
Interlink



The Newsletter for Southdown Intergroup

November 2020

Editor: Sinclair M sinclair757@yahoo.co.uk

Editor's message

Welcome fellowship Friends,

Without its legions of well-wishers, A.A. could never have grown as it has. Throughout the world, immense and favourable publicity of every description has been the principal means of bringing alcoholics into our fellowship. In A.A. offices, clubs, and homes telephones ring constantly. One voice says, "I read a piece in the newspapers...", another: "We heard a radio programme...", and still another, "We saw a moving picture..." or: saw something about A.A. on television..." It is no exaggeration to say that half of A.A.'s membership has been led to us through channels like these. The inquiring voices are not all alcoholics or their families. Doctors read medical papers about Alcoholics Anonymous and call for more information. Clergymen see articles in their church journals and make enquiries. Employers learn that great corporations have set their approval upon us and wish to discover what can be done about alcoholism in their own firms. Therefore, a great responsibility fell upon us to develop the best possible public relations policy for Alcoholics Anonymous. These words from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions still hold true today.

Southdown Intergroup has vigorously energised individual members, willing volunteers, to lead the way in our public relations policy, to contact organisations large and small whether public or private and make known that "no matter how far down the scale" of alcoholism "they have gone", alcoholics of every sort have somewhere to turn to for help. So it is that through our Liaison Officers in this our Southdown Intergroup that we entrust the vital work of making individuals and organizations aware of the fine work being carried out to help the "still suffering alcoholic", and not just those individuals but the organizations and institutions affected by this dreadful ailment. To these Liaison Officers we give our thanks, but not only them, our thoughts also go out to those who spent time and effort in arranging Conventions all of which came to nought due to this ongoing Pandemic. Our Intergroup continually need more willing volunteers to take on these very important roles, to keep this fellowship vibrant and of course to keep



themselves sober at the same time because that is how A.A. works. Those dedicated Convention conveners too will undoubtedly carry their hard work forward into 2021 to make these enjoyable events a reality. Keep working the programme because it works if you work it.

Chairpersons Report

We come to the close of the AA year no further forward in having physical Assemblies but hopefully God willing we can get back to them in 2021. Moggs Mead, where we hold our physical assemblies, have provided potential dates which are at the back of Interlink and on the AA website. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to accommodate and have supported the Assemblies via Zoom.

It has been great to see physical meetings re-open and I have enjoyed the ones I have attended. Please can I remind meetings only 15 people can gather in the rooms. I know some meetings have 13 with 2 seats being available for newcomers and some even must book. However meetings chose to accommodate their AA members, I wish them well.

Not to support, as opposed to cancelling the Portsmouth AA convention was not an easy decision but one the Steering Committee decided to do over a series of meetings and thought was appropriate due to COVID. Guidance from GSO was sought who advised they were encouraging people not to carry out physical conventions and were not actively supporting any themselves, especially given the Government guidelines that only 6 people would be permitted to attend.

Although the Gosport and IOW conventions have cancelled their 2021 conventions it would be lovely if these could take place via Zoom as we have seen others throughout the UK make this a success.

I am delighted to pass on my thanks to the many individuals who provide service to our Intergroup:

- Clare whose last Assembly will be November 2021, after 3 years in service. She has been fantastic in post always rising to the occasion whatever was asked of her and I wish her all the best in her next venture.
- Ellie who has done a tremendous job as PILO and I wish her every success at Region taking her experience of PI there and with the Darkness into Light project.
- Alan who has done an excellent job as ECLO going above and beyond his position especially this year and he will be a massive loss to Intergroup. I know doesn't want to go and if we can persuade him to stay until he gets a replacement, I'm sure he will be happy to. However, he may have other things in mind. Whatever Alan decides to do, I wish him well and the very best of luck.
- All the LO's and Regional Reps who have still done as much as they could to carry the message of AA to the still suffering alcoholic during this difficult time.

Please stay safe and I hope to see you at physical meetings once it is safe to do so.

Clare W – chair.southdown@aamail.org



Intergroup Vacancies

Vice Chair
Armed Services Liaison Officer
Interlink Editor
Employment Liaison Officer
Electronic Communication Officer (from Nov 20)
Public Information Liaison Officer (from Nov 20)
Archivist

Liaison Officers' Reports

Section A: Southdown Archives Report by Nick

Southdown now has 29 online groups, and 30 physical groups have now reopened their doors again.

We are still looking for a replacement archivist. Mary however has started to remotely work on the digital archive collection.

A Southdown working group is being assembled to help with the local exhibition, when it comes to Southdown in 2022. If you would like to offer your services, please email:

southdown@aadarknessintolight.org

If you would like to learn more about the project, do check out the members password protected website:

Fellowship.aadarknessintolight.org.uk

The password is: s3renity (for members only)

Section B: The Southdown Legacy by Lucia

Lucia continues to research our history, and there has been a steady flow of articles about the local groups and members experience of service within the intergroup. If you have any articles, photos or graphics that may be included in the 5th Edition, please email to Lucia on:

southdownlegacy@outlook.com

If you have never seen a copy, the 1st Edition (2006) is on the Southdown Intergroup website, just click on "The Southdown Legacy"

Section C: Telephone Service Liaison Officer Greg

During quarter 3 (July, August & September) we have seen calls to the Southdown Helpline increase by 306 calls. We handled a total of 1199 calls during the Quarter 3 averaging at 399 calls per month during this quarter.

The increase could possibly be attributed to a couple of things. Firstly, the London Helpline was out of operation since the beginning of the Covid 19 outbreak until the first week in October.



This has meant these calls have diverted across all the remaining UK helplines putting extra pressure on the network.

Secondly as the lockdown restrictions gradually reduced over the summer months, people were then required to return to some sort of normal living potentially exposing any problems that had built up.

All the responders are now working with the new 12th Step list. The Responders are also working very closely with Clare our 12th Step Co-ordinator to keep the list a live and up to date document. Responders are now completing call log sheets for every call which carries details of every 12th step volunteer contacted to help the new prospect. Clare is then updated with any changes to update the list where appropriate.

Finally, the telephone service is in the fortunate position to have a full complement of responders at present. Although we are still interested in building a strong reserve list and hearing from anyone looking to do telephone service in the future.

Month	Calls
April	298
May	279
June	316
TOTAL Q2	893
July	393
August	389
September	417
TOTAL Q3	1199
TOTAL Q2 +Q3	2092
AVERAGE P.M Q2 &Q3	349

Greg B - telephones.southdown@aamail.org

Section D: Telephone 12 Step Process Clare

- Training and roll-out of the new electronic/online version of the 12th Step List is now complete. The list is live and being used by the telephone helpline responders through Google Sheets. This online program is extremely secure and allows permitted users to view a single file which contains the most up-to-date information.
- For most of the team members, we no longer need to print out lists and they can quickly find 12th Steppers using filters such as gender, hometown and availability.
- Initial feedback from the team has been extremely positive and they are also sending their call sheets back to update the list on feedback from any 12th Steppers they contact.



- New 12th Steppers will be introduced to the role by their sponsor or GSR. They will be encouraged to read the 12th Step Call Leaflet, which provides further advice and then to email the 12th Step Coordinator for a registration form.
- The 12th Step Call Leaflet has been updated and is being printed to include the 12step.southdown@aamail.org email address.
- As of 10th October, we have 191 people on the 12 Step list, 162 have provided email addresses, 8 people do not use email and 21 have not responded. The first email correspondence to the 12th Step volunteers is currently being prepared for sending out this month.

Clare M - 12step.southdown@aamail.org

Section E: HLO Report by Danny

Due to current COVID19 situation, unfortunately no physical presentations and/or meetings with hospital professionals have taken place.

QA Portsmouth – retains enough newcomer's patient packs.

St Richards Chichester – Alcohol team uses 12 step helpline appropriately.

Are eager for AA to come back and present to professionals, in the meantime we have recorded a short video clip for trainee doctors & Nurses consisting of 3 main points: *below*

- Alcoholism does not discriminate – neither does AA
- Alcohol addiction is a medically recognised disease which consists an enormous component of denial
- Alcoholics Anonymous works and is FREE

The alcohol team understands the importance of it being the potential Alcoholic who makes initial contact when reaching out for help *i.e. phoning AA helpline/ 12 step responders.*

Hospital retains sufficient amount of newcomer's patient packs.

Due to venues being unable to open up for meetings in Chichester at this time, myself and the alcohol team are discussing the possibility of opening up a meeting within the Hospital.

COVID Safety, times/dates of venue and free parking has already been agreed in principle:
please can Chichester GSRs (and/or surrounding areas) ask if any home group members are willing to pick up service in helping to start this meeting? - please contact below:

Danny S Alcoholics Anonymous Health Liaison Officer

Email health.southdown@aamail.org and/or phone 07429928992



IOW Hospital St Marys - Communication between GSR Anne E & hospital regarding 12 steppers is consistently open.

The hospital Chaplain stated that they feel it's important to have an AA presence in the hospital and the Wednesday morning meetings have restarted (10 till 11)

12 stepping occurs at bedside on request of patient but non-attendance on wards/nurses' station is adhered to in aid of decreasing footfall.

AA signage/flyers are replenished on the ward by Chaplain and hospital retains enough newcomer's patient packs

Portsmouth Chemists - Doctors surgeries and public toilets are continuously updated and stocked with appropriate AA information leaflets.

Attended Liaison Officers workshop and will be also attending other intergroup.

Please see below a keep it simple A.B.C guide for professionals that has been sent to Portsmouth QA, St Richards in Chichester and St Marys in IOW.

Alcoholics Anonymous A.B.C.

A - Local & National A.A. Helpline 023 9258 0776 - 08009177650

B - Access to online & physical meetings can be found at <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Regional-&-Local-Websites/south-east-region/southdown-intergroup>: scroll down to ONLINE and/or PHYSICAL meetings

You will also find access to Newcomers packs and other relevant info online which is free to read. The shortcut to this page is <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/Newcomers/Starter-Pack>

C - Direct message to a recovering Alcoholic Anonymously - shortcut to this link is <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/Newcomers/Get-help-now> then click on the orange "Chat Box" which is found in the bottom right hand corner: - This service is not manned round-the-clock.

Above **A.B.C. guide** is to be printed on wallet sized AA cards so they can be carried and referred to by health professionals and passed to potential Alcoholics in a simple and anonymous way.

Currently in process of producing an "AA pack for professionals": to include: -

- A.B.C: above
- The Doctors opinion
- A message to professionals



If anyone in our fellowship feels these would be helpful to them also, please contact me by email or phone.

Danny S - Alcoholics Anonymous Health Liaison Officer

Email health.southdown@aamail.org - phone **07429 928992**

Section F: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS by Alan H

A large part of my time has been spent in maintaining the Southdown website both with the list of online meetings and adding a new list of meetings restarting. GSO has been kept updated of all meeting changes on a regular basis. We currently have 30 online and 30 physical meetings running. Of these, 6 are parallel (i.e. separate Zoom / physical, but occurring at the same time) and 3 are hybrid (i.e. Zoom and physical combined). We have had 6 Zoom meetings cancelled and 2 new meetings start up, one on Zoom and one Physical. Details of any significant changes – new meeting, venue change etc., have been sent to our Southdown Secretary and GSO via a pink form by the GSR.

As always, I aim to update the website within 24 hours after receiving a request. The website shortcut is the easiest way to access it: <http://www.aa-gb.org/southdown>. This shortcut saves having to go through all the various menus from the main site.

I have produced regular updates on Zoom meetings – new/cancelled and password changes. These have been sent to all Zoom meeting hosts, GSRs, Liaison Officers and Telephone Responders - the latter so that callers to the Helpline can be given online meeting information such as meeting status and passwords since this information is changing frequently.

I have been working with our TLO (Greg B) and 12th Step Co-ordinator (Clare M) on ratifying the existing 12th Step list and developing a new process to manage the list electronically. I've trained a group of Telephone Responders on the use of the list.

The Southdown website and Filestore have suffered from several technical problems which have finally been resolved following lengthy discussions with GSO support personnel.

I attended the SE Regional workshops held online on 20 September where I conveyed the main parts of this report to the ECLO group. General points of interest raised were on other ECLOs experience with electronic payments and running Conventions on Zoom. The details on these will be conveyed to our Steering Committee for consideration.

Alan H: ECLO, Southdown Intergroup ecomm.southdown@aamail.org

Section G: Criminal Justice by John K

No meetings have taken place due to Covid.

John K – prisons.southdown@aamail.org



Section H: PUBLIC INFORMATION – by Ellie

This is my last report as PI Liaison Officer for Southdown Intergroup and I would just like to express my thanks at the opportunity for service and the support and encouragement I have received over the past 3 years. I have truly loved this position and am grateful for the growth and strength it has given to my recovery.

PI Service encompasses a wide range of activities, from simply placing literature at your doctor's surgery, to addressing a school in an assembly. PI needs a large group of people with varying skills and any level of involvement would be greatly welcomed!

If you are interested in taking over this role, or would like any more information then please email me at Pi.southdown@aamail.org or call 07899796274.

As part of World Mental Health day which this year was on Saturday October 10th, I delivered an online presentation to approximately 40 people within my organisation. I updated the standard PI Presentation to make it better for a virtual delivery. I received great feedback from a few of the Mental Health Champions.

Section I: Report of South East Regional Assembly 188 20th September 2020 – By Jim



Regional Assembly
188

Section J: Report from Portsmouth Convention Committee - Patrick

You will have been notified, via the usual Intergroup distribution, the Portsmouth Convention has been cancelled. The reasons given in the email are inaccurate. At no time would the Convention Committee arrange an event that put the health and safety of our members at risk. To suggest this challenges the integrity of the Convention Committee and is an affront. To offer the absence of any Risk Assessment as another 'failing' is also contrived. There would have been no point wasting valuable resources and time securing such a thing given the changing face of guidance and legislation. It could wait until nearer the time.

Convener and Co-Convener visited the venue, meeting with the Banqueting Manager, on September 12th. Intergroup knew this. The venue were in complete accordance with PHE, Central and Local Government guidance and regulations in all areas and were entirely COVID-19 Secure. There was a one way system marked on the floor supported with clear signage. Hand sanitisers were in evidence at all doors and reminders to maintain social distancing were everywhere. We were satisfied we could hold an event for a maximum of 90 people spread across three rooms. If we divided the event into two events, offering morning and afternoon 'slots,' the numbers might have doubled. We did have in mind the impact capping numbers could have where such a decision might touch our Traditions and general AA ethos. However, since AA Meetings, at the time, were beginning to reopen with numbers limited we felt



following similar lines was an acceptable adjustment if we were to carry the message of recovery to as many people as possible. These were points for discussion at our next meeting along with detailed planning on how to choreograph the whole day.

The Convention Committee were due to meet on Saturday 19th September to discuss, in detail, the Co-Convener's notes – post visit to the venue – and fully examine all possibilities. There was never a moment in the discussions where the health and safety of our attendees was not of paramount importance. Having ascertained the event was 'do able' we were to discuss whether or not we should continue with planning and maintain a focus on changes 'outside the rooms' or defer and arrange a different date. It was a challenge to be sure but, as recovering alcoholics we had been faced with greater difficulties.

Unfortunately, before we could meet on the 19th the Chair of Intergroup cancelled the event. We discovered Southdown's Vice Chair had contacted the venue to discuss the Convention with the Banqueting Manager without our knowledge. His reported conversation, sent in an email from the Chair, was polar opposite to what we had seen and touched at our visit. This placed the Convention Committee and the venue's management in a difficult position in terms of client confidentiality. In a telephone conversation with the venue it was made clear the points made by the Vice Chair were incorrect. Further, this action called into question the understanding of the element of autonomy afforded to Conventions within AA's Guidelines. This will not be the first time the Portsmouth Convention has found itself dealing with interference from Intergroup Officers without the Convention Committee's knowledge. Today the Portsmouth Convention has been removed from Assembly, without the Assembly being consulted, because the Intergroup Committee have decided to declare it as an independent initiative. This decision made irrespective of any input from the Convention as to its future.

What our trusted servants on Southdown's Committee were unaware of was at our meeting, planned for the 19th September, we had only one item to discuss. The postponement of the 2020 Convention planned for 25th October. We had decided, following informal discussions, arranging the event would be too difficult given the amount of interference we were being subjected to.

The request to allow a simple notice of cancellation from the Convention Committee, responsible for reporting to Assembly, has been denied. This from the Secretary, "As Southdown Intergroup are not supporting this event, we would ask you to take care of any communication you feel necessary."

Writing this report for Assembly has not been easy but it is important to assure you all the implied lack of concern for basic health and safety matters casts a shadow across those involved in Convention service and challenges the dedication to you and the event of those people willing to serve. To further deny them the right to communicate with the Intergroup they are responsible to is unacceptable.

Patrick

Convener Portsmouth Convention.



Section K: Proposed Dates for Intergroup 2021

17th February

12th May

11st August

15th September (Conscience Meeting)

17th November

