

Questions for Conference 2022

Committee No. 1 – Question 1

1. **What more can be done to raise awareness that as AA members, especially in a sponsorship capacity, we do not give unqualified medical advice on the treatment of another member, especially concerning the use of prescribed for a mental illness?**

Background:

Some AA groups and members have reported incidents about newer members receiving comments on their medically prescribed drug treatment. Advising someone to reduce or stop taking their medication without proper professional medical guidance can lead to severe or life-threatening emergencies.

Also, when medical professionals are concerned about AA members giving unwarranted medical advice to recovering alcoholics on their prescribed drug regime, the reputation of AA and its relationship with the medical community is negatively affected.

Concrete guidance concerning giving medical advice can be found in Conference-approved literature, such as:

- The A.A. Member - Medications and Other Drugs
- The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2018, Chapter Six: AA and Healthcare in the Community
- Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered

Committee 1 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee 1 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee No. 1 – Question 2

2. Review proposed amendments and addition to Chapter Nine: “Probation/Criminal Justice Service” of the AA Service Handbook for Great Britain 2019 (page 62).

Background

Amendment and addition to section 9:3.2 Setting up a Confirmation of Attendance or ‘Chit’ System.

Chapter 9:3.2, Service Handbook – Amendment in red

9:3.2 Setting up a Confirmation of Attendance or ‘Chit’ System

The confirmation of attendance system, often called ‘the chit system’ is simply a scheme to let people have some document to show that they have attended a particular meeting. That person can then give the confirmation to offender managers, Social Services, an employer or any other body.

The system was endorsed by Conference 1987 as being within the Traditions, and operates without compromising anyone’s anonymity. It is up to the person requesting the chits to report on themselves to whoever is supervising them.

It is, of course, entirely up to each intergroup and group whether and how they choose to introduce the confirmation system. One common scenario has been for intergroups initially to discuss and vote on whether to endorse the use of the chit system in that particular intergroup. If the intergroup decides to endorse the introduction of the chit system the next step would be for GSRs to take the matter back to their individual group, to discuss at a conscience meeting whether or not that group wishes to participate.

The intergroup Probation/CJSWS Liaison Officer might wish to attend any meeting debating the ‘chit’ system to explain the system.

Each group that agrees to participate tells intergroup so, and the P/CJSWS Liaison Officer would add that group’s details to the list of participating groups prepared for the local offender management service.

The statement that confirms a person’s attendance at a particular AA Meeting can be of several types. The traditional ‘chit’ is simply a sealed envelope provided by intergroup or made up by the group. The envelope contains a slip of paper on which is printed the group’s unique group number as allocated to all groups by General Service Office (GSO). When this is given to the person requesting confirmation of attendance, a group officer just writes the time and date (not the location) over the sealed flap of the envelope, and initials it. Some intergroups now give groups supplies of blank certificates, **Blank confirmation of attendance certificates are available free of charge from GSO and can be requested by any group, intergroup or regional officer. They are printed with anti-counterfeit ink and use the group's number as a 'signature' thereby ensuring the anonymity of the member filling them out. They will only be posted out to a group, intergroup or regional officer’s address already registered with GSO, so before requesting any please ensure that your contact details are up to date, filling out a 'pink form' if necessary.**

Details of setting up and running a confirmation of attendance/chit system are given in AA’s ‘Liaison Officers’ Pack: Probation/CJS’ available from GSO and in the AA (GB) website’s Document Library.

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Committee 1 - Question 2 Response:

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Committee No. 1 – Question 3

3. Review addition to the GSR maximum term of service language for Structure Handbook, p.81 (Conference 2021 – C4, Q1, f)

Background

Suggested addition to the GSR maximum terms of service language for the Structure Handbook.

In the *AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain*, in the chapter 'The Group', section 'Group Officers', number 3, 'Group Service Representative (GSR)', 'Qualifications', fifth bullet point (page 81 in the 6th Edition 2021), revise the sentence to read:

'The GSR should be prepared to serve for a minimum of two and a maximum of three years.'

Committee 1 - Question 3 Response:

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Committee No. 1 – Question 4

4. Review addition to current Structure Handbook chapter, The Group, section 1, 'Group Meetings', p.76, Where to Find AA, first paragraph, after second sentence.

Background

Suggested addition to the Structure Handbook chapter, The Group, Section 1, 'Group Meetings'.

AFTER sentence in first paragraph which ends '... update their pink forms annually' and BEFORE sentence beginning 'Group secretaries, or those responsible...', insert:

'Keeping the *Where to Find* up to date is not simply an administrative exercise. Keeping up to date is an integral part of carrying the message within the Fellowship. There has to be a deep understanding that making it "easy to find" is an essential tool of recovery.'

Committee 1 - Question 4 Response:

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Committee No. 2 – Question 1

- 1. Would the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations on how groups can continue to meet in-person and abide by government COVID-19 regulations, such as contact tracing, vaccination status, whilst being mindful of our Traditions?**

Background

AA groups that meet in person may be subject to local authority COVID-19 regulations. These regulations change frequently and may be different depending on the city, county and/or country.

Regulations such as contact tracing may conflict with our Tradition of anonymity, for example, and requiring proof of vaccination or test status may conflict with our Tradition of “the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking”.

References Tradition 3, 11 & 12

Committee 2 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee No. 2 – Question 2

2. Would the Fellowship consider how post lockdown the website can evolve to meet its requirements?

Background

In 2008 the Fellowship considered that our primary purpose is to carry the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic but asked if we as a Fellowship are 'best using modern communications and methods to carry the AA message'. Conference passed a unanimous recommendation that 'a continuous review of the GSO GB website be undertaken by the ECSC to ensure ease of access and usage' and give the Fellowship the website it would like.

Bill W said: 'Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination.'

Bill W, The AA Grapevine, Inc., November 1960

Committee 2 - Question 2 Response:

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Committee No. 2 – Question 3

- 3. Review Archives Sub Committee revision of Chapter Eleven, Service Handbook, pp. 67-71.**

Background

Revised Chapter Eleven, Service Handbook, pp. 67-71.

SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT: 'C2, Q3_Archives Chapter 11 Service Handbook revised_v3'

Committee 2 - Question 3 Response:

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Committee No. 3

- 1. Would Conference discuss and make recommendations on making our language and literature more inclusive, taking into account the numbers of non-binary and gender-fluid members accessing the Fellowship in recent times.**

Background

Several LGBGTQ + members in the Birmingham area report feeling alienated by the opening line of the Preamble and confused and frustrated by the advice often misquoted from the Q&As on Sponsorship Pamphlet. They've even been told at times that 'Men for Men Women for Women' is a Tradition! Furthermore, the following (albeit outdated) advice in the pamphlet for gay and lesbian is rarely added in.

Surely AA must grow or die. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking – not 'to identify as men or women'.

In the leaflet 'Questions and Answers on Sponsorship': -

'Should sponsor and newcomer be as much alike as possible?

Often, a newcomer feels most at ease with a sponsor of similar background and interests. However, many AAs say they were greatly helped by sponsors totally unlike themselves. Maybe that's because their attention was then focused on the most important things that any sponsor and newcomer have in common: alcoholism and recovery in AA.

A.A. experience does suggest that it is best for men to sponsor men, women to sponsor women. This custom usually helps our members stay focused on the A.A. program. Some gay men and lesbians feel an opposite-sex sponsor is more appropriate for similar reasons.'

The above pamphlet made a start in 2015. It now feels time to perhaps guide members to choose a sponsor they are comfortable with and won't feel attracted to or be taken advantage of, so that they can concentrate on recovery.

Committee 3 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee No. 3 – Question 2

2. Would the Fellowship share experience on how, under pandemic conditions, it:

a. has carried the message to members and potential members in hospitals, treatment centres and other institutions;

b. has carried out PI activities aimed at doctors and other professionals working in these institutions?

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed restrictions on AA members attending hospitals and facilities in-person. Some areas have shut down in-person AA Public Information (PI) meetings altogether and disallowed members from visiting and speaking to the patients.

PI meetings can help bridge the gap between patients in hospitals and getting started in AA meetings after they leave. They can also help make AA attractive to hospital patients as they are able to see in-person a vivid demonstration of the fact that many alcoholics can recover.

Refer to the Service Handbook 6:4 Hospital/Treatment Centre Meetings.

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Committee No. 3 – Question 3

3.Review addition to current Structure Handbook chapter, The Region, section 2, ‘The Regional Assembly’, p.94, after final paragraph of section / first paragraph of page.

Background

Addition to Structure Handbook chapter, The Region, section 2, ‘The Regional Assembly’.

Proposal:

Add to *Structure Handbook*, ‘The Region’ chapter, section 2, ‘The Regional Assembly’, top of current p. 94, AFTER 1st paragraph (ends with ‘... and improve services in the region’), and before sub-section, ‘Service Structure’:

‘It is suggested that:

- 1. Each region holds a regular inventory.**
- 2. The regional inventory generates a list of ideas and actions to be used as a yardstick.**
- 3. The region considers using the inventory list as a regular item on their agendas.**
- 4. The inventory questions and answers of that region be shared with other regions and**

the General Service Office / General Service Board for wider distribution to the Fellowship, e.g., through AA Service News and Regional Chairpersons’ Meetings.’

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Committee No. 3 – Question 4

- 4. Review slight deletion to current Structure Handbook chapter, The Region, section 3, 'Conference Delegates / Alternates', p. 94, fifth paragraph.**

Background

Suggestion to delete the final five words, **'if invited to do so'**. The full sentence would then read: **'He or she should be available and willing to report back fully to the region and also be willing to travel to intergroup and group meetings.'**

This suggestion is based on a response from Committee 6, Question 1, in 2001, recommending stronger implementation of the guidance for communicating Conference decisions in the Service Handbook at that time.

Committee 3 - Question 4 Response:

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Committee No. 4 – Question 1

- 1. Would the Fellowship please consider deleting the second point of the “Just for Today” card, “Just for today I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be”, as it is potentially misleading for newcomers?**

Background

1. The Just for Today card is a much-loved piece of literature included in the Starter Pack for newcomers.
2. The text can be traced back to an article in the Boston Globe in 1921 by Frank Crane and Sybil S Partridge. One of its original ten points has already been deleted, leaving nine.
3. The Big Book states that the idea that we can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this life if only we manage well is a “delusion”, and its believers are “victims”. (Alcoholics Anonymous – p.61/1).

Committee 4 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee No. 4 – Question 2

2. Review the language for 'One Member, One Vote' addition to the Structure Handbook, 'The Group' Section', p. 75, in the paragraphs 'The Group Conscience and Business Meetings' and 'A Home Group' (Conference 2021 – C3, Q3)

Background

Addition to the Structure Handbook for 'One Member, One Vote'. Proposed amendments in **red**.

Amendment to the *Structure Handbook*, The Group, Section 1 'Group Meetings' / Types of Meetings, p.75 :

The Group Conscience and Business Meetings are sometimes overlooked but they play an important part in our group progress. Some groups schedule these meetings several times a year. Depending on the wishes of the members, they may precede or follow the normal meeting or separate sessions may be arranged. **It is suggested that groups have a policy on eligibility for voting and that the Traditions are read before proceedings. Promotion of understanding of the Concepts is also recommended.**

Business Meetings provide an opportunity for group officers to report on such matters as progress, future plans, intergroup matters and the financial position. The group may also take this occasion as an opportunity to appoint its officers and to conduct a group conscience meeting – which usually takes the form of a group inventory.

A Home Group is the group for meetings in which members feel most *at home*. In such groups they accept service responsibilities, sustain friendships and celebrate anniversaries. They are encouraged to **participate fully in group conscience meetings. 'It is a privilege to vote on issues that affect AA as a whole' (AA Service Manual for World Service, S25), and it is recommended that members consider both when and how to vote, and how the principle of 'One Member, One Vote.' might apply. In order that representation is proportionate, it is inappropriate for members to vote more than once on matters concerning the Fellowship as a whole (e.g., feedback on Conference Questions). Members visiting other groups should consider adhering to this principle of One Member, One Vote, by not taking part in that group's business or policy decisions. In this way, groups maintain autonomy and resist members of other groups influencing decisions.**

Committee 4 - Question 2 Response:

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Committee No. 4 – Question 3

3. Review Service Sponsorship language for Section One, Service Handbook, pp. 7-10 (Conference 2021 – C4, Q2)

Background

Revision of Service Sponsorship language for Section One, Service Handbook.

AA Service Handbook for Great Britain, Section 1

- new Section 1.5
- re-numbered Sections 1.6 - 1.11

Proposal:

Service Handbook, re-name Section 1, 'Growing into Service' to 'AA Service' (to avoid confusion with the new 'Growing into Service' pamphlet).

Change reference to 'Growing into Service' pamphlet to denote that the text comes from a previous version of the pamphlet than the one now in print – or delete reference altogether. Insert new section 1.5, 'Sponsorship, Service Sponsorship, and Sponsoring into Service' (after section 1.4, 'Service to newcomers at group meetings').

Re-number subsequent sections as follows:

- 1.6, 'A step further'
- 1.7, 'Service within the intergroup'
- 1.8, 'Still more ways to serve'
- 1.9, 'The loner'
- 1.10, 'The housebound member'
- 1.11, 'The older member'

New Section 1.5 Proposed Text:

Sponsorship, Service Sponsorship, and Sponsoring into Service (from the pamphlet 'Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered')

Essentially, sponsorship is one alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery programme sharing that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is trying to stay sober.

Most present members of AA owe their sobriety to the fact that someone took a special interest in them in their early days and was willing to share a great gift with them.

Sponsorship can be the answer for the person who has been able to achieve only interludes of sobriety. Even if we have many years in AA, we can benefit by asking somebody to be our sponsor.

In addition to sponsorship in the AA programme (e.g., helping someone through the Steps and Traditions), it is suggested that new members are also 'sponsored' into service.

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Some AA Members may seek a 'service sponsor' who has experience in a particular type of service or role.

Although there is no formal definition of service sponsorship or of sponsoring into service, the two may be understood in similar terms. (Some AA members say that service sponsorship is not separate, but simply a part of sponsorship.)

Service sponsorship focuses on AA's Third Legacy of Service. The service sponsor shares experience, strength, and hope about service roles and positions within the AAGB service structure. A member may take on (or be elected or appointed to take on) such responsibilities within the group or in the levels further down our inverted triangle – that is, at intergroup and region levels.

A service sponsor supports and encourages the member in all service activities – regardless of level – and leads by example. The service sponsor may suggest opportunities a member might consider in the group or beyond and can help the member gain a deeper understanding of AA's Traditions and Concepts.

Service sponsors can also help a member understand the commitment and responsibilities of a service position and determine whether they have the time available and are sufficiently far enough along in their sobriety to meet the obligations of the role.

*Please see also the AAGB pamphlets, 'Sponsorship: Your Questions Answered' and 'Growing into Service'.

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Committee No. 5 – Question 1

1. Should AAGB update the AA Preamble published on its website and in literature to the gender-neutral version recently updated by the AA Grapevine and agreed upon at the 71st General Service Conference (US/Canada)?

Background

Original Version

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of **men and women** who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

New Version

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of **people** who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Find out more

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Committee 5 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee No. 5 – Question 2

- 2. Will the Fellowship (through Conference) discuss and give further guidance concerning the autonomy and authority of National Conventions and their committees relating to online marketing, AA commemorative merchandise and raffles, etc., within their venues.**

Background

The Structure and Service Handbooks for Great Britain makes no relevant guidelines for National Conventions and the remit of their organising committee. However, the Handbooks indicate that conventions, especially National Conventions, should plan to finance the convention via registration fees, and can receive monies from sale of literature and catering, with surpluses returning to the committee and so the Fellowship.

The actions of National Conventions tend to get taken as examples. If a Conference approved AA convention takes a specific action, then it is reasonable to suppose that other events will follow suit.

References:

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain, 5th Edition 2021: Conventions (pp. 122-126)

Committee 5 - Question 2 Response:

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Committee No. 5 – Question 3

- 3. Review the Employment Sub-Committee (ESC) revision of Chapter Five, Service Handbook, pp. 45-49.**

Background

Revised Chapter Five of the Service Handbook.

SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT: 'C5,Q3_Employment Chapter 5 Service Handbook revised 2021

Committee 5 - Question 3 Response:

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Committee No. 5 – Question 4

4. Review the Terms of Service for Prisons' roles for Chapter Eight, Structure Handbook, pp. 57-58 (Conference 2021 – C5, Q1).

Background

Terms of Service for Prisons' roles for Chapter Eight.

Proposed *Service Handbook* Changes / Chapter 8 [changes in red]

8:1 Prison Groups

Prison Group Chairs are appointed according to the intergroup conscience. **These Chairs facilitate prison meetings and visit the prison on a regular basis.** It is recommended that **Chairs** have a minimum of three years' continuous sobriety. Security clearance is invariably necessary. Wherever possible, a team of AA **Prison Group Chairs** should be maintained so that inmates will gain a broader view of how AA works.

So far as the Fellowship is concerned, female members may be included in the panel of agreed **Chairs** for male prisons, provided they are accompanied by a male AA member or male AA members on the panel for female prisons, and provided they are accompanied by a female AA member, subject to the approval of the Governor.

As with all meetings, it is desirable that prison groups discuss the whole of the AA programme of recovery using every opportunity to introduce the Steps and Traditions and referring to the Big Book. In this way, it is possible **for inmate members to learn** that **they** can live the AA way of life prior to release.

Prison group members should, wherever possible, be encouraged to take an active part in their group in accordance with AA **Traditions. Whenever** possible, **Prison Group Chairs** should adopt only a supporting role.

AA members may be invited to speak at a prison group meeting at the discretion of the Chair. It is recommended that any such speakers have a minimum of one year's continuous sobriety. They need to be aware that they may also require security clearance.

8:2 Prison Liaison Officers (PLOs)

Prison Liaison Officers organise schedules for prison visits as well as facilitating communication with the relevant prison. Communication is reported back to the intergroup and region.

8:3 Communication

- **Prison Group Chairs share reports with their intergroup Prison Liaison Officer (IPLO) on a regular basis, outlining what is occurring within the prison(s) for which they are serving as Chairs.**
- Prior to release prisoners **are** encouraged to make contact with the Fellowship within their local area through the relevant Service Office. **AA** Members who wish to correspond with prisoners should **do so only** through the **prison** correspondence **programme** operated **through** the General Service Office
- Where no AA group exists at a prison, the local intergroup **is encouraged to make** every attempt to form one. Permission to establish a new prison group **must** be obtained from the **Governor. The** initial approach should be made by the Intergroup Prison Liaison Officer.

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- **Experience shows that** participation of prison group sponsors in meetings at national conventions and in regional Prison Sponsor meetings **can be** useful in **raising awareness of prisons service within the Fellowship and expanding member service experience in it.**

Committee 5 - Question 4 Response:

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Committee No. 6 – Question 1

1. Would the Fellowship discuss and share experience on the following matters concerning group autonomy: -

a. How may a group's qualification for inclusion in the AAGB and English-Speaking Continental Europe service structure and local and national meetings lists be determined?

b. How should secular AA groups using a modified version of AA's 12 Steps and AA's 12 Traditions be viewed within the context of the legacy of AA unity?

Background

- Tradition 3 long form
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Tradition 3
- Tradition 4
- Tradition 5
- Our Great Responsibility (A selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks 1951-1970) – Variations in the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions page 89: "Variations in the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions." "So I thought I would spin a little yarn to you about the original variations – especially in the Steps and the hassles we had about them – and then maybe philosophize a little bit on this question of whether this program of ours is frozen as solid as an ice cube or whether there is any elasticity in it or not: whether we are going to get into the business of insisting upon conformity, whether we are going to get into the business of creating an authority that says that these Steps and Traditions have to be this way."

Committee 6 - Question 1 Response:

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Committee No. 6 – Question 2

2. Would the Fellowship discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of the General Service Conference (GSC) being held online and make recommendations on whether future Conferences should be held online?

Background

Due to the coronavirus pandemic the 55th GSC in 2021 was held online for the first time. This experience has shown that, for example:

- compared to an in-person Conference, an online Conference may incur less expenses. The money that is saved by holding Conference online could be spent on other primary purpose activities. 18
- all business (such as giving reports, discussing Conference questions, making recommendations and voting on these recommendations) can be conducted successfully even virtually.
- an online Conference may not offer the same opportunities for connecting and fellowshiping with other AA members.
- an online Conference may involve a greater amount of preparation for the GSO staff (such as offering training for the online platform, organising meeting rooms, sending access codes to members of each committee, etc.)

Committee 6 - Question 2 Response:

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Committee No. 6 – Question 3

3. Review additions to the current Service Handbook sections 1.6, ‘Service within the intergroup’, and 1.7, ‘Still more ways to serve’.

Background

Additions to sections 1.6 and 1.7 of the Service Handbook.

Proposal:

- Add to current section 1.6 in *Service Handbook* (p.9), as a new paragraph (before current paragraph beginning with ‘In most of these activities...’) :

‘Intergroups may elect up to three Regional Representatives, who attend, participate and vote in regional assemblies, carrying their intergroup’s conscience forward to the region.’

- Add to 1.6, a new paragraph (after current paragraph ending with ‘...and deepen our sobriety’.):

‘Please also see The Region Chapter, Section 2, “The Regional Assembly” in the *Structure Handbook*’

- Add to current section 1.7 in *Service Handbook* (p.9), ‘Still more ways to serve’ : **‘elected by intergroups’ – in brackets next to ‘Regional Representatives’,**

i.e., ‘Regional Representatives (elected by intergroups)’

Committee 6 - Question 3 Response:

Please aware that you can submit any feedback on Conference questions via your group GSR or email to conference.ls@aamail.org Also, please use this email to request any visits to your group from conference delegates.

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Writing your Question for Conference

The leaflet 'General Service Conference – the Conscience of AA GB' is available FREE to the Fellowship. It outlines what you need to do when writing and submitting a question for the General Service Conference (GSC).

It contains the following information: -

- **The role and function of Conference – it's purpose**
- **What is, and who sits on the Conference Service Committee (CSC)**
- **How to submit a topic or question for Conference**
- **What happens at Conference**
- **A map of how Conference works from start to finish**

Click on the link below for the leaflet. Or cut and paste link into your browser.

<https://aagb.silverink.ie/download/1/Library/Documents/Conference%20Reports%20and%20Background/General%20Service%20Conference%20-%20The%20Conscience%20of%20AA%20GB.pdf>

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