

## **CONFERENCE QUESTIONS:**

### **55th General Service Conference**

## **Questions for 55th General Service Conference**

**16th-18th April 2021**

**PLEASE NOTE:** These questions include those originally selected by the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) for April 2020. As Conference was first postponed till October 2020, then following the Delegates' vote, till 2021, the CSC selected an additional three questions, which are included here (Committee 1, Question 4 / Committee 5, Question 3 / Committee 6, Question 3). The "new" questions are noted and are in **red**.

### **Committee One**

- 1. Would Conference:**
  - a. Review Chapter 10 of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2018.**
  - b. Consider publishing a telephone responder's leaflet to include malicious calls.**

### ***Background***

Both experienced and new responders have requested guidance on how best to handle such calls.

Chapter 10, pages 65-66, AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2018.

To assist in AA's duty of care to its members.

***Consider the contribution to the carrying of the message, financial and practical implications when deliberating each question.***

## **2. Would the fellowship share experience of appropriate resources and support for alcoholics who have special needs or disabilities?**

### ***Background***

The group's experience was that a member with autism wasn't treated fairly when sharing, and that inappropriate comments were made about this individual.

We think there needs to be more awareness of members with special needs and disabilities within AA, so groups can have a better understanding of dealing with this when it arises. This would help to support all individuals with disabilities, whether visible or not.

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## **3. Would conference share its experience and discuss any benefits of separating intergroup meetings into a GSR section and a Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community section?**

### ***Background***

Sometimes intergroup meetings can take up a lot of time with reports and requests from the various public information officers. Would it be better for the PI committee to discuss their reports and requests separately and then send a representative to intergroup so as intergroup can then focus more on the issues and matters arising from Conference (Concepts 3,4 & 5).

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## **NEW QUESTION:**

4. **Review proposed addition to the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018, in the chapter ‘The General Service Board’, section 3, under the heading ‘Appointment of new members of the General Service Board’ (pages 112-113).**

### ***Background***

Proposed addition to the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain, Chapter ‘The General Service Board’, section 3, under heading ‘Appointment of new members of the General Service Board.

***Consider the contribution to the carrying of the message, financial and practical implications when deliberating each question.***

## **Committee Two**

1. **Can Conference consider whether the General Service Board be given authority to approve posters, videos and pamphlets produced by sub committees without these items needing additional approval by the General Service Conference, which may cause unnecessary delay?**

### ***Background***

“Right of Decision” (Concept 3), “active responsibility” (Concept 6), “custodial oversight” (Concept 8), “Good service leadership ”(Concept 9), and “authority” matching their “responsibility” (Concept 10).

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2. **Could Conference emphasis the benefits and share experience of effective formats for pre- and post-conference meetings at Region level?**

### ***Intention***

To encourage more active participation by individual members within the groups and among GSRs which then may benefit the service structure at all levels thus bringing the whole fellowship closer together (Concepts 1 & 4).

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**3. Review the revised chapter The General Service Conference, section 1.5 Delegates, point B, Rotation in the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain**

***Background***

Revised chapter The General Service Conference, section 1.5 Delegates, point B, Rotation.

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## Committee Three

**1. Would the Fellowship consider how any person or persons wishing to open a new meeting may be guided as to the effect on other groups and AA as a whole?**

***Background***

*Tradition 4: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or AA as a whole."*

*Tradition 7: "Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."*

For further consideration:

- a. Service positions are more difficult to fill?
- b. The ability to meet essential expenses is being adversely affected?
- c. Less money is being passed along the chain to intergroups, regions and GSO to meet essential expenses?
- d. There is less money available for valuable 12th Step work?

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**2. Can groups reflect on and share their experience of how they select officers?**

***Background***

AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain, section 2 'The Group, Officers' states:

- "The group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers..."

- “Most groups make sure that their officers have had a known period of continuous sobriety, at least one year, and have shown themselves willing and available to give dependable service through regular attendance at meetings.”
- “Each nominee is usually approached by other members of the group and, if he or she agrees, that name is put forward at a business/service meeting, so letting the group conscience decide the election.”

Can groups, including intergroup and region, consider how well their processes for selecting officers fit with the above guidance? Can groups share their experience of the processes of selecting, nominating and approving officer appointments which work well?

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### **3. One member, one vote**

**What more can be done to raise understanding across the Fellowship of the spiritual principle that we do not take part in the business or policy of groups which we visit, but which are not our home group?**

#### ***Background***

- The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018, page 75
- “Most members feel more at home in one particular group than in others and consider it their home group, where they accept responsibilities and try to sustain friendships. They do not take part in the business or policy of groups which they visit but in which they would accept no service assignments.” Pamphlet: “The AA Group”, Q22, p.23
- “... The home group affords individual AAs the privilege of voting on issues that affect the Fellowship as a whole; it is the very basis of the service structure... where they participate in business meetings and cast their vote as part of the group conscience of the Fellowship as a whole. As with all group conscience matters, each member has one vote.” The AA Service Manual (USA & Canada) p.S25\*

\*available from the General Service Office, item code 3360

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## Committee Four

1. **Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations with regards to the issue of rotation within AA's structure, as envisioned by Bill?**

(The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, page 10, 1.10, the Older Member)

***"Here we may find service in AA is seemingly being taken over by those much younger in sobriety. This is how it should be: our traditions have always supported the idea of rotation in our service activities...."***

AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2018, p.77

*As Bill Sees It*: 307, Circle and Triangle; 207, The Fellowship's Future; 25, We Cannot Stand Still.

*AA Comes of Age*, page 224-page 227.

Concept XI "Do we practise rotation in all our service positions?"

### ***Background***

Newly appointed Group Service Representatives (GSRs) often find it difficult to integrate at intergroup.

Perhaps we could look at how well we cultivate a spirit of willingness for service for the younger member throughout the structure, within sponsorship, and on a one-to-one.

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2. **Could Conference discuss ways the Fellowship can assist sponsors in their responsibility of encouraging newer people into service positions?**

### ***Background***

Sponsoring into service is a vital link in the ongoing strength of AA to carry its message. Working through the structure of group service and on to intergroup, region and conference should be aspired to but may be considered as unattractive or beyond reach. The intergroup is a fundamental link between the groups and the region and needs people to carry out the work.

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- 3. Review revised Chapter 3, AA and Electronic Communications, section 3.6, The AA GB Website of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2018.**

***Background***

Revised Chapter 3, AA and Electronic Communications, section 3.6, The AA GB Website.

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## **Committee Five**

- 1. Can Conference discuss their experience of sobriety requirements for Prison Liaison Officers and members sharing at prison meetings and, if deemed necessary, recommend amendments to Chapter 8 of The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain in order to give more clarity?**

**Background**

Section 8.1 of The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain states that “Prison sponsors are appointed according to the intergroup conscience. It is recommended that sponsors have a minimum of 3 years continuous sobriety”.

There is much discussion regarding the length of sobriety required for:

1. The Prison Liaison Officer
2. Members going in with the prison meeting sponsor to give a main share.

With the exception of Regional Representatives, all other service positions have a minimum continuous sobriety requirement of 2 years. Does this also apply to the Prison Liaison Officer – the liaison officer may not, necessarily, be a prison meeting sponsor – rather facilitating it.

Likewise, many groups are interpreting the chapter as indicating that any member attending the meeting should have 3 years continuous sobriety, even though they are not sponsoring the meeting.

This greatly restricts the number of available members that can support the prison meeting.

Experience has demonstrated that many people are more encouraged by people in early sobriety – say 6 months – as they find it easier to relate to the rawness and problems in their first year of sobriety.

Guidance and clarification would be of great use to our Prison Liaison Officers.

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- 2. Would Conference consider the implications of the adoption of the practice by AA in Great Britain of inviting speakers from overseas and paying their expenses? Make recommendations.**

***Background***

This matter was brought to Conference in 1995 and dealt with by Committee No. 6, question No. 4. Here is the transcript:

“Having considered the implication of the adoption of the practice by AA in Great Britain of inviting speakers from overseas and paying their expenses, the Committee decided that neither AA money nor AA’s name should be used for this purpose, as to do so would be in breach of Tradition 4 and Tradition 12.”

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**NEW QUESTION:**

- 3. Would Conference consider the best way to keep archive material intact? Should there be a move to ask all Region and Intergroup Archivists to pass their older material - say anything older than 10 years – up to York for safe keeping?**

**Would Conference also consider that intergroup or regions’ archive material, even though stored at the home of the Archivist or under lock and key elsewhere, remain the property of AA, despite voluntary rotation, or the incumbent passing away.**

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## Committee Six

1. Conference is asked to consider and make recommendations on ways to reach out to problem drinkers in black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Membership of AA is still predominantly white, even in racially mixed towns and cities.

### ***Background***

AA Membership Survey 2015

***Consider the contribution to the carrying of the message, financial and practical implications when deliberating each question.***

2. Would the Fellowship share experience in reaching out to the growing homeless community, many of whom have problems with alcohol?

### ***Background:***

Brighton Intergroup has established the role of Homeless Liaison Officer. The key features of this role are as follows:

- A weekly visit to the town's homeless day centres
- Provision of AA's PI materials to the staff
- Regular communication with clients who are struggling with alcohol problems
- Introduction to local AA meetings

The Homeless Liaison Officer works in partnership with the intergroup's PI, Health, and Young People's Liaison Officers. In Brighton, the team includes a Polish AA member who can communicate more easily with homeless people from Poland and the Baltic states.

Conference is asked to consider establishing additional services within its service structure to reach out to suffering alcoholics in the homeless community.

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## **NEW QUESTION:**

3. **Would the Fellowship share experience of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on AA in Great Britain at group level and make recommendations on suitable commitments and an appropriate service path for newcomers at online meetings?**

### **Background**

Things to consider:

- Contactless Tradition 7 payments as discussed at Conference 2018 Committee 2 Q1 or regular direct debit bank transfers from members to groups, intergroups or GSO
- How online groups may become part of the structure of AA GB (e.g. to join existing Intergroups or create an online Intergroup)
- Tradition 4 – each group is autonomous etc.
- Hybrid meetings with face-to-face facility shared with online facility
- Multi-meeting groups so that rental costs can be shared amongst two or more meetings
- Groups moving from church and community halls into lecture theatres in universities and hospitals for greater meeting capacity, projector & screen facilities and social distancing
- It could be helpful to identify online service roles for those in early sobriety. In physical meetings, a common progression might be from tea-making and greeting, through literature and secretary/treasurer, thence to a GSR role and ultimately service outside the group.

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