster. I have to the best of my ability been available when called upon to assist Areas in their function and to listen and provide clear guidance and direction in accordance with the Service handbook, Conference approved literature, decisions and to uphold the Fellowships Traditions and Concepts to Areas and the Groups they serve.

During this year I have helped were asked in Area DOGs and have been on Area DOG Committees in 3 Areas in the Province. I have attended and supported Derry and Belfast Area DOGs and helped guide Down Area with theirs. Thank you to everyone who was part of these Committees. It was with the help of my fellow GSCDs that suggested Guidelines were drawn up to set up a framework for new Area Officers coming in to work from.

There has been a lot of good work done out there by most Areas, but I must emphasise the importance to all Area Officers to get hold of the Service Handbook 2024 or download or buy one from GSO. This will empower them and shed clarity on the roles and Principles set down to assist them in Growing into Service. For that they are responsible.

Most Areas (not all) are struggling to get people into Service and getting Group GSRs to attend Area. The most important position in AA is the GSR role as they are the vital link between the Structure and the Group and communicate all matters to the Group. There is a new GSR Pack now available for this role and can be ordered from GSO, I would recommend Groups to order these. I would therefore encourage all Areas to plan an Area Inventory early in the term to work out what is working and what is not and to take stock. Area Inventory page 74 Service Handbook (GSCDs will be happy to facilitate). Same applies to Groups (page 21 Service Handbook).

Again, this year there are still too many Groups/ Areas not utilizing their AA Mailboxes. This is how AA communicates with its members and is vital if a Group /Area wish to be kept up to date about what is going on in their Fellowship. Too many examples of this not happening at Group and Area level resulting in Groups / Areas being not well informed, thus letting in misinformation which is disruptive to the real Area Business at hand. The minutes need to be read out to the Members by the

Secretary at Area/ Group level to keep them up to date about what is happening in their Area, Intergroup and Conference. There has unfortunately been far too much time wasted in 2024 going over old ground which has already been documented and addressed. The Intergroup have held online workshops to help Areas/Groups set up their AA Mailboxes and there is also information on this on the National Website. I would like to thank the UIG Officers for facilitating these.

It is sad to reflect that there are still a few Groups in Ulster not holding regular Group Conscience Meetings. This will lead to Groups not being well informed and leads to misinformation and becoming detached from the Service Structure.

It was great to see Derry grow from strength to strength this year and well done to the Officers in that Area in conjunction with their sub committees for all the hard work in putting together their DOG which has not occurred for a few years. Great commitment shown by all concerned.

The Area I feel would benefit most this year from a D.O.G would be Fermanagh, to try and encourage Unity, Service and make a Public Information Statement for the Area. The Area has been struggling of late getting new people into Service. Again, the GSCDs are there to help with the latter.

I took part in the Intergroup Inventory in Feb 24 and would encourage this Intergroup to do the same this year.

I have attended and hosted the GSCD meetings and have been responsible for the Delegates rota this past year. I would like to thank them for their cooperation.

During the past year I have visited the Munster and Connaught Intergroups as part of the National PI Presentation rollout and thank them for their kindness shown to me. I also arranged and took part in the Presentation for Ulster. I visited Leinster previously.

As a Member of the Company and Conference I have attended the AGM and Conference 2024. I have enjoyed and am grateful for the experience and given the opportunity to take part on the various debates. I do my best to be as honest and transparent as I possibly can and try to ensure a degree of humility, integrity and leadership when called upon.

I do respect and encourage other people's opinions if it is fair, factual, well informed and it comes through the Service Structure in a respectful manner.

A big thank you to all those who have been involved in Telephone Service especially Robert, Joanne, Barbara and our wonderful Area Coordinators and responders. I appreciate your important work in Carrying the Message.

The Presentations were very helpful this past year so thank you to all those concerned. I hope they will continue for 2025 as they are needed due to Service Rotation.

Thank you to the employees of GSO for working effortlessly behind the scenes on our behalf.

Finally, Public Information- Carrying the Message. I would like to thank Jeremy for his Service this year and his work towards this endeavour. I wish him well. Regional PI will need a fresh approach this year at UIG, Area and Group level to deliver effective Public Information for which we are all responsible. We need to push PI up our Agendas if we are sincere about Carrying the Message.

It was a step in the right direction to see Open Meetings now listed on our National Website. I hope we can encourage our Groups to hold more of these and add to that list. As a starting point Groups should have their own Open Public Information Meeting annually to let the Public know we are here to help the still suffering alcoholic out there. Thank you and well done to all those I have been privileged to have worked alongside in Carrying the Message this past year, including The Mac Event, Stormont Event, Days of Gratitude, various Workshops / Presentations and everyone involved in PI within our Service Structure. Looking forward to 2025.

It was very humbling to work alongside my colleagues on the National PI Subcommittee and I am grateful to be given the opportunity to serve. This Committee is working hard to develop a Structured Strategic Plan for our Fellowship as a whole.

Thank you to Kenny Ulster Trustee, my fellow GSCDs Billy James and John McC for all your advice and support over this past year. Happy retirement Billy and thank you for your dedicated Service.

To the outgoing UIG officers I personally would like to thank you for your tireless work behind the scenes it has been a privilege serving with you.

I look forward to working with all our new Officers at all levels this term.

In Fellowship,

Brian D.

Ulster Delegate 3

## **Conference Report 2025**

### **James McK – Ulster Intergroup**

This was my second year serving as a GSCD it was a privilege to be of service. In Ulster all the Conference Delegates rotate around all the areas and I visited all the functioning Areas over the last year. There are 10 Areas in Ulster 9 designated by county and an additional area for Belfast. Cavan Area did not function during this year again, though there continues to be several groups operating in the county, a few of them attend Fermanagh Area. All Area meetings are now physical with Antrim Area being the last to return in January 2025

I continued to be a part of Conference's YPLO subcommittee, we currently have no YPLO in Ulster after a 2<sup>nd</sup> resignation however I am hopeful that we can fulfil the position through the structure.

Some Areas continued to struggle getting all access to their financial dealings straightened out when new officers are appointed. Down Area has had this challenge for over 4 years now but have made progress in that they are able to forward money to Intergroup but are not receiving statements etc. The court case of a former treasurer in Derry Area did cause a lot of controversy in 4 or 5 of the Ulster Areas and was especially difficult for the officers of Derry Area even though none of them were in service at the time of the misappropriation nor the investigation.

Antrim Area is generally well attended and did run a DOG last year. The hospital meetings are only starting physically again in early 2025 and the Area provide the main support for Maghaberry Prison service. Antrim did struggle to fill several of its roles at times last year but did have a consistent PI convenor who worked along with the Belfast Area PI convenor on a couple of workshops. The Area did run a DOG and are very active in telephone service which is run in Ulster with every Area providing cover 1 week in 9.

A Telephone Convenor swaps licences on the Horizon App on a weekly basis and helps to iron out challenges. Some new telephone responders do have occasional problems with the system but from my own experience familiarity with the app usually settles this out. Our Intergroup Treasurer and Secretary were involved in the Telephone committee and pushed out many training sessions which helped ensure smooth service. Currently the service receives an average of 5/6 12<sup>th</sup> Step calls a week but it still seems to receive many calls from members looking meeting information and who don't always consider the importance of keeping the line free.

Armagh Area implemented a very successful system of issuing post office lodgement cards for their bank account that gave greater traceability to group funds coming towards the Area. Like several Areas behaviour at meetings was brought up a couple of times during the past year and directories and missing groups also were a part of the conversation at the early part of last year. Last year's motion on specialist meetings was discussed a couple of times and a motion will come through to UIG. A new PI Convenor was appointed in November and a very enthusiastic start has been made. The Area did run a DOG, but numbers were low.

Belfast Area had probably one of the most active PI committees in Ulster over the last year and the prison committee worked well bringing in the neighbouring Down Area to their local prison, prison service in Ulster had been operating in silos in most cases. They did run a DOG with a highly praised service meeting covering all aspects of service. The DOG in the last number of years has been low on numbers and a post event meeting was held to consider how this could be revitalised. Belfast Area had a lot of discussion around the charity status earlier in the year with a lot of misinformation that fuelled the debate and increased attendance at one of the already better attended Area meetings.

Derry Area Officers had been in service from the previous year and only rotated out in November but continued with their strong effort to pull the Area together after division from the fallout of the stolen funds. The communication was particularly strong in the Area bringing some of the country groups back to Area. Prison service to Magillan prison was under the control of Derry with assistance from Tyrone which meant regularly meetings always took place and service was equally as strong in the coverage of an Institution. PI work happened throughout the year with one great multi agency event as a highlight. The Area ran their first DOG in many years which was a great achievement and gained some press coverage. Derry Area held a well-attended Inventory meeting early last year and did consider the results

Donegal Area ran a Day of Gratitude as well as a Convention. The Area did struggle with Area officers all year with a couple of rotations. The Area was very supportive of the telephone service. Area meetings have been taking place in Ballybofey for the last year and though the Area does have over 40 groups it does tend to attract the geographically closest groups to where the Area meeting is taking place with generally and rarely more than 10/12 groups maximum attending. The Area has contacted the hospital again, but no meetings are running but all meetings are covered at an Institution in the county

Down Area tends to have anything between 6-10 groups represented at Area meetings. The Down PI Coordinator also acts as telephone convenor for Ulster. During the year a prison committee was formed. Like a few other Areas the closing of the Belfast office did get some mention and debate during the year but like many cases in all Areas most of the debate came on the back of lack of communication from previous serving GSR's. The charitable status also got some debate with many members struggling to get their heads around this complex issue.

Fermanagh Area continues to function and sends money through to Intergroup meeting every couple of months. While they do not send any representation to Intergroup, they do get involved in telephone service and continue to work along with Connaught members to provide prison service in the nearby Cavan based prison.

Monaghan Area has the smallest number of groups in Ulster. They did run a DOG and regularly take part in telephone service. Area meetings take place every 3 months. Monaghan had a challenge with their bank account too but did get money flowing through structure again. Meetings are very well attended at groups in the Area but they struggle to sponsor members into service.

Tyrone Area benefited from controversy in that it has helped drive attendance at Area meetings. Debate has been ongoing in the Area from member of a couple of groups who seem to have missed communication through structure over a couple of years around the closure of CSO in Belfast and the charitable status. Communication through the Area has improved greatly over the past year. The Area did hold a successful DOG at the start of last year and are repeating in January this year again. As previously mentioned, the Area regularly provides prison service for the prison in Derry.

Ulster has been operating with only 3 conference Delegates for most of the last year and at the time of writing this report we also have no Intergroup Secretary, PI Convenor, Prison Convenor or YPLO.

DRAFT



## Appendix E - 28<sup>TH</sup> World Service Meeting

**27<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024.**

**THEME:** "The Three Legacies in the Digital Era: Our Great Responsibility to the Alcoholic Being Born Today."

The WSM was held in New York over one week with extensive technical preparatory sessions offered for "ONBOARD" and ongoing tech support provided throughout the meetings. The two key languages used were English and Spanish, with translators available for other languages when required. The Meeting was moderated by Bob W. General Manager USA/Canada and coordinated by Irene D. GSO US/Canada. Victor N managed the tech support. The recently appointed Chair, Scott H of the General Service Board New York/Canada was introduced and gave a synopsis of his role/responsibilities and service duties.

Each delegate was given one minute to introduce themselves accommodated through a "Red Ball Meeting." There were forty-nine countries attending with some represented by two delegates. WS delegates presented their respective Country Highlights over the course of the week. These offered an insight into how well AA is today globally and how different countries are dealing with challenges.

There were very informative Literature & publishing and World Service Meeting Fund Presentations given by Bob W/ Scott H. We were proud to report that AA Ireland contributed a substantial amount to the International Literature Fund and the world service meeting fund, valuable services which help countries all over the world who can't yet afford to translate and publish in their own languages. Since the inception of the International Literature Fund in 1990, the impact on the increase of the reach of our literature into the hands of hopeless alcoholics is incalculable. The generous contributions from around the world since that time are truly amazing.

One significant outcome was that a publication called "the big book in plain language" is complete. This book is published in accordance with advisory actions passed by substantial unanimity of the general service conference (GSC) of alcoholics anonymous. In 2021 the 71<sup>st</sup> GSC advised that this book be developed. Progress reports, then sample chapters were reviewed at the 72<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> GSCs. The final draft of the plain Language big book was reviewed and approved by substantial unanimity at the 74<sup>th</sup> GSC 2024. This process and outcome therefore adopt this text as conference approved literature. This is now available to buy as of 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2024.

In addition, New Zealand reported that they were publishing a book containing the stories of the first 12 indigenous alcoholics members from their country.



Belgium also reported that they too were seeking to publish a book of stories from their founder members.

More in depth discussion took place at the relevant committee sessions in addition to the Country Highlights, the week was broken up into themed workshops, committee meetings and presentations, many of which focused on the theme of the new virtual era. Country reports being delivered on day 4.

### **Committees:**

- Agenda,
- Publishing & Literature,
- Policy / Admissions and Finance
- **Working with Others.**

### **Agenda Committee**

Chairperson: Frank Guthrie      Secretary: Diana Lewis

#### **A. Review Composition, Scope and Procedure**

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

#### **B. Review suggestions for the theme of the 29th World Service Meeting (2026)**

The committee recommended the following theme for the 29th World Service Meeting: "Guided by all 36 Principles."

#### **C. Review presentation/discussion topics for the 29th World Service Meeting (2026)**

The committee recommended that the following presentation/discussion topics be included on the agenda for the 29th World Service Meeting:

##### **1. Steps: Into Action and Recovery**

a. "Practicing the principles in all our affairs

##### **b. Humility through willingness**

##### **2. Traditions: Working Together in Unity**

a. Traditions in my personal growth

- b.** Principles for group unity

### **3. Concepts: Interactions for Our Emotional Sobriety**

- a.** Concepts for our spiritual stability
- b.** Concepts for our structural stability

### **4. The Responsibility Statement**

- a.** Singleness of Purpose: How does it fit?
- b.** Putting these principles to work in all our affairs.

### **5. Implementation of Rotation – Benefits and Challenges**

- a.** Lack of service commitment
- b.** Principles before egocentricity
- c.** Service sponsorship

### **6. Online Integration: Where are we now?**

- a.** How do online groups fit our structure?
- b.** Online groups: a vision or a reality?

### **D. Review Workshop topics for the 29th World Service Meeting (2026)**

The committee recommended that the following workshop topics be included on the agenda for the 29th World Service Meeting:

- 1.** How do We Listen to Online Groups within Our Structure and Conference?
- 2.** Working with Public Information
- 3.** Are We Allowing Outside Institutions to Direct Our Program?

The committee elected Páll Sigurjónsson of Iceland as chairperson and Ángel Rodríguez of Bolivia as alternate chairperson.

Literature/Publishing Committee

Chairperson: Marie-Paule Meuwly      Secretary: Michael Riley

### **A. Review Composition, Scope and Procedure**

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes. The committee noted that Procedure 6 from the Composition, Scope, and Procedure was unclear

**"6.** The chairperson will maintain correspondence and communication with the secretary of the committee, as well as with other members of the committee, throughout the interval between World Service Meetings." The committee noted that it would be helpful for the GSO U.S./Canada to provide future guidance on how to facilitate this communication.

**B. Review AAWS Report on the International Literature Fund (ILF)**

The committee unanimously accepted the AAWS Report on the International Literature Fund.

**C. Sharing on the topic of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic as relating to A.A. Literature:**

The committee had a robust discussion relating their experiences not only with literature sales but also how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their work as a service structure. The delegate from Portugal shared how they have only recently increased prices. While they have had the ability to order online, they have recently implemented new ways of digital payment which led to the updating of prices. They have also noticed benefits from online groups assisting users with ordering of literature. Mexico reported that there were few interruptions in providing literature sales to their groups. The government was flexible, and offices and groups remained open. Little to no impact was felt. The delegate from Brazil shared that they were greatly affected by the pandemic. They saw a 20 percent decrease in sales which is concerning because the structure relies heavily on sales of literature. Great Britain reported that to the best of their knowledge, the pandemic did not have much of an impact on sales. Effort is being made to have the digital equivalent of

"Newcomer packs" as the spread of online meetings left a void in that aspect of carrying the message to newcomers. The delegate from Belgium shared that they saw a significant impact during the pandemic as they were not set up with an online bookstore, which they set out to establish following the initial impact of the pandemic. Now that the pandemic is largely behind us, they are seeing a thirty-five percent increase in sales. This shift to online has a positive impact in overall operations and efficiency. Prices have increased but remain affordable. They are continuing to add publications to their bookstore. Belgium also reported they have produced and will continue to produce new material. One example is a biography of a fifty-year trusted servant. They seek to produce new material on their history and founders. Paraguay reported that they were largely unaffected by the pandemic in terms of literature sales. Some groups never reopened. They still printed some literature and currently buy literature from Argentina. They have received permission from AAWS to print their first

book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, which they are working to publish in the future. The delegate from Bulgaria reported that they have not found a way to sell literature online; it needs more refinement. They mainly sell in person, thus sales during the pandemic dropped. Because it is a small country, they know each other and can request literature or connect each other with literature and send directly via delivery. There is not a large profit margin. The Slovenian delegate shared that sales are increasing slightly since the pandemic. They have increased prices. Most sales are direct sales in groups, at events, workshops, and conventions, and not online. The delegate from the Dominican Republic reported that due to various cultural issues it is difficult to sell any literature. Many of the young people don't read books, have never read a book, and this is a serious problem. Australia's delegate reported that the pandemic caused great problems as they realized that a large percentage of profit came from literature. Combined with decreased meeting attendance they saw a significant decrease in available funds. They now have an online bookstore, but it was met with some resistance. Due to the geographic size of the nation, they have seen some Central Offices struggle with sales, as groups order from the online bookstore at the GSO. They are working to alleviate this and encourage sales from local offices. The delegate from Italy reported that sales are steady. They do not have an online bookstore. The English book is available free online, but the Italian is not. This is something they will investigate in the future. Venezuela reported that inflation is staggering, and costs inhibit sales of A.A. literature. Members who can afford to buy literature offer it to those who cannot afford it. Often it is very hard for a newcomer to afford literature. But in the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous, if they continue to work toward a solution, they will find one. Venezuela also shared that they are receiving help from Mexico and other countries.

Denmark shared they were able to move online quickly during the pandemic. They already had an online bookstore, and over time they adjusted their pricing to include shipping costs. This meant that a book that was listed for twenty-five dollars previously was now listing for thirty dollars. Since the base price went up, they benefited from large orders to treatment centres and such. They are moving their entire catalogue to digital and audio books. Sales have gone up since the pandemic. The Slovakian delegate shared that due to the small size of the country the problem was not the distribution of literature but the low number of meetings. Since it is a small country, members and groups can order by phone and travel to the office to pick up orders. It worked that way throughout the pandemic, so there was no real disruption. The delegate from Latvia shared that at the beginning of the lockdown there was no online bookstore, so it was difficult to connect with newcomers. In the last year they have instituted an online bookstore out of necessity, and it has been beneficial, doubling income from literature. Greece reported that they continue to have problems selling literature but are starting to find a solution with the online store. They are seeking guidance from their accountant as to how they can make literature available by donation. The delegate from Ireland reported that they have ceased to purchase the Big Book from AAWS and now buy from Great Britain's GSO. This is resulting in lower costs for Ireland and more readily available for newcomers, so this is a success. Their

service structure encourages groups to buy books for new members and not give them away. Since the pandemic they haven't seen much change, but some expenses have been reduced since they are utilizing more online sales. The Argentinian delegate reported that the pandemic was tough on their office. They were closed, meetings were closed, sales plummeted. They dipped into their reserves after the pandemic and have stocked up on literature again, which was a big investment. They have three-hundred or four-hundred percent inflation, so prices go up every few months. They learned during the pandemic, as Seventh Tradition contributions declined, that they were relying too much on literature sales. They have learned from their Country Sponsors that groups need to contribute more. They are seeing improvements. Just last month they saw a fifteen percent increase. They have learned much from their sponsor, Mexico. Uruguay reported that up to the pandemic they bought literature from Argentina, Colombia, AAWS and others. When the pandemic hit this became impossible. After the REDELA meeting they asked Argentina for sponsorship. They also requested files from AAWS and since they have a printing house, have begun to print literature in their country. Costs are lower, sales have improved, and sales are adding a bigger percentage to income. Nine titles are in print, and they now have access to the AAWS portal so they will be able to deal directly with AAWS for future publications. The delegate from Czech Republic reported that when the pandemic hit the committee took the time to translate and publish A.A. literature in their language. Revenue was down significantly. Revenue for 2020 was fifty percent of what the revenue for 2023 was. They have only one employee for the entire Fellowship, who performs all the labour. They produce an audio book and an e-book. Due to inflation, they have seen prices of literature double. French-Speaking Europe reported that they are doing relatively well. Members and groups are currently having no difficulty ordering books. However, since costs have increased in New York and in Europe, there will be an increase in the next few months. During the pandemic, there were difficult times. The offices in the three countries loaned money to the French-speaking publishing company for rent, etc., and have been reimbursed as of today. They have no online shop but continue to have an order form that is filled out and sent to the office.

**D. Discuss ordering A.A. literature from AAWS and AA Grapevine.**

**Purchasing:** The delegates had a lively discussion sharing the variety of experiences with ordering A.A. literature from AAWS and the AA Grapevine. Ireland, instead of ordering from AAWS, they have been ordering from the Great Britain GSO, who print their own literature. Bulgaria orders from Great Britain as well, as they are unable to complete online orders with AAWS and the AA Grapevine because they cannot select their country in the online form. The delegate from Great Britain shared that the books they publish are the same as AAWS, with some different covers, etc. Pamphlets are different and produced independently. The Slovenian delegate commented that they did not receive responses to emails sent to AAWS, and that questions remained unanswered about the status of their licenses. Other delegates offered solutions to this by communicating with GSO and sharing guidance on how to access the Translation Licensing Portal. The delegate from Australia shared that the office buys

from AAWS, as it is more expensive to publish their own. They have discussed the option to self-publish and may do so in the future. They reported no issues with the payment process and the price increases didn't impact sales. The delegate commented that their sharing was limited as they only received the meeting agenda recently and were unable to gather shared experience from their countries' service structure. French-Speaking Europe reported that some, not all, materials are ordered from AAWS. They also shared that French Speaking Europe also has the same issue as Bulgaria – they cannot order from the AA Grapevine because they are not able to select their country for delivery. The delegate from Portugal shared they print their own literature. They have requested licenses and are beginning to publish the literature. They use the same covers as AAWS except for one title, *The Language of the Heart*, which although it has the same cover, also has an outer cover commemorating their recent International Convention. India reported they order English books from WSO but print in their country any literature from one of 26 spoken languages. The delegate from Hungary shared that due to the prohibitive costs of clearing customs, they do not order from AAWS. In Denmark, it was reported they print everything. The delegate from Flemish Belgium shared they print their own literature, translating the official A.A. literature. They publish about the history of A.A. in Belgium, and since it is created by them, they do not have to ask for permission from AAWS. They only require permission from the GSB of Belgium. The delegate shared they have an ageing A.A. population, 80% of the members are 50 years or older. Most of these members have A.A. literature, and if they don't produce new items, they will have nothing to sell. New literature drives sales. Latvia reported they do not buy from GSO, U.S./Canada. The delegate from Greece shared they have books in English and Greek, translated with license from AAWS, and they print these in Greece. French-speaking Europe's delegate reported they have their own publishing company that serves their structure; thus, they order some literature from AAWS, but they also print their own. They order from AA Grapevine directly because they cannot obtain licensing. The orders arrive at the publishing company in Belgium and are then shipped to France and Switzerland. To aid in delivering, deliveries are made by car when the publishing company attends the Conference of the three countries. In Venezuela, the delegate reported they print their own A.A. literature, with help from the sponsor country, Mexico, and that they do not order from AAWS. The Dominican Republic reported they have help from their Mexican sponsor country with different buying options and have no issues with purchasing A.A. literature. The delegate from Ecuador reported that after receiving licenses through the platform, their publishing situation has improved greatly, and this helped with the contributions. They previously purchased from Colombia and Peru, and this has lowered the costs. Australia's delegate raised an issue related to global literature decisions and expressed there is a concern among some in Australia that when countries produce their own material it may not be aligned with A.A. across the globe. A discussion followed among the delegates, and it was shared that AAWS has given permission for countries to create their own literature, that decision is up to each different conference. This sparked a lively discussion, the delegate from Czech Republic shared that the issue is not how they are affiliated with other service structures but how to protect themselves. That while they have autonomy to produce

basically whatever they want; it remains their responsibility to publish what is aligned with A.A. The delegate from India shared they print literature in languages such as Urdu and Tamil and offer these to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as their sponsor country. The delegate from Ireland shared they have two self-produced publications, a Newsletter, and a magazine titled "The Road Back."

**Licensing:** Denmark reported that many problems have been solved and they don't need new licenses since they do not have new publications currently. They may need new licenses for audiobooks. The delegate from Slovenia inquired about the Licensing Platform, and how to find out which licenses they held. A discussion followed that helped guide this issue and offered ways to use the portal and to contact GSO for any questions. Additional questions were raised by various delegates:

- How long a license is valid.
- How to message the Legal, Licensing, & Intellectual Property (LLIP) through the portal.
- How to resolve waiting periods for licenses.

The delegate from Italy asked for shared experience about selling A.A. literature to non-A.A. members, i.e. bookstores, treatment centres, etc. A.A. Italy has been issued its own Value Added Tax (VAT) number which allows the Association to sell its texts externally as well as internally (allowing the ability to sell to non-alcoholics and the public). The guidelines state sales of A.A. literature may take place tax-free, "provided that in its total amount, the sale of such literature continues to be directed mainly to alcoholic members". A variety of experiences were shared by several delegates that they do in fact sell to the public. A discussion was held on the ways that various service structures offer audio and e- books and how those are made available, and thus could be available outside the Fellowship as there is no way to confirm if non-members were purchasing them. The delegate from the Czech Republic shared that the printed book is only available through their store. Other delegates shared they sell or offer very little outside the Fellowship, and that the appearance of A.A. materials is not attractive outside the Fellowship. It was suggested to look at producing more modern, attractive literature. Another delegate shared that some A.A. literature was sold at Al-Anon or Narcotics Anonymous events.

## **New business:**

### **1. Discuss E-books and audiobooks:**

The delegate from Czech Republic shared in detail the process they took to produce their audiobook. From cost saving measures; using A.A. members as voice actors and directors, and a friendly studio, and sourcing a vendor to offer it on a retail platform. They kept the costs low and are very happy with the results. They had a bidding

process to come up with the retail vendor. Slovenia shared their audiobook features a journalist who is an A.A. member and the product is available on the website. Denmark is just finishing the audio version of the Big Book. They hired an actor for the first 167 pages, then had several A.A. members with voices tested through a panel to do the personal stories. It cost around \$15,000 to make it to pay the actors and studio. This should be finished by the end of the year and will be available through the online bookstore. In French-speaking Europe, France and Belgium have many stories available on the website. In Belgium they made a few videos for Instagram. These are short, catchy videos that give the telephone number and website to find more information and are designed to attract young people. The delegate from India shared that if they are offering audio literature for free, it could impact sales of printed literature, and they could suffer financially. Others shared that audiobooks and eBooks can be welcoming and once an alcoholic joins the Fellowship, they will purchase literature. Still others shared that there are uses for those with limited access to read or listen, or even see. So, audio and sign language versions of A.A. literature help carry the message to those members. Mexico has a Braille Big Book, which is very expensive. They only give it to certain foundations that serve the blind population, it cannot be bought, not available for sale or for groups and only donated. Because the texture is erased after storage or use, after so many uses the copies can't be "read."

### **New Business: Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

The delegate from Ireland raised the issue of AI and how it might impact on A.A. The committee noted that it might be valuable to consider including shared experience on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as it relates to A.A. literature, in a future agenda. The committee discussed the timing of the posting of committee background. The committee suggested that background materials be distributed earlier so that the literature committee has ample time to review and facilitate a more informed group conscience. The committee elected Pascal Deotte of Belgium as chairperson and Andy Poad of Australia as alternate chairperson.

### **Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee**

Chairperson: Justin Tunstall

Secretary: Irene Donoso

### **A. Review Composition, Scope and Procedure**

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

### **B. Review requests for participation at the 28th World Service Meeting:**

MERCAA (Middle East Regional Committee for Alcoholics Anonymous):



The committee discussed with gratitude the Middle East Regional Committee of A.A. (MERCAA) request for participation at the 28th World Service Meeting. The committee noted that the MERCAA at this time is still in process to develop.

Fiji: The committee reviewed with appreciation Fiji's request for participation at the 28<sup>th</sup> World Service Meeting and agreed that based upon the current qualification guidelines and the information shared by Fiji that they would not qualify at this time but encourages application in the future.

Honduras: The committee approved Honduras's request for participation at the 28th World Service Meeting.

### **C. Review qualifications for countries participating in the World Service Meetings**

The committee reviewed the qualifications for countries participating in the World Service Meeting and noted the need to update the description of the process to review requests from countries for financial assistance from the WSM Fund to participate in the WSM. The committee recommended that Item 7 which currently reads:

Before the due date for the election of World Service delegates, the secretary of the World Service Meeting will notify each country on the policy regarding the representation and the financial responsibility for countries participating in the World Service Meeting; and will inquire whether or not it wishes to participate in the forthcoming World Service Meeting and intends to fulfil the delegates' commitment and financial responsibility. If this commitment should be impossible, the Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee will consider each situation individually. The World Service Meeting Fund (which is maintained by A.A. World Services but is under the purview of the WSM Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee) was established in 2018 to provide financial assistance to countries that request funding and to support the World Service Meeting. Be changed to read:

Before the due date for the election of World Service delegates, the secretary of the World Service Meeting will notify each country of the policies regarding the representation and the financial responsibility for countries participating in the World Service Meeting; and will inquire whether or not it wishes to participate in the forthcoming World Service Meeting and intends to fulfil the delegates' commitment and financial responsibility. If this commitment should be impossible, each situation will be considered individually by the AAWS Finance committee. The World Service Meeting Fund (which is maintained by A.A. World Services but is under the purview of the WSM Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee) was established in 2018 to provide financial assistance to countries that request funding and to support the World Service Meeting.

## **D. Review qualifications for World Service Meeting Delegates**

The committee reviewed the qualifications for delegates and alternate delegates participating in the World Service Meeting and noted the need for better description of WSM delegates' role and responsibilities. The committee recommended that the items which currently reads:

- 1.** Delegates are to be elected or appointed by the Fellowship or Board in their country/countries, and not be self-appointed.
- 2.** Except where a delegate is serving two or more countries, delegates should be residents and preferably citizens of the country they serve.
- 3.** Delegates should have a working knowledge of English or Spanish and, if they are A.A. members, it is desirable that they have at least five years current unbroken sobriety in A.A.
- 4.** Countries that have no WSM delegate available with working knowledge of English or Spanish may choose to send an interpreter for that delegate at the expense of the delegate country.
- 5.** Delegates should have service experience at their national level. They should have demonstrated leadership qualities, genuine service interest, organizational ability, a knowledge and love of A.A., and time to attend the World Service Meeting fully informed on A.A. in their country/countries.
- 6.** After returning to the country/countries they represent, delegates should have the time to present a report to the Fellowship on the World Service Meeting.

Be changed to read:

- 1.** Delegates are to be elected or appointed by the Fellowship or Board in their country/countries, and not be self-appointed.
- 2.** Except where a delegate is serving two or more countries, delegates should be residents and preferably citizens of the country they serve, in order that they may best represent the structure they serve, with current experience of the structure's successes and challenges. They should have time to prepare for the World Service Meeting and to take back the WSM experience to their structure's officers.
- 3.** Delegates should have a working knowledge of English or Spanish and, if they are A.A. members, it is desirable that they have at least five years current unbroken sobriety in A.A. Countries that have no WSM delegate available with working knowledge of English or Spanish may choose to send an interpreter for that delegate (or find one local to the WSM location) preferably at the expense of the delegate country.

4. When selecting their delegate(s), countries may wish to consider potential challenges in obtaining visas for admission to the WSM host country.

5. Delegates should have service experience at their national level. They should have demonstrated leadership qualities, genuine service interest, organizational ability, a knowledge and love of A.A., and time to attend the World Service Meeting fully informed on A.A. in their country/countries.

6. After returning to the country/countries they represent, delegates should have the time to present a report to the Fellowship on the World Service Meeting. Formatted: Not Expanded by / Condensed by the committee noted a concern from a minority of countries that discontinuing the practice of funding interpreters (other than English/Spanish) hotel and meal expenses by AAWS at short notice has greatly inconvenienced countries who, with limited time to budget funds, are supporting interpreters at delegates' personal expense. Concern was also expressed at the potential exclusion of countries from the WSM by focusing entirely on English and Spanish as the official languages of the meeting. The committee suggests that this be discussed by this committee at the next WSM.

#### **E. Review World Service Meeting finances and delegates fees**

The committee reviewed the preliminary finance report of the 28th World Service Meeting and an AAWS report on the history of World Service Meeting expenses and delegate fees. In the spirit of Self-Support as outlined in A.A.'s Tradition Seven, the committee recommended that the delegate fee remain US \$2,000 for the 29th WSM and that a suggestion be made to those countries that can pay more or contribute more to the WSM Fund. Note: At the first WSM held in 1969, the delegate fee was US\$200. The highest WSM Delegate fee was US\$2,900 at the 15th WSM in 1998. The committee requested that errors in the 28th WSM Finance Report be corrected and clearly report on the contributions made by the European Service Meeting in the fourth quarter of 2023 that are currently credited to Great Britain. The committee had a lengthy discussion on a self-supporting World Service Meeting acknowledging that the current delegate fee and contributions to WSM Fund does not cover the expenses of the WSM. Broader concerns were shared regarding whether the WSM is relying too heavily on an expectation that the U.S./ Canada structure will supplement the costs with a larger WSM Fund contribution. This question extends beyond just monetary concerns. The committee discussed how to establish a fair delegate fee to enable participation from smaller structures or countries that cannot fully fund their involvement in the WSM. It was agreed that maintaining a flat delegate fee, while encouraging countries that can contribute more to do so, is the best practice at this time. The committee discussed the potential for a sliding scale fee and concluded that developing criteria to assess a country's financial situation for a fair implementation is not viable at this time. The committee requested that the Site Selection Committee incorporate affordability as a criterion for future WSM locations.

## **F. Confirm date for the 29th World Service Meeting**

The committee recommended that the 29th World Service Meeting take place in a location selected by the Site Selection Committee in October 4-8, 2026

## **G. Review of the World Service Meeting Statement of Purpose Following up on a proposal presented at the 27th WSM to degenderize the World Service Meeting Statement of Purpose, the committee recommended the following changes:**

1. That the first sentence in the WSM Statement of Purpose which currently reads: The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that all of A.A. activity--to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world they may be, whatever language they may speak.

To be changed to: The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all of A.A. activity--to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world, whatever the language.

## **H. Election of Chairperson and Alternate Chairperson**

The committee elected Sheli Bowman of Hong Kong as chairperson and Sales Lucken of South Africa as alternate chairperson

## **Working With Others Committee**

Chairperson: Marita Rhinehart Secretary: Misha Quill

1. Introductions. The chair welcomed everyone. Some changes were made to the composition of the committee to accommodate changes to the attendees of the WSM.

2. Review Composition, Scope and Procedures The Committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedures and made no changes.

3. Sharing on Selected Topics – The committee added some additional discussion topics, which included:

- Carrying the message through social media.
- How are public meetings conducted? • What Audio and Video resources are used for internal and external audiences?
- How are we carrying the message to universities and training colleges (Cooperation with the Professional Community)?

**A.** Carrying the message through social media One country noted that a few years ago they began to have questions about social media, but they did not have a Public

Information committee, so they started one. They have also noticed that older members tend to be less enthusiastic about social media and more concerned about Traditions. One country shared that they have a national coordinator for social media and another one for Public Information. They noted that young people want text messages, and the national chat text line creates opportunities for connecting with them. They have very strict guidelines for how they run the chat line, and a roster of people who respond to inquiries (not Artificial Intelligence). One country is getting a lot of calls to the Messenger app. It took four years to get authorization from Conference to start a Facebook page. The permission was granted just as Covid started. At the start of the pandemic, everything moved to Facebook. But Page 1 of 11 people were very concerned about anonymity. Then people became more comfortable and nothing bad happened. But they noticed that young people don't use Facebook, just people over the age of 40. They have been using Instagram in a way that people don't break anonymity. It is just one-way information about meetings, group changes, and events. Another structure noted that their General Service Conference and Boards have been asking if they could make Facebook pages. In the meantime, the working group has created a Facebook page and Instagram account for their national convention. The pages are just for members. One delegate asked a question – can purchased ads on Facebook or Instagram be used for Public Information? Is it against the Traditions to pay for ads that will reach people with a Public Information message? A committee member observed that a neighbouring country, Brazil, has been a leader in using social media to carry the message. One delegate noted that his country is careful about introducing new tools. When it comes to digital tools, they only have guidelines now for how to use the internet. Three years ago, at the General Service Conference, they decided to create a video for Public Information, then created four videos and a country-wide YouTube channel. They have not created ads for Facebook or Instagram. Another delegate reported that they are putting Public Information ads on Instagram and Facebook. It is much less expensive than any printed media. They are getting the best response on Instagram where they include links to audio recordings of A.A. members' stories. In one country, after the pandemic, they started Facebook, TikTok, Twitter and Instagram. They spend the equivalent of \$80 each month. The more Seventh Tradition contributions they receive, the more they can spend on outreach to the still-suffering alcoholic. One delegate shared that one of their strategic goals is to strengthen their financial position, so that they can improve the quality of outreach. When they have local and regional events, they use the radio and can get hundreds of calls. They also ask Class A trustees to create videos for TikTok. One member noted that in his country, it is important to remember that anonymity for the member is different from how we communicate with the public about A.A. We don't have to be invisible. A delegate reported that they have had a lot of success with wallet cards with a QR code and think this works better than having someone carry around a pamphlet, which can make people feel concerned about their anonymity. Another country delegate noted that they have an annual gratitude month collection, – this year it was for social media, and they collected \$11,000. They encourage members to put a dollar in for each year of their sobriety. A few delegates talked about how they don't have podcasts or Facebook. Some have a fear that

Facebook's advertising or its methods might violate anonymity. Another member shared that they try to take a lot of care with our Traditions. "We do not talk about politics or anything. If someone breaks anonymity on Facebook then we poke them a little, to remind them of Tradition 11." He noted that he thinks GSO will never have a Facebook for A.A. in that country. One delegate stated that the board of his service structure talks a lot about social media, but they always come back to anonymity. He noted that they are reluctant to use social media for the official A.A., but groups have private Facebook pages. Delegates expressed gratitude for learning so much about using social media from each other. Another country shared the experience of having no social media and wondered if an emphasis on anonymity might make A.A. invisible in her country. A member from another structure noted that on (Twitter)you can pay for access to a particular demographic. He said that in a neighbouring structure, the A.A. board was targeting people by geo-locating people who had attended a large music festival. The following Monday those who attended would get a text saying, "If Alcohol is a problem for you, call this number." In one country they reported putting business cards in police stations, bus stations, banks, really any public place. They are more discreet than other literature. On the card is a QR code that connects the person to A.A. Another member noted: Facebook is for old people. Even the audience for TikTok is aging." So, when you pick a social media site, you must think about who you are trying to reach. One delegate described how the web page for his country's A.A. office must be approved by their conference. You can go there and see a list of meetings organized by area, and it has events and activities. Another country representative talked about how their most popular communication tool is Telegram. On Telegram they have about 2,000 speakers recorded that people can access. They also use Google Meet and have 7-8 meetings per day online in their main city. One representative talked about an annual wellness event on a small island. A.A. volunteers wear a T-shirt that says, "I am an alcoholic-- but I do not drink." This opens the door to communication with those who are interested. One member noted that in his country they had a good discussion about how the definition of the word "promotion" has changed since the Big Book was written. He noted that "We think in current language, but in 1930s language, the terminology of promotion was more about individuals advocating for something based on their personal identity." He said, "We need people to know that A.A. exists!"

**B.** How do we conduct public meetings? One delegate noted that in his structure they organize professional lunches and show the Cochrane report video. The video emphasizes the cost savings that can happen when people get sober in A.A. He noted the effectiveness of (showing the video) is seen in the call backs they get. Recently, they had a lunch for medical students. They usually focus Cooperation with the Professional Community work on counsellors, social workers, not doctors, who are too busy. Another structure noted that they also used the Cochrane report video and shared it with treatment centres, who play it for new clients. It has the message: A.A. works. One country representative recently held a public meeting for nursing students for Cooperation with the Professional Community/Public Information work. He also explained how his board holds an annual corrections forum with the eight areas in

their service structure. The location rotates each year so that they can connect with correctional institutions in every area. They invite professionals and use Class A trustees to reach out. One member described how A.A. members continue to work on educating doctors, police, and people from the courts. He noted that they sometimes get negative pushback from a religious leader. He also noted that they are trying to bring the A.A. message to high schools, hospitals, and institutions. "We do the best we can." A few delegates talked about meeting with addiction specialists and mental health professionals. Another shared about going to hospitals and that they have a prisons committee, which is going well. A delegate noted that their work in schools is not going well, because the Public Information committee members are "too old!" One delegate shared that the public (police, justice, hospitals, institutions) has been inviting A.A. to come and share. So A.A. does not have to promote itself. When an organization needs help, they are always able to bring the message. "When a school asks, we have people in their 20s and 30s who are happy to go. We are also contacted from social media. They will reach out and ask if someone can come and speak. When Page 4 of 11 we have requests from the press and media, we are trusted by members to share their experiences." In one country to get the message out to professionals, they rely on a committee within the board. Lately they have focused on human resources (HR). When they have events A.A. volunteers attend, but it is expensive, and they have not seen a big impact. So, they are looking for other ways. One delegate talked about how their country is very secular, and so people might have concerns about A.A., and wondered if A.A. was being kept a secret as a result. One representative noted that they have not had much luck with corrections or police, noting that there is a lot to learn from others here at the WSM. He noted that in his country, it is very uncommon for people to come directly from the street – most new members come from treatment. In one country, the national Public Information committee is composed of Public Information trusted servants from each Area. Their online Area is starting to do some Public Information work in places where there is no A.A. group or very few.

**C. Audio and Video** - how are service structures working with audio and video for internal use and for external use? One country shared that they do not have any audio or video. They publish a magazine – for internal use. It gets shared with doctors, but since it is not attractive, it is not very effective. One representative shared that in his country they think audio is very important because lots of people struggle with reading. They recently published a new book of stories from indigenous people but want to make audio recordings of the stories so people can listen to them. The delegate from another country noted that they have created a television spot and that they have adapted videos from the UK. A radio spot airing on national radio was made with help from Class A trustees. Another delegate noted that in her service structure, they do not have a trustee on the Public Information committee. She noted that as a result, all the Public Information work happens on the level of groups and three regions. Every group has a secretary who makes a connection with media, radio or TV. One delegate noted that in his country they are careful about anonymity and Traditions. He noted "Maybe sometimes we are too strict, and it inhibits our action." They have created one video: Welcome to A.A. And they have added subtitles in the

local language to four US/ Canada videos with permission. Page 5 of 11 One country noted that for the public they have made TV program with members' voices, being careful with anonymity. They also made a radio program for interviews with members. Another country delegate noted that they are making a library of videos: for young people, prisoners, old timers, and newcomers from treatment, and a number of audios of A.A. members' stories. He also noted that in his country, in one city, there is a one-hour meeting once a month on community radio with three members, each telling their stories. One delegate described his structure's videos for professionals directed toward healthcare, human resources, church (faith leaders), courts and education – all on their website. A few members described how they had created audio files of members reading the Big Book and other literature (like Living Sober) in local languages. One country reported having success with putting stickers with A.A. contact information up in metro stations, buses, doctors' offices, and pharmacies. The stickers say: "A.A. can help – if you have a problem with alcohol - call us" He also said that A.A. communicates when they are giving food to homeless – that helps get the message out. But it is extra difficult to reach some professionals – especially religious leaders – it is almost impossible! One country noted that they have been invited to put their message on some international radio broadcasts but must decline because these channels are so politicized, it might get A.A. in trouble. One delegate reported a positive experience they recently had when a radio journalist attended their national convention. She interviewed people all weekend. After the convention, there was a 15-minute radio piece that was great – and so the fears vanished. A lot of people heard the message. Another member shared that in his country an important tool for internal communication is the internal magazine they publish. It's very inexpensive and all the groups get it. They print about 7,000 copies. He noted that they also print the conference report, but alcoholics don't want to read, they just want to share.

**D.** How are we carrying the message to universities and training colleges? One country reported that they have a couple of events at universities where they set up tables, but they don't get any interest from the students. So instead, they are looking for Cooperation with the Professional Community opportunities where they would be able to connect with faculty and administrators. Page 6 of 11 One country reported that they have an ongoing goal to intensify their Twelfth Step work. They call it national week – for instance, there is a national week for A.A. with Young People. They also have a national week to carry the message to health care institutions. One representative noted that normally they would bring literature displays of pamphlets and give them out and talk to university students. He said they get a good response. Sometimes there are people who have problems, or maybe they have experience with a family member drinking. In one structure, each area is in charge of creating their own materials. But she noted that they had discovered that people don't want to be seen taking information. One success they had was with nursing programs that are willing to have A.A. members come and talk to students. Or for continuing education credits, for professionals, A.A. can provide some information. The professional groups sometimes want to have these continuing education credits online, but the Area A.A. structure wants to remain in person because with online classes, you don't know if the



people are even listening. In some countries, they have been trying to get contacts with schools, but when the GSO provides literature to the schools, it works better when the institution invites A.A. (the Public Information committee) to come in and talk about their own experience. One representative shared that it is not easy in our country to talk openly about being in A.A." In one country there is a National Day of Recovery. The day before that is for professionals and it's an opportunity to bring the information about A.A. and share our A.A. literature. In one country, at the national level they make a Public Information package, but the actual activity of sharing those with institutions happens locally. They notice that it helps when there is a personal relationship between the A.A. members and local professionals. One delegate reported that there is a national professional association focused on addiction in her country, and it is very effective to build relationships between A.A. and those addictionologists. One member asked, "Who is responsible for Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community in your home structure?" (meaning national/ regional/ local entities). A quick show of hands revealed that Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community work is about evenly spread between national, area (or regional), district and group-level work.

**E. How do you cooperate with Local and National Law Enforcement?** One delegate reported that in their country, there is an app that police use. The A.A. structure is working to get A.A. listed as a resource.

In one country, the GSO tries to work with the national police, and that includes focus on family courts and family violence. He noted that there is a lot of alcoholism related to domestic violence, and that it could be helpful to work with family police in the rural areas. One delegate described how in his structure they have worked on a strategic plan to communicate with police and law enforcement – they wanted to create a framework that could be shared with all the regional structures. In another country, they have begun to have weekly talks to the police. It's not a board job, it is the Area's work. When the area does not have enough trusted servants, the board steps in. One delegate described outreach his structure is doing with the transit police – traffic police, who do operations for drunk driving tests. the A.A. members can help educate them. One country reported that they believe the outreach to the police is better at the local level. The local referral is better at building a relationship with the professional or the potential member A member from one country reported: "Today it's wonderful. Twenty years ago, when members would say 'We are alcoholic,' they would be threatened with being sent to jail. They were put on a bus, and were brought to jail as sober members, but then the police started to understand that the members were not drunk. Now it is better. We even have A.A. board members who are part of those influential parts of our society. A representative from another structure they talked about how groups and areas take on the service of reaching out. At the national level, there are three law enforcement agencies, and the national GSO works on some outreach to them.

**F.** Carrying the message to professionals in the military: armed forces officers, unit commanders or military chaplains One member talked about how in his country when the military gets training – A.A. brings a meeting every week, and offers to bring the military member who needs help to outside meetings Another member said reaching the military is like reaching law enforcement, it's two-fold:

**1.** How can we in A.A. help you in the military help your own members who are suffering from alcoholism?

**2.** How can we in A.A. help you in the police or the military respond to alcoholics you encounter in your work? (this is more difficult)

**G.** Service work and online groups - how do we encourage it?

Members from a couple of countries agreed that it is a challenge to integrate online groups with the service structure. One country representative pointed out that in his country there is an online Area – and they are very involved in service. They are especially good for reaching remote members Another representative reported that it is because they are a small structure, and they really encourage members to come in person.

A delegate reported that in his structure there is a question about whether online groups could do Public Information service? Right now, they are encouraged to work with the national Public Information committee. In one structure, they have some members who say, "We are online, so we only want to do service online." So, they have not been incorporated into the service structure. In another neighbouring country, they made it flexible. They told the online groups, "We could create a structure for you but that will take some time, or you could just register in a district, and send a representative in-person to the meetings, then you can get connected and be represented in the structure." That worked! We just needed flexibility on both sides. One member suggested that better communication is needed. He noted that when they talk about service in online groups, they are often talking about group level service. Service to them is who is leading the meeting, watching for zoom bombers, handling the technology. But if we want to get them involved in general service – we need to start telling people that service in A.A. is so many things, not just group service.

**H.** How to find potential Class A non-alcoholic trustees (Friends of A.A.)?

Almost all representatives said they have struggled to find people who would be willing to serve. A member from one structure noted that they have had many problems trying to attract Class As. In recent years, there have been well-attended professional forums. That was how they met their current board chair, a Class A, and he is doing a great job, attending 20-25 events per year. He is bringing in others to observe meetings and they might someday become Class As. He noted, "We want them to fall in love with us." One member asked if any structures paid their Class A's.

Members of the committee agreed that they did not. There was one Class A in the room, who shared that some professionals do want to be paid. He noted that it is difficult to manage the travel as a Class A. In his country, he travels 9 hours to get to a board meeting. One country said they have asked for help from all different professions but have had no success. Another member noted that sometimes members of Al-Anon or the family members of alcoholics are a good possibility for Class As, especially if they have professional credentials. The member from another country talked about how in his structure, the board chair is a psychologist who works in the prisons. She (the Class A board chair) is trying to find her own replacement, but it is challenging. One structure put an advertisement on a website for people interested in board work, noting that A.A. service does not pay. But they have not had any success. In one country their Class As have traditionally been professionals who deal with alcoholics – doctors, social workers, psychotherapists. But recently a person who was a journalist kept asking about interviewing members, and she was interested in learning about the solution, and so they invited her to become a Class A. In one country, they call them Friends of A.A. They are great, even when they are not on our board, we can use their help to reach professionals.

#### **I. Sharing strategies to carry the A.A. message to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented immigrants**

One delegate shared that there are 125 million refugees worldwide and there is much work to do to reach the hand of A.A. out to those who need and want help. Another delegate agreed, saying that this is so important, it has been discussed at their GSB. There are lots of immigrants, and we don't see them at meetings. We worry, "How do we reach them?" One member shared that his structure had provided literature to a neighbouring country that shares a language with his and where the political challenges made it impossible to stay in contact, but they heard that five people had gotten sober. He also noted that there is a minority group of refugees in two countries that their structure is trying to support and that they are working to create a Big Book in the Kurdish language. One country shared that there have been Russian-speaking members who have been in their country who were afraid to come forward with their problem, but that the office was able to connect them to other Russian speakers who could help. A delegate shared that in European countries there have been conflicts with A.A. members struggling when there are countries at war and people not wanting to be in meeting together. A member suggested that for refugees, online meetings in their own languages could be very helpful.

Another member agreed, noting that there are many Ukrainian refugees in various countries, not all countries have resources in the languages that refugees speak. They worry that they don't have much to offer and hope that online groups would be helpful. One member reported that in his country there are more than a million migrants from neighbouring Venezuela, and because they share the language, they come to the same meetings. A.A. has welcomed them. A member from one Central American country noted that their country experiences migrants who are passing

through, – people are on their way to somewhere else. He noted we don't do anything with people who are passing through. We don't have any organized efforts to reach migrants. One delegate said people from his country have left and are a diaspora – they have become migrants in many different countries – and that makes the online meeting so important. The committee also noted that they did not have enough time to finish this discussion on the topic of "Sharing strategies to carry the A.A. message to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented immigrants;" and they would like it added as Old Business to the 29th WSM Working with Others Committee.

**4. Elections:** The committee elected Jony Francissen-Tinus (Netherlands) as chair and Karolina Mikhailova (Czech Republic), as alternate chair.

### **Presentation: Paths to Embrace the New**

Has the pandemic, and with it the proliferation of online groups that followed, been a curse or a grace? A look at the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, while not answering this question with absolute certainty, can at least give us hope that we can face it without fear. Who would have thought that one day Bill would become sober and, what's more, find in Bob the companion he needed to maintain his sobriety and lay the foundations for an association that today boasts some 2 million members with access to a Twelve Step program to enrich their sobriety?

Who would have thought that the first alcoholics, who "are people who normally would not mix, "would manage to remain unified in the face of adversity after gaining access to the Twelve Traditions? Despite these principles, Bill knew that he and Bob wouldn't be around forever, and that he needed to ensure their continuity. So, Bill wrote the Twelve Concepts empowering the groups through a structure with a balance of responsibilities between the General Service Conference and the General Service Board.

The introduction of the Twelve Concepts for World Service demonstrates Bill's vision of the generational challenge these principles could face, but also his confidence in their rigor to meet that eventuality and safeguard the spirit of A.A. Using a variety of mechanisms and social media, the A.A. community is constantly interconnected and finding new and innovative ways to communicate the A.A. experience, strength and hope for recovery.

In the U.S./Canada, the question hasn't been whether we accept to integrate them, but how to go about it. We know that, in general, to make a change, we must go through a period of discomfort. We all are flowers that have grown out of manure. I know a thing or two about that, as I was completely buried in manure when I arrived at A.A. You, the great gardeners, knew how to bring out the flowers that were lacking air in my heart. And since then, you've never known what to do with me other than to love

me by including me in your great bouquet. And so, my heart began to beat and, I dare to believe, to serve A.A. to the best of my knowledge. Why should it be any different with online groups?

With the onset of the pandemic, a new page appeared in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, a page whose conclusion has yet to be written as the number of virtual groups exploded during the pandemic: in April 2022, 595 groups had already registered with our General Service Office; in June 2023, the registration list showed 1,236 groups and 797 GSRs.

At the 71st General Service Conference, two resolutions relating to online groups were passed. One of them was that "the General Service Board form a committee to study future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the General Service structure of the U.S./Canada." The committee set to work exploring future possibilities for online group participation in the U.S./Canada General Service structure. This transition brings new and exciting challenges, as well as highlighting the need to open up new perspectives on how to integrate this platform into A.A. life, while respecting our principles. To understand the development of online meetings and the different approaches to the issue of online group integration, the ad hoc committee drew up an initial survey. The vast majority of those who responded replied they were participating in both the area and district levels. In general, local participation has adapted mostly positively to the inclusion of online groups. The development of hybrid formats has proved to be an excellent way of maintaining greater participation, while letting groups choose their own path.

The committee evaluated that it might be helpful for local sharing to be compiled by the General Service Office, and that the Group Services desk consider the creation of an A.A. Guideline to encourage participation and provide shared experience for technological and logistical learned efficiencies. The feedback from the survey was informative and highlighted many ongoing questions, such as the need for guidance on what might differentiate an online meeting from a group, the benefits of participating in the service structure, and above all, observing the spirit of the Fourth Tradition by providing options for groups to choose from that feel responsive to their needs. This transition brings new and exciting challenges, as well as highlighting the need to open up new perspectives on how to integrate this platform into A.A. life. Guided by our 36 spiritual principles, we can fearlessly adjust to the winds of change while remaining sober and unified. In conclusion, "We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. ... This is the Great Fact for us." (Alcoholics Anonymous p.164) Thank you for the opportunity to present this report, and to be part of the process that will undoubtedly lead us to a successful conclusion. Robert L. , Trustee-at-Large/Canada

**Presentation “How to choose the right service for me. Is it what I like to do or am good at? Or will it help me grow as a person?”**

My name is René F. and I am an alcoholic from the Czech Republic. Thank you for the possibility to speak about this fascinating topic. I promise I'll keep it brief and to the point, as we AAs are supposed to when sharing: no philosophy, no theories, me and my experience. But please allow me at the very beginning just a short general statement: while there isn't a universally agreed-upon "natural ratio" for people willing to go the extra mile versus those who aren't, some psychological and behavioural studies suggest that a smaller percentage of people consistently go above and beyond in various aspects of life—whether at work, in personal relationships, or in community service. This idea can be linked to concepts like the Pareto Principle (also known as the 80/20 rule), which suggests that roughly 20% of people or efforts often produce 80% of the results in many systems. While it's not a hard and fast rule, it implies that a smaller subset of people typically takes on more of the initiative or responsibility. Personality traits, motivation, and external factors (like environment and culture) influence this as well. In teams or organizations, you'll often find a mix of people with varying levels of commitment and enthusiasm, but those who consistently go the extra mile tend to be in the minority. And that's exactly what we see in Czechia – with membership around 1500 (my humble estimate) there are about 200 serving in our committees, as secretaries etc. The same faces rotating around – you know what I mean In my case it was very simple – the service chose me. Or perhaps my higher power did. Or, most importantly, quite logical sequence of events took place. I started to go to AA meetings in September 2015, after decades of heavy drinking, after rehab and a number of lapses. And in January 2016 I attended the first General Service Conference, and still being the big mouth from my drinking days (oh these old habits...) I couldn't resist and commented on just about the Big Book, which we call "The Blue Book". So here I am, freshly dry know-it-all from a small township in Eastern Bohemia, giving advice to the Literature Committee... And guess what? I had come as an ordinary delegate and left as the Committee member. And loved the assignment ever since. Because it was exactly my cuppa tea. Because I could learn about "the other side" of book making business: the licenses, the proofreading process, the print works – all the stuff. But mainly because I could learn humility. Long gone were the days when I thought they had been doing lousy work. Nothing is as simple as it seems in publishing AA literature, right...?

From then on it ran quite smoothly – Organization Committee, Service Conference moderator, National Delegate and finally Board member. And all that time I've had countless moments to remind myself of how misguiding my self-perception can be. I had been a consultant previously, time was money – no space for blah blah, say your thing and shut up, now let's move on. So, the AA horizontal structure, where nobody leads and everybody has the right to express their views, without being limited, and the voting system, where those opposed explain why they were against – I can tell you that it gave me really hard time but again: after cooling down it gave me the chance to realize how long my journey towards humility still was and that has been helping

me to grow as a person. I've been always more than happy to translate our texts, I've become used to the licensing process (now much better thanks to the online tools), I've even started to like long discussions with my AA friends on boring, but important topics – but what service actually gives me is the possibility to work on myself. Service doesn't make me a better translator, or interpreter, or teacher, but it does, or will (all fingers crossed) change me into a better person. And that makes me grateful squared: not just for the fact I've been sober since I joined AA, but also for the opportunity to move forward mentally and spiritually.

René F., Czechia

### **Presentation: Anonymity as a Spiritual Principle: We Are All Equal in A.A.**

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you about anonymity as a fundamental principle for our fellowship and recovery.

#### Understanding Anonymity

In Tradition One, it is written, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity." Anonymity is the first principle in A.A. and remains one of the most profound. In essence, anonymity means that our personal welfare is secondary to the shared goal of sobriety. This principle protects both the individual and the group, ensuring that our focus remains on recovery and cooperation through the sharing of experience. The Spiritual Foundation of Anonymity

Anonymity serves as the spiritual foundation of our fellowship in several ways:

1. **Humility:** Humility is a crucial element in both individual recovery and the survival of the fellowship. It helps to subdue the ego and reminds us that we are all equal members of A.A. regardless of personal stories or backgrounds.
2. **Unity:** Anonymity fosters unity within our groups. By removing personal recognition and distinctions, the A.A. message remains the primary focus. This unity is vital to our collective strength and the effectiveness of our mutual support.
3. **Selflessness:** Practicing anonymity is an act of selflessness. It requires setting aside the desire for recognition and personal gain and focusing on the well-being of others. This selfless attitude forms a solid foundation for our spiritual growth and recovery.
4. **Safety:** Anonymity provides a safe space for all members. Ensuring that A.A. remains a welcoming environment for anyone seeking help is crucial.

**Practicing Anonymity** When sharing in meetings, I always focus on my experience and hope rather than personal achievements or praise. In service, I have received tremendous benefits as an A.A. member by serving others in A.A. without seeking recognition. However, when I attend fellowship gatherings that are not in any service

capacity, I still find myself battling with the small personal failing of approval-seeking. The Japanese Societal Context Perhaps due to the social norms of Japan, such as the desire to follow the rules, the desire for uniformity, and the aversion to taking risks, it seems that there are few cases of major anonymous breaks. There is also a tendency to interpret the Traditions in an excessively broad way, and to see them as rules. For example, I would like to share an experience involving the National Corrections and Treatment Facilities Forum, hosted by the General Service Board, held last December in Okinawa and seek your opinions and feedback. The organizing committee members were featured in a local newspaper with a photo to promote the event. As you might imagine, this led to a lively discussion at the hosting district committee meeting on how to interpret "anonymity at the public level." The trustee responsible for correctional facilities and the public information trustee joined the district committee meeting via Zoom. The district's conscience was "As a rule, do not post your picture in the media," "Reaffirm at each event about anonymity." We should organize a study session on anonymity." Additionally, at this year's 29th A.A. Japan General Service Conference, it was recommended that "the General Service Board should promote awareness of the Anonymity Letter," and the Trustees' Public Information Committee has already placed a statement on the JSO website regarding the treatment of A.A. members in the media.

## **In Conclusion**

When I first joined A.A., I was deeply confused by the concepts of anonymity and equality, which were so different from the societal norms I had known. Ultimately, I am incredibly grateful that I came to understand that anonymity is not just a guideline. Anonymity has become a spiritual path, leading me to humility, unity, and equality. As it says in Chapter 11 of the Big Book, "A Vision for You," on page 235: "No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially—if he means business. Social distinctions, petty rivalries and jealousies—these are laughed out of countenance. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?" Anonymity reminds us that we are all equal members of a united fellowship of anonymous alcoholics on our journey to sobriety. By embracing anonymity, we cultivate an environment of acceptance, understanding, and shared purpose, ensuring that A.A. remains a refuge and a place of hope for all who seek it. I am grateful for this. Thank you for allowing me to share these thoughts with you today. My spiritual awakening has come slowly over time. Through the experience of giving without expecting anything in return, I have received the priceless gift of a new awareness and existence. This program has reached me across the seas. Although I am a university graduate, I am unable to read or speak English well. Next year, Japan will hold its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention. It has been 45 years since the Japanese translation of the Big Book was published. I am deeply grateful for the passion and service of those pioneers who were involved in the publication of the first Japanese Big Book, as well as for the financial support provided by the General Service Board of the United States and Canada at that time (of course,



all funds were fully repaid). That book saved my life! I look forward to hearing your thoughts and experiences on this important principle. Let us continue to uphold the spirit of anonymity and equality within our fellowship. "Diversity in A.A.: Our Heritage of Inclusion — Are we truly inclusive with atheists and agnostics?" Hello everyone, my name is Marie-Paule, and I am an alcoholic. What a privilege to be asked to speak on the topic "Are we truly inclusive with atheists and agnostics?" Thank you for asking for my perspective, even though I must admit, after much research, I am left not knowing if we are truly inclusive or even if it is possible to be truly inclusive. I hope it will catch your interest and that you will bring it back to your conferences, to your intergroups, to your districts and to your groups. It is important to bring awareness and open people's reflections on the topic of inclusion. The theme implies for me a question I need to ask myself: "Can secular members of the A.A. Fellowship feel welcomed by me? Do they know, through the message I pass, that I am not judging them and that they truly have the right to be in A.A. as the short version of the Third Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous states: "That the only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking"? I talked to people who confirmed that it was not an easy journey for them to feel included. They understood that they would only get sober if they had God in their life. They thought that they were not good A.A. members because they could not believe in the same way it is described in our method. They imagined there was something wrong with them. They had to find their own way of making peace with this concept to find their place in the rooms of A.A. They often remained silent about it because indeed there were incidents where they were aggressed verbally and chased from the room for their way of seeing things. But they knew A.A. was the last house on the road for them and they choose to stay. Yet these people do great service work, are very involved, and have years of sobriety. When they felt a source of moral guidance, love and wisdom, they were able to give their own meaning to the Steps, even where the word God was used. Along the way they also found people, often a sponsor, who played a big role in helping them receive the miraculous benefits of this program. These people emphasized to them the Third Tradition, that the most important thing is not to pick up a drink one day after another, that alcohol is stronger than they are, that the consequences of drinking has made life unmanageable, that they need to be kind, tolerant, honest, and loving, to recognise their faults and do what is necessary to repair them, to be of service, to learn to change their behaviours and their attitude and to apply the principles of the program. This is a good start for people who are struggling with the concept of God to help them get out of self-centeredness. I would say that they benefited from the slogan "Live and Let Live." I was made aware by the General Service Office (GSO), of a group in France, which uses the term "Higher Power" when they read the Steps. An A.A. member wanted to know if this group followed the Traditions. I contacted the World Service Office (WSO) with this question, and this is the answer I received. They based it on the Fourth Tradition: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." The only way this group would be breaking this Tradition is if they printed a new version of the Steps and diffused it. By reading them and using Higher Power instead of God, they are not breaking the Fourth Tradition. I later discover that this group was created for agnostics, believers and atheists; all are welcome. I do have

experiences as a sponsor of members who have problems with the word God. This is either because they are incredibly mad at God, for theirs and the suffering in the world, or for others, because they have been so indoctrinated to believe that they and their behaviours are shameful in the eyes of God. This has left them with low self-esteem, guilt and inability to accept themselves as they are and their goodness. To address this topic today, it does not matter if I am a believer or not. It matters that I do not impose my views onto others with my convictions. The principles of the program are loving. Our founders looked again and again for ways to accommodate people who might leave just because the word God is mentioned. In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, they describe it in many ways – Supreme Being, Creative Intelligence, Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, Him, the Realm of Spirit, our own conception of God, Power Greater than myself, All Powerful Guiding Intelligence, Spirit of the Universe, Infinite Power and Love, the Father of Light, our Director, a New Employer, our Creator, etc. If this is the base of our program, it is because it is necessary to realize that self-reliance is what failed us to get sober. Otherwise, we would have done it a long time ago. Which logically means that we need to rely on something else. To come and speak to you I did a Fourth Step on the question. I realized that I am not judging others' beliefs, but I see others as a threat to my safety when they have other ways of being, thinking, acting and believing, no matter what the topic might be. Can I remain safe when people practice the program differently than I do? The answer needs to be a resounding YES in order to practice being inclusive. It reminds me of something my sponsor said: "That if I am afraid that I won't get what I want (in this case that people agree with me) I am not believing that I am always cared for by God." This in a way makes me an agnostic even if I believe in a Power greater than myself. To conclude I would like to leave you with the words that Bill W. wrote in 1965: "We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion. In A.A. we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering. Consequently, the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all. Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of A.A., so long as he or she declares." – (The God Word, page 5). When we are inclusive as much as possible, it gives a chance to people to relate to what is being said. I can keep this in mind as the newcomer, or the old-timer, join a meeting so that they can feel as they are finally home and have hope that they too can get sober. Thank you for your attention, Marie-Paule M. International delegate for French-speaking Europe.

Nori Imai

## **Presentation: 28TH WORLD SERVICE MEETING HOW CAN GROUPS HELP ALCOHOLICS WITH MENTAL DISORDERS AND STAY SAFE FOR EVERYONE?**

My name is Aris Ramos, and I am a class A custodian representing the Southern Zone of Central America (Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama). Since my beginnings in my training as a resident doctor in psychiatry, I have felt a great love for this beautiful community. As a student I had early access to the knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous, which led me to choose the specialty of psychiatry and addiction medicine. Today, as a member of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and the World Association of Dual Pathology (WADD), based in Madrid, I constantly seek to nourish myself with the latest studies. According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, an estimated 283 million people worldwide will be living with an alcohol use disorder or alcoholism by 2021. According to the American Psychiatric Association, alcoholism can interact with other psychiatric disorders, particularly mood disorders such as depression and bipolar affective disorder, as well as anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorders. The medical literature also refers to other comorbid psychiatric disorders such as personality disorders, psychoses, cognitive impairments (formerly called dementias), as well as suicidal and violent behaviours. The term dual pathology is currently used for people suffering from an addictive disorder such as alcoholism along with another mental disorder. These problems, according to research, can occur sequentially or simultaneously throughout life. Dual pathology is considered to be more the rule than the exception, and studies indicate that up to seventy percent of people who develop alcoholism may have a comorbid psycho-emotional condition or psychiatric illness. The relationship between alcoholism and other mental disorders is complex and can develop in three ways:

- 1- The mental disorder may precede and increase the risk of alcoholism.
- 2- Alcoholism may precede and increase the risk of developing a mental disorder.
- 3- Mental disorder and alcoholism can develop independently due to common risk factors.

Compared to patients with a single disorder, patients with dual pathology of alcoholism and other psychiatric pathology experience more emergency room admissions, increased hospitalization rates, high prevalence of suicide, high relapse rates, and early mortality. Alcoholic individuals who attend Alcoholics Anonymous groups but have dual pathology or psychiatric comorbidity often share with their sponsor or a group member about their condition, which should not be an impediment, as long as they remain stabilized. From my perspective as a mental health specialist, I believe that group members can be offered help in different ways. Of the following points, the first four are based on my observations of the A.A. Traditions.

- 1- Members of Alcoholics Anonymous should be clear that anyone can suffer from the disease of alcoholism, including the mentally disturbed.
- 2- No A.A. member should take on the role of doctor, since all assessment and treatment should be obtained from a qualified physician; however, we can reinforce adherence to medication and monitoring with the mental health specialists of the person affected by the two conditions.
- 3- We should avoid labelling members as addicted to “pills” if they have a mental disorder and have a treatment supervised by qualified physicians. This encourages the member to abandon their treatment with consequences that can range from suicide to psychotic symptoms in cases of major mental disorders (such as schizophrenia or bipolar affective disorder).
- 4- Direct confrontation should be avoided from the podium (e.g., in the case of a member suffering from major depression, this may cause the member to leave the group, or in the case of a paranoid member, it may cause a violent reaction).
- 5- Confidentiality must be respected in case the member is stable and decides not to share his/her condition with the rest of the group.
- 6- If the member with dual pathology shares that he/she is planning to commit suicide, family members should be contacted, and the member should be taken to an emergency room for hospitalization by mental health teams.
- 7- In open meetings, family members should be invited to learn more about strategies that can help in the case of a nervous breakdown.
- 8- The A.A. groups are based on a program of mutual support, one alcoholic helping another. They should have emergency telephone numbers and maintain communication with the mental health teams near their area or zone, this will allow for fluid attention and quick responses. Within the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous, we find the pamphlet published by AAWS in 2018 titled “A.A. for alcoholics with mental health problems - and their sponsors”, which shares stories of people with drinking problems, as well as mental health problems, that reflect their experience, strength and hope. The booklet also has a foreword on medication with suggestions for the member taking medication and the inherent risks if not supervised by a specialist. In conclusion, regardless of whether the patient suffers from a mental or psycho-emotional disorder, if he or she is regulated and stable, and has the cognitive capacity to be able to take part in the activities offered by Alcoholics Anonymous, as members of this beautiful fellowship we are called to fulfil the third legacy of service.

From “A.A.’s Legacy of Service”

Our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the

message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die. Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer—ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service. Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship. These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion. Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A. In the name of God Greetings to all my dear friends. My name is Amir and I am an alcoholic. It is my honour to be the second term delegate of Iran at the 28th World Service Meeting and to have been given the opportunity to share my experiences with you for a few minutes. I am very pleased, from the deep of my heart, that this opportunity was provided for me, and for that, I thank God and sincerely thank the servants of this meeting. In the invitation sent to me, I was asked to share about "Face-to-face sponsorship." So, let me start with a quote from the Big Book in the foreword to the second edition, page XVI: "Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic, but he had succeeded only in keeping sober himself. The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician. This physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth's description of alcoholism and its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no non-alcoholic could. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery." As mentioned above, this subject shows the amazing effect of one alcoholic's message to another alcoholic. And only an alcoholic can understand another alcoholic well, because alcoholism has caused us alcoholics to sometimes behave similarly, and this causes us to identify with each other in meetings. Now I want to talk a little about sponsorship and as stated in the pamphlet "Questions & Answers on Sponsorship." Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: "You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!".... And he found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need A.A. was born. Many years have passed since Ebby T.'s visit in the fall of 1934, and during this time the message of Alcoholics

Anonymous has reached many countries, penetrating borders and, regardless of language, race, culture, religion, skin colour, etc., the message of A.A. has reached all corners of the world. In Iran, A.A. was introduced years before the meetings were established, and the memoirs of one of the Seagoing A.A.s (the so-called Internationalists), are an example of this statement. Robert Lee M., who passed through Abadan (a port city in Iran) in November 1950 with the S.S. Stanvac ship, shows that the A.A. message came to Iran years before I was born, but the history of the first A.A. meetings in Iran goes back to the early '90s when some A.A. members who lived outside of Iran brought this message with them when they travelled to Iran. Today, thanks to God, Alcoholics Anonymous has grown a lot in Iran and many meetings are being held. We deliver the message face-to-face, online and hybrid. We have messaging committees and in addition to committee work, this process is also going on individually. Most A.A. members, in line with the work of the Twelfth Step, are transmitting the message of A.A. and we usually transmit the message face-to-face, because we think that in this method, the message is understood through skin and bones. This method makes it possible to use other senses as well, and the good feeling of hugging a sympathetic friend will bring extra energy to the parties. Of course, nowadays, with the advancement of technology, we have benefited a lot from online meetings. For example, in Iran, where A.A. is entering puberty, this online environment has helped us a lot. With the start of the spread of Covid-19 in the world, online meetings were unintentionally imposed on us, and at first we made many efforts to reject this approach because we felt that this type of communication lacked soul. But as time went by, our prejudices about it lessened and we held not only recovery meetings, but also many conventions online and were able to connect with countless alcoholics around the world. This led to the progress of A.A. in Iran. But with all the help that the online environment has given us, I think that the communication between the sponsor and the sponsored is more effective in person and face-to-face if possible. Especially when working the Steps, because when we are together and in a peaceful environment, we feel safe and calm, and this causes us to receive God's message more effectively in our hearts. Another advantage of face-to-face sponsorship is to prevent the power seeking and personalization of some members. In this way, equality and anonymity are shared among the members, and the rotation principle is observed in the Twelfth Step. One of the problems power in the meetings due to having a large number of sponsees, and this problem manifests itself in the group conscience and in the business meetings and causes the spirit of democracy to disappear. Instead of fulfilling God's will, the personal will of some members can be advanced. I think that the transmission of the A.A. message should be a combination of publications and personal experiences and share experience, strength and hope. Regardless of the form of sponsorship, be it face-to-face, online or hybrid, the important thing is that we have to deliver this message. In addition, as a member of the big family of Alcoholics Anonymous, we have a duty to generously deliver the gift that has been given to us for free to alcoholics who still suffer. We have to stay in this cycle and have sponsorship as part of the Fellowship and be in daily contact with both our sponsor and the sponsored and this contact can be face to face, phone call or online. And finally, I will end my speech with a quote from the Big Book, chapter 2, page 17: "The tremendous

fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism." Many thanks

Amir Zakaei Soleimani Delegate second round of Iran

## **PRESENTATION -- ONLINE SPONSORSHIP**

My name is Radoslava S., and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is February 22, 2015 and I currently serve as International Delegate First Term and member of the General Service Board (GSB) of A.A. Bulgaria since 2023. I bring you warm greetings from A.A. Bulgaria. Thank you very much for the invitation to prepare this presentation. I am delighted to be with you today and to share with you the Bulgarian experience in online sponsorship. When I started preparing the presentation I remembered my life when I was a child. With my parents, we lived in a house and we had only a landline telephone. We didn't have mobile telephone, a computer or the internet. Then, when I was a student, I started working on a computer and using the internet. When I remember those facts I realized how lucky I am and feel gratitude for being here today because I know that the technologies are really helping lots of people in their recovery from that fatal disease called alcoholism. Online sponsoring helped me as well to stay sober and continue my recovery. As alcoholics our main purpose in Alcoholics Anonymous is carrying the A.A. message to those who still suffer from alcoholism. Nowadays it is possible not only on in face- to-face meetings but also online using the internet. During the past decades, internet and online platforms developed rapidly all over the world, and that gave us the opportunity for sponsoring to help suffering alcoholics anywhere in the world. With the ability to use computers and to know how to work with the internet, Viber, WhatsApp, Zoom, Discord and other programs, alcoholics become more confident and started looking for other opportunities for recovery and to help other alcoholics. In the beginning, all the meetings and sponsoring were face-to-face. The first meeting in Bulgaria was held on December 5, 1989, in the capital, Sofia, in one of the halls of the Psychiatric Clinic. Then over the years people started using online sponsoring, first on Skype, then using video chat. Through the years we continued working on the A.A program using also tools such as scheduled meetings with a few alcoholics to read the A.A. Big Book or to work on the Twelve Traditions with a sponsor. Before 2020 many people had worked with their sponsors online when they lived in different countries or in small settlements. In the capital of Sofia many people preferred to meet their sponsor face-to-face and to work for their recovery. In the smaller settlements people preferred to work with a sponsor from Bulgaria or abroad online. The reason for this choice is that in the smaller villages (where, in most of the cases are usually living between 10 to 100 people), all the people know each other, and also the alcoholics, especially the newcomers, are afraid thinking of how to keep their anonymity. People are also afraid of losing their job or to be a

subject of rumours; that is why they prefer to work with an A.A. sponsor online or by the phone. The next stage, which is also important in the development of online sponsorship in Bulgaria, was the COVID-19 lockdown. During that period, face-to-face meetings were completely suspended from March to June 2020. Most of the face-to-face meetings took place online during this period. At that time online sponsoring became popular, and that allowed A.A. Bulgaria alcoholics to keep in touch with each other and share experiences of strength and hope for their recovery. Currently, the online sponsoring continues, but the focus is not on the constraints of holding meetings, but on the attitude to such sponsorship and the convenience of this type of meeting. My experience in online sponsoring is not very strong for now — just a few years, but I could say that it helped me a lot in my recovery. I have been sober for nine years and seven months now, and with my first and second sponsors I have worked with face- to-face meetings. With my third sponsor, we have used online sponsoring because she lived in another town, and we could meet each other very rarely. We used Viber and video chat, and it helped me a lot because I could see her, talk to her and feel her willingness to help me and her friendly care for me. We also read the A.A. Big Book and she was my sponsor on the A.A. Twelve Traditions as well. My experience helps me when I'm sponsoring a woman from A.A. I prefer face-to-face sponsoring but also use online sponsoring when needed. When the women I am working with lives in another town we work only online. When we are working on the A.A program online we are using Viber, Zoom and video chat, and I could see not only their faces but also talk to them and show them some books they could read and to create friendly connections between us, based on loving care and trust of each other. According to Bulgarian sponsors I have spoken to, online sponsorship provides an opportunity to help other alcoholics when we live in different cities and we need to connect online, or when we work till late in the evening and can't see each other face- to-face. Most of the alcoholics prefer face-to face contact instead of online sponsorship. Sometimes the sponsors are using hybrid sponsoring. Also, when sponsoring online, many sponsors implement working on the A.A. program online via video connection, because this keeps contact between us and communication is more effective. During these meetings, in addition to working on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, takes place reading of AA Big Book. Online sponsorship has made it easy to find a sponsor and to receive the help you need anywhere in the world. Sometimes online sponsoring is the only way for Bulgarian alcoholics to recover speaking their mother language when they live abroad and are unable to return home often. It is much more impactful and emotional to be able to say your prayers or talk to a sponsor or friend in Bulgarian language because there are moments when every person feels nostalgia and searches for their roots. Online sponsoring allows recovery when a person is traveling on a ship, when the alcoholic is ill or when people have difficult accessibilities and cannot leave home. This is an opportunity that modern technology allows and is a necessity that I appreciate with all my heart. As I already mentioned I'm also sponsoring online and have had a sponsor online. This has given me an opportunity to bring to your attention the strengths and weaknesses of this type of sponsorship.

The strengths of online sponsoring are:



- Easy and fast communication between us — we can share with each other, or ask a question, getting support without delay.
- Conversations at a convenient time for each participant — gave us the opportunity to schedule our appointments with respect to each other's time and personalities.
- Access to a sponsor anywhere in the world — allows us to help suffering alcoholics when they live in different countries or continents.
- Easy exchange of literature, information, brochures and etc.
- Video call — one of the most powerful and effective tools of our program is video call between us. In addition to the honest sharing of problems and difficulties, we have many happy moments and positive emotions; we become friends and feel accepted.

The weaknesses of online sponsoring are:

- Lack of face-to-face communication between us — online sponsoring really helps a lot, but in this case there is not the possibility to meet with the sponsor and to drink a cup of coffee or tea and just to talk to each other. The live contact between us is missing;
- Difficulties in communicating when the sponsored does not have an internet connection or a computer — in smaller settlements in Bulgaria, which don't have live meetings, or places with poor internet connection, or in the cases when the sponsored does not have a computer or ability to work with a computer, it causes difficulties in recovery of the alcoholics.
- Lack of motivation to work on the program when the sponsorship is entirely online — currently most of the sponsored prefer face-to-face contact with a sponsor to get to know and to build trust with each other, therefore when sponsorship is only online sometimes their motivation to work on the program decreases with time. Thank you very much for the opportunity to share the A.A. Bulgarian experience in online sponsoring.

Radoslava S. — International Delegate, First Term, Bulgaria

## **Presentation**

Hello, my name is Balys, and I am an alcoholic. I came to A.A. in 2010 and I am very grateful that we already had a well- established fellowship in Lithuania. A.A. in Lithuania started in 1988. Our first member, his name was Romas, was struggling to find somebody who could help him quit drinking. He tried various methods and failed again and again. Once he saw an advertisement in a local newspaper that Alcoholics

Anonymous might help him. There was an address—BOX 459, Grand Central Station, New York. He decided to write a letter, but he knew no English, so he did it in Lithuanian. It seemed like a crazy idea to ask somebody to translate a letter to this mysterious country of America's saying that he was drinking too much. But he was desperate, so he found an English teacher who could help him. As he met the teacher, she told him that she had recently been asked by a priest to translate some parts of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Coincidence you might say. He sent the letter and received an answer quickly. Romas was an artist so the international desk at A.A.W.S. even found an artist A.A. member in New York, with whom he could exchange letters. He also exchanged letters with some Lithuanian A.A. members living in the US. He managed to stay sober for a few months but then he drank again. He understood that he would not be able to stay sober only via mail. Some Lithuanian A.A. members from the US decided to get out of their comfy homes and fly over the Atlantic to meet Romas and start A.A. in Lithuania. In summer 1988 three sober A.A. members from the US and three drunks from Lithuania met in Romas' apartment and they talked overnight. That was the first A.A. meeting in Lithuania. Later A.A.W.S. helped Lithuania print our first books. They paid for printing in Germany and shipped the books to Lithuania. That's why we feel the duty to contribute to A.A.W.S. literature fund every year. A.A. members from the US and Canada started coming to Lithuania every year, they would even hire a bus and drive around going to hospitals trying to start new groups in different towns. Our archives hold a lot of correspondence with A.A.W.S. and private A.A. members from the US and Canada. That is a short story of hybrid country to country sponsorship before the digital era. When I came to AA in 2010, we didn't have Big Book sponsorship in Lithuania. Of course we did have sponsorship, we worked the steps, we lived the program, but we had no Big Book thumpers. Some ten years ago Big Book sponsorship came to Lithuania. The process of bringing this kind of sponsorship to Lithuania was also very much hybrid. As we didn't have many Big Book sponsors at home, some members found sponsors in other countries. They worked the steps via Skype and met in person for the Fifth Step and maybe some other Steps. After these members worked the Steps in this hybrid way, they were able to sponsor members at their local home groups and now Big Book sponsorship is a common part of Lithuanian A.A. Digital means of communication helped it a lot and that was way before the pandemic turned things around. Speaking of country-to-country sponsorship today, Lithuanian A.A. has good relations with our neighbouring A.A. fellowships, especially Poland and Latvia. Any time we ask Polish A.A. to help us with workshop speakers on various service topics, they are very willing to travel to Lithuania and do it. We always exchange invites to our General Service Conferences. At the moment we are working on rewriting our Service Manual. When the Service Manual committee approached the Polish A.A. with some questions on this topic, just again, a few of the Polish A.A. members, some of them who were involved in writing the Polish Service Manual, joined our committee and answered all their questions, only this time virtually. That it just one of many times when we had virtual calls or in person meetings with our fellows from Poland. Latvia is another country that we visit each other's General Service Conferences every year. In our country highlights I already mentioned the informal Baltic service meeting that we started this year. When we got

the idea to start sharing service experience between our countries on a regular basis, our Latvian friends felt that we should invite Estonian A.A. members too. We still don't have Estonia neither at the WSM or ESM and their service structure is not so strong yet. At the moment two delegates from both Latvia and Lithuania and one from Estonia meet online to share experience on current things happening in our service structures and plan bigger themed meetings where we invite more members from the Fellowship in our countries. We hope that after a few online meetings we will be able to organize a face-to-face Baltic service meeting. Of course, virtual platforms allow us to save time and money, but at the same time I feel that a face-to-face meeting allows for a better human connection. A couple of years ago we had some questions about A.A. helplines. We wrote an email to the ESM mailing list. A few days later we received an answer from A.A. Portugal – a country that is right on the other side of Europe, that we had no contact with before. Portuguese A.A. offered to have a virtual platform meeting in a couple of days. Of course, we met and A.A. members from Portugal were very kind to answer all our questions. As we met the international delegate from Portugal in person at the ESM last year, we told him we were very touched and inspired that they decided to get out of their daily routine and have a virtual call with somebody they didn't even know. His answer was that for them it was just the same as when a suffering alcoholic reaches out for help. My time is limited here, and I can share just a couple of occasions of country- to-country sponsorship. In Lithuania we are very grateful to be part of the ESM and WSM as it gives us a feeling of being a part of the worldwide A.A. community. Not only by participating in the meetings, but also being able to get in touch with our fellows from other countries all year round via email, chat and video calls. Whenever we have a question, there are people to answer it, sometimes it's Denmark that picks up that virtual call, sometimes it's the UK that sends us a generous email loaded with service material, sometimes it's another one of the many loving and caring A.A. fellowships in the world. Thank you all! And to end this scattered presentation I want to quote a sentence from the foreword to the fourth edition of the Big Book that was printed in 2001 and was read here at WSM on Monday morning: "Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity."

Balys Kumza, Lithuania

## **Workshops**

### **Workshop I**

Are Our Groups Really Practicing the Traditions?

Twenty-eighth World Service Meeting

The Westin New York at Times Square

Monday October 28, 2024

2:50 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

Secretary: Diana Lewis

Workshop discussions were informed by the following questions:

1. Are our groups really practicing the Traditions?

a. How can trusted servants encourage more understanding/ practices of the

Traditions? When Traditions are presented as adhering to principles as guideposts rather than

looking at Traditions as “rules,” members can be more open to seeing the spirituality that derives from them. The A.A. Preamble is a helpful introduction to discussing Traditions and reading the Twelve Traditions at the beginning of a meeting introduces them to new members. Including the practice of the Traditions in personal life (family, friends, jobs, etc.) shows that the A.A. program is more than just Twelve Steps. Learning to connect all the Traditions to actions applied in our daily lives, provides a more practical way of seeing them as a guide to living. When groups focus on only a few Traditions as being the “most important” there may be a tendency to overlook the others. Many delegates believe that unity is achieved when we practice and look to all the Traditions when searching how to apply them to situations. Sometimes, people believe A.A. sponsorship is limited to only the Steps. Just as a sponsor encourages understanding and practice of the Steps, they can do the same with the Traditions. At the heart of many problems or disunity in service can be a lack of understanding of Traditions. The Traditions create a roadmap to finding our way back to A.A.’s primary purpose. Hosting Traditions workshops or forums, etc., can motivate understanding and enthusiasm. Those members who may not see the purpose at the beginning, are grateful afterward to have discussed this topic. While every A.A. member can have a different interpretation about what it means to practice the Traditions, when groups exchange their experience with other groups, we can learn from each other’s experience. Stories from the book *Language of the Heart* can be helpful in sharing why and how Traditions came about. They came about out of the mistakes and lessons learned in our early history. We continue to benefit from those experiences. The Twelve Steps bring us closer to ourselves, the Twelve Traditions bring us closer to each other and the Twelve Concepts keep us together with greater participation and understanding of our roles in relation to our primary purpose. Some online groups have developed meetings for newcomers that are question and answer format, to allow people to share and ask questions about Traditions, about service and what service means and has to offer the newcomer. PowerPoint presentations about what A.A. is and what it is not, are a helpful way to understand Traditions. In some countries, younger members are often sponsored by members abroad and get a good

introduction to the Traditions. It is important that General Service Representatives have a grasp and understanding of the Traditions and can then serve as a resource at their group when questions arise. While A.A. Traditions are for A.A. and not for non-A.A.'s to adhere to, we do appreciate when the professional community, including the media, cooperate with A.A. within these guideposts. The general public's understanding of our principles can help avoid misconceptions about A.A. at the public level.

b. When appointing service positions in our groups, do we practice anonymity, or do we favour more experienced trusted servants?

Some shared that the thread throughout service is the principle of anonymity. When filling service positions, it is important to ask ourselves if we are driven by "personalities over principles." Are we choosing our trusted servants because they are "popular" or simply familiar? Another way to answer this is to ask ourselves if we adhere to the principle of rotation. Despite the lack of experience of new servants, it is important to encourage new people to serve. While not every type of service is attractive to every member, we can help members identify aspects of service that might tap into their attributes or encourage them to try new roles that may not come instinctively. As long as there is a willingness, we pass on our experience. Service sponsorship plays a role. Some shared that it is important to avoid repeating service roles unless necessary. Older servants should step back to allow new people to come through. Some additional sharing included points such as the importance of refraining from cliques in meetings; being mindful that sobriety time is not always the best gauge to the most qualified person to serve; experienced service people can intimidate new people from wanting to participate; and having alternate service positions can be helpful in onboarding new people to service.

c. Do we trust the group conscience of service boards and committees?

Often, by being in A.A. we learn to build on experience which includes our trusted servants. Many think that there is trust but when people allow personalities to get in the way, it creates mistrust. Ultimately outcomes are determined by an informed group conscience through God/Higher Power. Good communication is vital, and boards need to trust the process. Board inventories can be extremely helpful to review what needs improvement and what is going well. In a group you can leave if you don't like what the conscience decides. As a trustee it is a legal obligation to voice dissent at the board level and not after as a criticism to your friends. Often there is a perception that service boards are full of conflict and controversy. In reality, they mostly have good relationships. It is important to dispel the notion of disunity as it discourages people from volunteering. Alcoholics tend not to trust the world in general. A.A. teaches trust in a higher power. When a group makes a mistake, it is an opportunity to learn the lesson.

d. How do we balance inclusivity and singleness of purpose?

Groups taking a particular topic can motivate inclusivity while supporting singleness of purpose. Many groups can practice the Third Tradition by being tolerant about the different types of life experiences of newcomers who are seeking help with a drinking problem while being firm on our singleness of purpose. By helping guide newcomers to understand what their primary addiction is we can direct people with other addictions to appropriate places of help. Groups have identified ways to communicate local experiences from A.A. members with how and where they have addressed problems other than alcohol. In some countries, to participate in a group a newcomer needs to identify as someone with a desire to stop drinking. Though alcoholic we may also have other addictions. We have to agree and not protest our singleness of purpose. We need to have patience when people with different addictions come into the group. Sometimes they get sober in A.A. and then leave to join or start other fellowships. Sometimes N.A. is not available so they join A.A. and later join N.A. While we are focused on alcoholism and not drug addiction, open meetings are for everybody to learn about A.A. Countries produce targeted literature for members that are BIPOC, LGBTQ, and/or Women. Newcomers take hold of "different bits of rope" of experience and hope. Not everyone grabs the same piece of rope to get into the lifeboat. We print a lot of different pamphlets. When one enters the room there may be no one there with a similar culture or experience. But when there is a pamphlet for such people, they feel they belong here and are seen. All alcoholics deserve a chance to participate in service.

## **Workshop II**

Seventh Tradition: Self Supporting in the Digital Era

Twenty-eighth World Service Meeting

The Westin New York at Times Square

Tuesday October 29, 2024

2:50 p.m. – 4:20 p.m. (New York Time)

Secretary: Michael Riley

Workshop discussions were informed by the following questions:

A. How can we ensure that contributions are from A.A. members only?

"We can't!" One delegate shared that a newcomer got sober and then put a large amount in the basket. Since some records are not kept in A.A. this can be a challenge.

However, some countries use codes or group numbers to identify the origin of the funds. One office uses a third party to receive contributions, then the office confirms the source and verifies membership. Some countries have imposed maximum amounts a member can contribute, others have not. Delegates shared various experiences on how they handle gifts from the family of deceased members, with some being accepted after thoughtful discussion. Others have been returned. The office must account for contributions that we don't know where they are from – not usually very much and usually able to identify where amounts come from. For a large amount – would check with a bank where it has come from. Generally, it is felt that we cannot control whether a non-member contributes, but it is unlikely that it will happen. Some countries have very few online meetings, so they know that contributions are coming from members. On the website, include confirmation that the contribution is coming from a member. A "check", if answered no, politely decline. In an online meeting, you will generally, know who members are, and therefore their contributions can be accepted. Be thoughtful in helping groups understand the Seventh Tradition as it relates to fundraising. The guidelines must be followed, if contributions are beyond the limits, they must be rejected. Open meetings provide challenges because non-members may contribute to the basket or buy literature. Care should be taken to ensure at open meetings that only members can contribute. If the 7th Tradition is openly broken, then it is easy to address, otherwise it is a matter of public education of the 7th Tradition. Do we take the contribution from the newcomer on their first meeting? What if they haven't identified as a newcomer? Bill W. wrote to not adhere to the letter of the law, but the spirit. There is a need to educate Class A trustees that they cannot contribute. Each group can keep its own bank account for accountability. There must be transparency. Some countries report difficulty receiving contributions from groups, where most or all the money is kept at the group or local level. This can provide for difficult times. Some countries have made requests for additional funds for purposes such as attending the World Service Meeting. One delegate reported most of the income comes from literature sales. During the pandemic literature sales dropped, but then contributions increased and became 55% of the income. However, despite a 4x growth in members, a relatively small percentage of members were making contributions. Low-income members were not contributing until education from the start that money is needed to run meetings and this helped to correct the lack of contributions.

B. Is there a group conscience about how groups disperse their funds?

Funds are generally spent after a group conscience. All groups are autonomous, so they can decide how to spend money, but they will decide how to spend within the group (rent, coffee, cookies, etc.) and how much to send down the service triangle. It was reported in some countries that groups and service entities can rely on others for support when facing difficult times. This can extend from group to nearby group or across the service structure as well as when planning events and so forth. In one country, 50% to 60% to Central office / Intergroup, since this is where support for the newcomer and public information happens, then lower percentages to the group,

regional, or other service levels. No funds are accumulated, anything beyond prudent reserve is always handed up. Groups without a district service structure adhere to 70% of the service office, then 30% to the group. Of note: some groups reported accumulating large sums for very ostentatious multi-day anniversary celebrations with bands, speakers, banquets, etc., which they see as a public information investment. There have been times when this money has been stolen by a trusted servant. It was suggested to make self-support literature available. Guidance for groups is a really good idea. Explain to groups where the money goes and what it is used for, and why it needs to be sent through the structure. Some groups are prepared to contribute to local workshops and projects but don't send money through the structure. The treasurer should keep a record and report back to the group at every group conscience. Some countries have guidance on this. Sometimes online groups contribute much more through structure than in-person groups due to low fixed costs. This is one of the advantages of online groups over in-person groups. Several online groups are not part of the structure, so they don't contribute to GSO. Many countries are in desperate need of funds so it would be good if they did contribute to GSO. The difference between Groups and meetings needs to be emphasized. A structured group is more likely to hold a group conscience. Too many meetings without a group conscience is a problem. There is some experience of groups holding onto funds. Also, in some countries, groups send money to US/Canada GSO. Some countries have reported a significant decrease in funds. Often groups assume that GSOs have sufficient money and do not send money to the office. Groups and members should be reminded that any money collected in A.A. no longer belongs to the group -- it belongs to A.A.. Monthly group consciences are recommended relating to finances. After expenses, the group conscience decided what percentage to keep from the group, what percentage for GSO, and what percentage for Intergroup. And that is then done for 1 year. Regular reporting by treasurer groups, intergroups, and regions. 60/30/10% principle seems to be common

- 60% to level below group
- 30% to level below that
- 10% keep for group

C. Hybrid – how do online participants contribute?

One country has an email account where a member requests contribution information and the office replies with instructions. Some groups also ask attendees to donate directly to the main office.

Other sharing on payment methods include:

Swish – internet payment Bank transfer is another method PayPal is used often QR codes with link for payments are increasing in popularity Difficult for groups to get



bank accounts so it's often an account that belongs to an individual member of the group Bank information/digital payment information in Zoom chat so members can make bank transfer Some groups tell members that if they cannot contribute online, to put extra into their home group pot Some countries do not see it as a problem. In some countries where online groups are not part of the structure, there is a risk that they may set up their own structure. The importance of a reason for the Seventh Tradition and ensuring that younger members were informed was emphasized.

D. How are we discussing the need for support in online groups?

One delegate reported that contributions decreased significantly once we went to online- only meetings. If there is a shortfall, then extra discussion is helpful, a gentle reminder that the money is needed. A.A. members are generous if they know why the money is needed. Education is key in all meetings. To help ensure the safety of the account, two or three members may share a bank account. Some Zoom meetings have no expenses as the Zoom account is paid for by GSO. Be conscientious of the accumulating funds.

Do online groups have needs that we are not aware of?

It is important to let online groups know of the work that is done at GSO, etc. and why money is needed to help carry the message. 'Committee of Virtual Affairs' has been introduced in one country to look at the needs of online groups and make sure they are well supported. Webmaster at GSO who has access to passwords for official accounts so they can help if they get lost trying to find meetings or run meetings. One GSB agreed to create a tech committee to help facilitate setting up online groups in the pandemic. It operated for two years and grew until it became an online intergroup with 27 registered online meetings. Will be putting on an Assembly to help other groups find out how to set up online meetings. Guidance from experienced A.A. members to ensure principles are adhered to. Countries are reporting varying success in integrating online groups into the service structure and are looking for guidance. Some have representation in their Conference. Some countries have a disconnect between where the money comes in and where it goes. One office developed a simple card for newcomers to help them easily understand the importance of contributions and where the money goes. One country reports contributions from each group in a publication. Since groups can see each other's contributions, they often compete to give more, ensuring that funds from groups are consistently coming in. Each group decides on its contribution level. We now have members who only know online A.A., and we need to be mindful of this.

### **Workshop III**

Online groups in the world: Here to stay

Twenty-eighth World Service Meeting

The Westin New York at Times Square

Wednesday, October 30, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Secretary: Misha Quill

Workshop discussions were informed by the following questions:

A. Have online meetings replaced face-to-face meetings?

Many delegates thought the answer to this question was “No, online meetings have not replaced face-to-face meetings.” However, a couple of delegates observed that for some people, online meetings have in fact replaced face-to-face meetings. It was observed that online meetings are convenient, but nothing can replace a hug. Members agreed that online meetings will never replace the warmth of the physical meeting. Others shared that they thought members had more difficulty focusing and paying attention in online meetings. It was acknowledged that during the Covid-19 pandemic, online meetings did replace the in-person because they were life savers. However, now in-person meetings are returning more and more. Some of the pandemic-era online groups have since stopped meeting. There was consensus that online meetings are a great tool, especially where distance is a problem. Also because of poverty and illiteracy in some countries, face-to-face meetings will always exist. Not everyone who shifted to online meetings during the pandemic has returned to the face-to-face groups. Members also reported some mixed experience with hybrid meetings. Delegates thought that there is a good balance now between online and face-to-face. A few members agreed that online meetings are useful for business meetings. Online meetings are also useful to cut costs for A.A. Members shared that some kinds of meetings would not be easily possible face-to-face, for instance early morning meetings, late night meetings, meetings in less commonly spoken languages. Online groups are also helping to start face-to-face groups in remote locations. It was noted that there are countries which have different languages every 100km you travel, so it is hard to find enough meetings with the same language. Online groups can help fill this gap. It was also observed that online meetings can allow a safer place for women, older members, those who are homebound and those with accessibility challenges. Some shared that they can attend more meetings if they attend some online. Another member shared how people who are incarcerated can sometimes attend online groups. Members reported that there seems to be a trend that young people tend to go to online meetings, the middle-aged group does a combination,

while the older people do meetings online. In some countries they see more women online than at in-person meetings. It was observed that we need to show new members why in-person meetings are so important; we need the new people in the rooms. Going to in-person meetings helps to build a strong community. One delegate suggested that we should stop differentiating between online and face-to-face meetings; they are the same.

B. Virtual-only A.A. – are all newcomers in virtual groups getting exposed to our service structures and to A.A. literature?

Most delegates agreed that newcomers in virtual groups are not getting exposed to our service structures or A.A. literature. The workshop participants suggested that there could be communication from the General Service Boards to online groups, maybe providing a suggestion that each online group make a literature announcement. At virtual meetings it is easier to provide the correct links to A.A. literature. One member suggested that if newcomers are not immediately exposed to our literature, they will when they start to work the Steps. Another member observed that the structure of the online group makes a difference. If the virtual meeting includes a literature service position, it is easier to share the A.A. literature with newcomers. However, not all virtual meetings present newcomers with an explanation of the A.A. structure. Some virtual meetings have helped newcomers understand the A.A. structure by inviting them to in-person meetings. Others have tried methods like creating a slide presentation with links to the A.A. service structure websites and showing it in every meeting. Some delegates agreed that in their experience, many of the people in online meetings primarily do service at the group level and may not even understand how they are connected to A.A. as a whole. One delegate said that in her country online group members participate in all service structure levels. Some other delegates observed that they want to learn from each other about virtual districts, and how they are implemented in the service structure. Some countries say that online groups send the most money to their GSOs. One country saw the growth of online groups as an opportunity to create an online store for literature. Another delegate shared that his structure had no online literature, which makes it difficult to share with newcomers in online meetings. Another delegate shared that in her country they send free books to newcomers in virtual groups. They have sent more than 5,000 books in the last two years. One country created a committee to investigate how to involve online groups in the service structure. The delegate shared that they see it as our responsibility to teach online groups about our Three Legacies. "We need to not preach, instead we need to be willing to help virtual groups if they ask for support."

C. Challenges regarding service when members are from different structures.

Some members noted that it can be a challenge to know if a particular person is eligible to be of service. For example, if they are not an alcoholic (someone in an A.A. meeting who is from another Fellowship) or if they are from another country. A delegate suggested that we may need to create guidelines to explain who is eligible

for different kinds of service. structure, and that would go against the principle of one member, one vote, one group, one vote, in a world context, but groups should decide which structure they wish to participate in. One delegate described how smaller countries have fewer members, so when they are trying to find people to fill service positions, those nominated may not have sufficient sober time to serve in that position.

Some challenges of online groups include:

- Online groups may use different preambles or different literature from different countries/groups.
- Online post-meeting chat does not replace the meeting after the meeting.
- People choosing sponsors from other countries encounter problems because the sponsor may not have understanding or awareness of the service possibilities in the sponsees' own structure.
- Different currencies and payment methods in different countries cause people not to participate in the Seventh Tradition. A delegate asked, given the differences between in-person and online meetings and the ways that people attend meetings from all over: "How do we keep our unity?"

D. How does my online group do service work outside the group?

One delegate shared that the challenges of getting people involved in service are the same for online groups as with in-person groups. It's just in another format. Another delegate suggested that changes could be made to facilitate online meetings to participate in district activities and in the Fellowship as a whole. Online members should be welcomed in the same way as those from in-person meetings. Some countries shared that they are trying to start online meetings in prisons. In other structures, the online groups host online meetings in hospitals. One member shared that online groups can help face-to-face groups that are having difficulties with PI work, finding the entities to contact, making the contacts, helping with events. Online groups can join face-to-face structures to financially support Hospitals and Institutions Committees, Public Information, Treatment, and Corrections Committees in their service work. One member reminded everyone: "It's a digital age now, so we have to be flexible and welcome those online!"

The WSM can make suggestions, provide discussion options and ideas but has no decision making remit on behalf of the fellowship.

The 29<sup>th</sup> WSM will be hosted by Portugal.

The serenity prayer was said in 41 different languages to close the 28<sup>th</sup> WSM.

I would like to thank Bob W for coordinating the event, special thanks Irene D for her highly effective facilitation skills and for Victor N for his coordination of all tech support before and during the event.

It would be remiss not to mention the staff of GSO New York, all of whom gave us a great welcome when we visited their place of work, thank you for all you do for AA

**Tom D. and John T.**

**World Service Delegates**

DRAFT

## Appendix F - Fifty Eighth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous – Great Britain – 12-14<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### Theme: Maximum Helpfulness to Others

The Fifty-Eighth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain convened in the Park Inn Hotel, York on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024. The conference comprised of 87 delegates from sixteen regions, 23 members of the general service board, Sean M, the Conference Chair (Glasgow Region), Ranjan B, the General Secretary and 7 members of staff from the General Service Office in attendance. Also in attendance were 8 observers, including ourselves from Ireland. The total in attendance was 127.

The conference was opened by a keynote from Sean M, from the Glasgow region on the theme of *Maximum Helpfulness to Others*. The keynote was quite emotive – describing his experience in AA, and how he came to understand the need to be of Maximum Helpfulness to Others in the same way that he experienced others being towards him.

### Presentations

There were several reports delivered. Excerpts from the most informative follow. All reports thus presented were passed by a two-thirds majority vote.

### Conference Steering Committee Report

Jim M, the Alternate Conference Chair gave the steering committee report, which covered the procedure used to organize the committee, how it was organized and how it took decisions. It is interesting to note that the committee chose additional members and decided if they had an observation or voting role on the committee. The minutes of the previous committee were looked at, and feedback incorporated into the process. An analysis of all the questions offered for conference was made and a proposal for further improvements to the process for submission of questions to conference was made to the committee in order to assist members who wished to submit questions, such as a template structure, and guidelines.

A significant change was made to the voting process – in previous years voting was performed manually, with a hand-count of votes being made. This process was cumbersome and required a lot of time to accurately perform. This year introduced an electronic system, with keypads being used to perform voting as a trial measure.

Voting operated in the following manner:

- Quorum was 2/3rds of the Conference Members.
- A simple majority of the voting members is a ***recommendation*** to the board to take any necessary action.

- A two-thirds majority of the vote is taken is *binding* on the board.

A decision was made to finish the Saturday evening with the plenary session, and not to offer an additional session for the committees to meet that evening – this is to allow all participants an opportunity for a full night's rest – a 2am conclusion from the night before would not allow for that.

The quantity of questions for each committee was limited to 2, to allow for a full discussion of the individual questions within the timeframe that the committee had been given, as well as to allow for the draft reports to be written and submitted for distribution to the attendees prior to their departure on the Sunday.

### Finance Presentation

Clive K (Honorary Treasurer GSB) spoke about the charity's finances, talking about the uncertainty in a society existing in a post-pandemic state, and how it's still meeting it's requirements. GSB still maintains three accounts for the Charity, which includes the *Development Fund Account*, which is serviced by the royalties from the hard-copy versions of the Big Book and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. This money is used to promote Primary Purpose activities and aid AA infrastructure around the globe – mainly in Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. There is also the *European Service Meeting Account*, which is serviced by English speaking countries in Europe to fund their bi-annual meetings which are held in York. There is also the *General Open Account* which is serviced by contributions from the Fellowship, sale of AA literature and Investment revenue. It is used to carry out Primary Purpose work as directed by the Fellowship by the deliberations of the Conference Committees. GB uses The Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) investment company (<https://www.ccla.co.uk>) which invests the money using an ethical framework.

### Literature Presentation

The literature presentation had five items to approve, all of which were approved with an in excess of 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority:

- A Pamphlet: *Alcoholics Anonymous as a Resource for Criminal Justice Professionals*
- A Pamphlet: *Does anyone Else Look Like Me In Alcoholics Anonymous*
  - o Encouraging people of color into the fellowship
- A Pamphlet: *Now that I am an Employment Liaison Officer*
  - o Service leaflet for those taking on the role
- A Pamphlet: *A Guide for the Health Liaison Officer*
  - o Service leaflet for those taking on the role
- A Pamphlet: *Little Book 2*
  - o A bringing together of various conference approved literature into a little meeting in a pocket

The primary service handbooks were significantly revamped and refreshed to make them more attractive to people. Having personally received copies of the updated handbooks, they are a significant improvement on previous editions. They're easy to flip through and find information on various aspects of service is well presented, easier to read and easier to understand.

## PI & E Comms

Tom Fox and Tim B gave this presentation. It's with a heavy heart that I also must report that Tom Fox passed away during the last year.

## Website

A demonstration of the refreshed website was made. Key items on the homepage include easier access to the 'Find a meeting' button, with callouts at the top and bottom of the page. Many pages had the information simplified and had clutter removed to make it easier to understand.

The 'Find a meeting' page can use location services to find you upcoming meetings around you, as well as having a separation of online and physical meetings, which makes it easier to differentiate them.

There is also the option to print the list to a PDF or printer.

## Postering

There was an offer from JCDecaux under their social responsibility policy to have a postering campaign. After a lot of back-and-forth it was agreed to work with them to see if something could be done, which involved working with 'The Raised Eyebrow Society', who proposed an anonymous campaign by Alcoholics Anonymous.

The campaign does not include calls-to-action. It's not pointing someone to the phone number or website. It was intended to make people think. The purpose was not to be an advertising campaign, but instead to use the apparatus of advertising to carry the AA message to people who are still struggling with alcohol.

The posters would contain simple text, using the AA typeface, with the A focused using the explicit A we all recognise from the logo.

- Le**A**rn to live without **A**lcohol
- You need never drink **A**g**A**in
- Stop As you me**A**n to go on
- Is **A**lcohol costing you more th**A**n money?
- Try J**A**nu**A**ry
- **A**lcohol isn't the **A**nswer



The proposal to go forward with this offer and campaign was passed by a greater than two-thirds majority.

The proposal was also offered with or without the AA logo on the posters, and it was passed by a greater than two-thirds majority to not have the AA logo on the posters. This would increase the intrigue of people seeing the posters as they would not be explicitly mentioning who the campaign came from.

## Films

Further PI films had been commissioned by Conference about women, LGBTQI+, people of color and one targeting employers within blue light services. The films about women, people of color and targeting employers were available for review by conference. They were presented as mostly complete, with some changes needed to preserve anonymity and to ensure clear audio, as well as to provide subtitles.

All three films were highly emotive. The two directed at potential alcoholics helped show that there are members of the Fellowship who are also part of their community. The third, which was guided towards employers helped show them that help and support is available to those in their employ from the Fellowship.

The Women in AA film received a simple majority, due to several concerns raised on the content of the video related to inaccessibility of the meetings, and the implication that they might deal with outside issues, which could be misinterpreted by the public.

The other two films passed with an in excess of two-thirds majority.

## Health Report

The report was introduced by Barbara O, and the majority of the presentation was given by Kieran Moriarty.

The biggest item of note was the recognition AA received from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) quality standards.

While an alcoholic can say *AA Works for Me*, unfortunately there isn't a lot of underlying evidence (personal reporting does not evidence make), and when it comes to looking for evidence, members of AA tend not to be too forthcoming when being asked on these topics.

The standard – QS11 – Alcohol-use disorders: diagnosis and management was published in 2023. It covers identifying and supporting people who may have an alcohol problem, as well as support for their family and carers. It calls out explicitly:

- Adults seeking help for an alcohol-use disorder are given information on, and support to access, community support networks and self-help groups

They emphasise the 12 step program.

The Cochrane Review was published in 2020. It is a review of 27 high-quality studies that compared AA and the 12 steps against other methods such as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and motivational enhancement therapy (MET), which covered 10,500 patients in total.

The underlying message from the review was that while AA and 12 step programs were similar in results to CBT and MET for all drinking related outcomes, when it came to total abstinence and remission it was found without doubt that AA and 12 step programs were superior

Two quotes which will be added to the 'What professionals have said about AA' include the following:

John Kelly:-

"Evidence demonstrates that AA confers long-term benefit by simultaneously boosting relapse prevention coping skills, enhancing and maintaining recovery motivation, reducing craving and impulsivity, and increasing spirituality, which can help people to reframe and better cope with stress. Since AA is widely available and accessible for free in most communities, this new evidence indicates AA may be the closest thing public health has to a 'free lunch'."

I have no political affiliations whatsoever, but I have been on government alcohol committees for 20 years and I can tell you, and you all know, the public health cuts have been brutal over the last 15 years and the thing is that AA treatment is free, whereas NHS treatment is usually time limited, and also AA treatment is lifelong.

Keith Humphries:-

"AA was created by people who knew what they needed to recover; a new outlook, a new community, and new ways of interacting with other people. The scientific evidence demonstrates that the results of their efforts is a free, grassroots organization that helps more people recover than all professional treatments combined. Giving support is as good for our health as getting it. AA gives a sense of worth and service."

Either of these quotes are a wonderful way of putting the benefits of AA.

Further into the NICE Summary Report which talks about the stigma associated with those who misuse alcohol. Treatment of people with this condition have been historically poor, with refusal to take people with alcohol problems even if the issue was completely unrelated to the alcohol misuse. The situation has improved with time, so it's less seen as a moral failing, so it's more common to use the word 'alcoholic', rather than use the slightly looser 'alcohol related' when discussing patients and treatment.

An additional point raised was that 65% of respondents reported that their concept of a higher power was secular, rather than religious, which exploded the myth and misconception that AA is a religious organization.

When you ask the question: "Is AA religious, spiritual or neither?", The answer, would appear to be the enigmatic 'Yes'.

What does this mean?

An AA member can highlight the Cochrane Review when dealing with GPs, doctors and nurses. Nurses tend to be the front-line workers dealing with patients, and when they're offered a solution such as an AA meeting in the hospital which will improve the outcome for their patients it's likely that they will be very receptive to the idea. In addition if you have people who are in hospital for alcohol related issues, getting them into meetings and potentially sponsored into meetings once they leave the hospital they are more likely to get into and stay in recovery.

### Telephone / First Response

Presentation given by Holly A and Levy P.

The telephone service was reviewed to promote unity and consistency. The central 0800 number is an open-distribution number, which arbitrarily direct to the telephone service which would easily not be in the area that the caller was coming from.

There is a set of 39 regional helplines who operate independently of the national 0800 number.

The proposed new system would route 0800 number calls to one of the regional helplines, understanding the operating hours, and routing to 24 hour call centres when out of hours. It would also provide for 'hunt groups', which would cause the caller to ring through a series of numbers when searching for a responder. It would also provide for call management – repeated calls going to the same destination, excessive calls being blocked as they constitute abuse.

The new system was to be discussed with the National Telephone Sub-Committee in the August time period, which would also provide details on the potential launch date.

The Chat Now / Online Response Service is a service targeted for the newcomer, to provide an online point of contact for the still-suffering alcoholic who is reaching out for help.

Chat Now is on the AA GB website, and ORS is available as an email service ([help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org)). Because they're on the website, they fall under the responsibility of the GSB, rather than the Fellowship in general. There is a sub-committee that deals with the running of these services (FROSC).

These services are intended to direct the still-suffering alcoholic to local telephone numbers and meetings, as well as provide family members and professionals contact details of Al-Anon as well as PI information.

In relation to provisioning of the service, the sub-committee has been creating job descriptions and application forms for members to understand the work needed, as well as to ensure safeguarding processes are in place to ensure that the charity and Tradition 7 funds are not at risk in the event of any safeguarding issues.

### Sub-Committee updates

There were updates from several other sub-committees – excerpts are presented below

#### AA Service News

Service news is being distributed to more than 4000 alcoholics in printed form, and 2000 alcoholics in digital form. It carries the message across the whole Fellowship, and includes conference questions, messages from the general secretary, job adverts and regular updates, as well as calls for shares on particular topics such as mental health, sponsorship. By making it vibrant and interesting, it's also hoped to attract more members into service.

#### Anniversary Sub-Committee update

The Sub-Committee produced Terms of Reference as guidance for any future events. They were not intended to be hard and fast rules for any future events. Another outcome of the Sub-Committee was that the Anniversary Sub-Committee will become a Sub-Committee of GSB, and will be subject to the same criteria as any GSB Sub-Committee, financed by the contributions of the Fellowship, and providing budgets for the finance Committee. A committee of 6 members was formed. Full details of the report related to future conventions is in the full conference final report – there is a lot of good detail in the report which could be used by any committee trying to organize a convention, regardless of their experience which would help in planning, budgeting and organization.

#### Archives Update

The Sub-committee met and engaged with the Borthwick Institute in a productive exchange of ideas.

Oral histories of AA will be made available to the archives for access on a rotating basis on the AA website, as well as guidelines on their use

The Cataloging process has added a dedicated archivist, who will catalog the digital archives, and help in cataloging both the physical and digital archives using the same taxonomy.

Groups are not keeping their details up-to-date (pink forms), which leads to the loss of historical information on groups.

## Television Update

GSB engaged with the BBC in the making of the hour-long documentary – I'm an Alcoholic: Inside Recovery, which allowed people to see what went on inside an AA meeting using deep-fake technology, and to follow these people in their recovery. It has been aired worldwide and has helped many suffering alcoholics get in touch to start their own journey of recovery.

## Armed Services Update

Contact maintained with the armed services. There are many vacant AS Liaison posts.

## Employment Update

We are encouraged by employers recognizing the information and help that AA offers for the employee who is exhibiting Alcoholic behavior, which has been helped by the presence of Employment Liaison Officers, who are guided with the new, approved 'What do I do?' pamphlet.

Interacting with 'Blue Light' services continues, with presentations to London Fire Brigade.

Presentations with Network Rail Safety and Pastoral Care, a presentation to National Bank's Enable Disability Network were given on the topics of AA groups at work, Tips on Living Sober and Myth Busting.

## European Service Meeting Update

Held in York – 20-22<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2023 discussing *AA in a Changing World* discussing the challenges and opportunities in service: finding people to do service, leading by example and unity and safeguarding. AA World Service gave a presentation on how fortunate AA in English-speaking Europe is to have pre-existing literature and structure in place, and to contrast it with the additional effort needed by AAs in Eastern Europe who needed to overcome wars, poverty, politics and language to get the message out.

## Prisons Update

Without a Sub-Committee until the end of September due to rotation hindered the work that could be done. Still looking for more members to improve geographical spread of members. Prison stand held in the Scottish & National Convention. Presentation given at the Midlands forum.

Slow clearance process and a difficulty finding people to commit to prison service.

## Young People Update

Continues to be enthusiastic and engaged, with lots of work to carry the message to younger people. A roadshow in Cardiff generated enthusiasm for the service, creating more Young People's meeting being set up, with more members engaging in service. Holding drop-in meetings to help YPLOs share experience and get support from one another.

## Committees

The conference was broken into 6 committees to hear the responses from Regions to questions posed to conference. Some of the committees also reviewed literature. Below are the topics that were considered, discussed, voted on and reported back to the main conference body.

1. Conference is asked to consider, and make recommendations, for a comprehensive overhaul of the service structure. A streamlining of disciplines could reduce persistent vacancies and make carrying the message more effective in changing time.
2. Would conference investigate the viability in terms of security, cost and anonymity of opening conference to online observers?
3. Could conference please give more clarification and detail on situations in which making direct amends is against the spirit of the steps if it is likely to cause harm?
4. Would Conference share experience on how AA members may communicate with each other on matters affecting AA as a whole, as well as their specific roles? Good communication between members should be encouraged without promoting specific platforms.
5. Would Conference consider how online meetings are best represented and sharing information with each other? Would it be prudent to have an Online Intergroup for each region or nationally where online meetings talk to each regarding online matters and carrying the message online.
6. Would Conference share its experience on the importance of rotation at all levels of service within the AA structure? (The impact of having vacant positions and why members should not repeatedly occupy the same service position).
7. Would the Fellowship consider the following questions concerning Chapter 4 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, "For AA Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field" and make recommendations to Conference.
  - a. Is the chapter about AA service?  
If not, then
  - b. Should it be removed from the handbook?  
If so, then
  - c. Should the material be presented in a different format, such as a pamphlet?
8. Will Conference review "LGBT Voices' pamphlet with reference to Tradition 1. Our common welfare should come first: Personal recovery depends on AA unity.

- a. Consider a complete and more permanent title change for a constantly evolving community.
  - b. Consider an Update to the Stories to include a wider and more up to date range of experience (LGBTQIA+)
  - c. Consider removal or change the paragraph in the Title heading which reads "As a gay man in a very heterosexual AA it's a bit like being an alcoholic in a sober world" this is not inclusive to all in the fellowship only Gay men.
9. Could Conference discuss how the Fellowship's understanding of the principles of anonymity may guide those Groups requiring AA members and visitors to put their names in a signing-in book/attendance book at meetings.
  10. Would Conference discuss and consider the viability of creating an additional version of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous) incorporating stories from AAGB (including CER).
  11. Would Conference share experience on how an AAGB App would help carry the message in addition to the AAGB website and existing apps?
  12. Would Conference discuss the merits of creating a user friendly information pack about how to be involved in the service structure, with each discipline running an online workshop, at the 3 yearly seminar, on how to get involved?

## Summary

The AA GB conference was a very informative few days. From opening to closing, we experienced diligence and democracy packed well into the available time. It was wonderful to meet our counterpart trusted servants from GB and the continent.

The use of subcommittees to address the questions to conference helped to get through them all in a timely fashion and is something we should continue in our own conference when we have sufficient motions.

Most committee attendees came armed with binders of feedback from the areas they represented on every question that was presented at conference. This ensured they were well informed and were presenting the will of the fellowship.

Several of the reports contained concerns related to a lack of representation as well as gaps in service through a lack of members engaging in service, which is something that is directly relatable in Ireland.

There did appear to be a better distribution of women and younger people in attendance, which raised hope in me that if we continue our efforts at reaching younger members as well as being more inclusive in our messaging that we will see a similar change in distribution ourselves in AA Ireland.

You can see the ongoing PI efforts to attract more women, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and Blue Light community members into the fellowship through the videos and general messaging.

The improvements to the formatting of the service handbooks improves their utility. It is significantly easier to track down information and understand it without ambiguity.

The medical presentation gives an important source of information that can be used to help reach the suffering alcoholic in medical facilities.

While we were observers, we were welcomed to contribute our experience, strength and hope in the Committee sessions.

The full AA GB 2024 report is available at:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members/document-library/>

Tags: Conference

Category: Conference 2024

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Conference-2024-Final-Report-.pdf>

Anya S. Leinster Intergroup Secretary, and Tom K. GSCD



## Appendix G - All Ireland Convention 2024 Report

The 2024 All Ireland Convention was hosted by Leinster Intergroup at the Tullamore Court Hotel from April 19th to 21st, 2024.

As is tradition, we kicked off the weekend with an early bird meeting on Thursday evening. Over the next few days, we aimed to bring a fresh energy to each session by assigning specific themes to our meetings. We were thrilled by the strong support from various groups and areas, who played a crucial role in hosting these sessions.

The weekend was packed with a variety of both traditional workshops and new, exciting activities. These included:

- **Opening Meeting**
- **Open Public Meeting**
- **Presentation on Public Information**
- **Greet the Board Session**
- **Recovery Countdown**
- **Writing Workshop** (which contributed new articles to *The Road Back*)
- **A Conversation Between Two Generations** discussing their respective recovery journeys.

In addition to these, we had marathon meetings on the hour, providing continuous support throughout the weekend.

For our younger attendees, the YPLO (Young People's Liaison Officer) room offered a range of activities including meditation, board games, art sessions (such as drawing your Higher Power), yoga, and even a trivia quiz. It was great to see so many young people participating and engaging with these activities.

Elsewhere in the hotel, we set up a **Historical/Archive Display**, showcasing the rich history of AA in Ireland and the key milestones that helped bring AA to our shores.

Entertainment played a big part in the weekend's success. On Friday evening, we hosted an open mic session, which had a long queue of performers eager to take the stage. Saturday night featured a DJ, which kept everyone dancing and energized as we wrapped up the weekend.

The weather was fantastic, which only added to the positive atmosphere. We were particularly delighted to see such a strong turnout, including many younger members.

A new feature this year was the option for **pre-registration**, which was well received, especially by our international attendees. We also introduced **cashless payment facilities** at registration. All registered attendees received printed name badges, souvenir All Ireland wristbands, and a detailed program of events. The wristband also granted free entry to the Saturday night entertainment.

Despite our best efforts to make payment as easy and accessible for all – the actual attendance greatly exceeded the number of paid registrations by quite a lot, which was a huge disappointment.

We had invited Al-Anon to join us, but unfortunately, they were unable to attend at the last minute. However, some Al-Anon members still managed to arrange their own meetings during the weekend.

The event was made possible by a dedicated team, including Dredre S, Barbara A, Anya S, Jenny K, Robbie Mc, Philip McG, and Emmet, with additional support during busy times at registration. You may have seen some of them wearing pink hi-vis vests, handing out sweets to attendees.

## Financial Summary

### Income:

Category	Number of Attendees	of each	Total
Pre-registration	25	€12.50	€312.50
Registration	463	€15.00	€6,945.00
Dance (pay at door)	37	€5.00	€185.00
Literature Sales	-	-	€304.00
<b>Total Income</b>			<b>€7,746.50</b>

Category			Total
Committee Expenses			€520.00
DJ			€400.00
Hotel			€5896.00
Lanyards/Name Cards			€280.00
Souvenir Wristbands			€275.00
Literature Costs			€304.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>			<b>€7,675.00</b>
<b>Surplus</b>			<b>€71.50</b>

On behalf of the 2024 Leinster All Ireland Committee, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of this event. Your support, hard work, and dedication were instrumental in making the weekend such a memorable and enriching experience. We couldn't have done it without you!

Thanks – Emmet, Chair of Convention Committee.

DRAFT