
Interlink



The Newsletter for Southdown Intergroup

July 2020

Editor: Sinclair M sinclair757@yahoo.co.uk

Editor's message

Welcome fellowship Friends,

It has been such a blessing during these difficult times of the Pandemic, to be able to hold meetings over the internet in one form or another. These meetings are better than no meeting.

Through Unity, Service and Recovery in equal harmony, it should be remembered, we can carry our message to the suffering alcoholic with clarity, confidence and love, but only if all three are there in equal strength. Please help any who are willing to get involved in Service so that we can make sure that these three can be of equal strength. There are positions waiting to be filled so please put the word out and help sponsor members into these roles.

Chairpersons Report

Hello everyone, long time no hear! I hope you have all been keeping well in these very odd and strange unprecedented times. I hope you have been managing to use the Zoom facility to enjoy keeping in touch with familiar faces over the internet. One of the good things to come out of the Zoom meetings is the fact we have been able to travel the world making new friends and connections from the comfort of our living rooms/bedrooms or anywhere else we may happen to be using our laptops/phones. Ironically this is something we used to do in our drinking days in our heads doing geographicals while not moving any further than to get the next drink from wherever it could be but usually within arm's reach!

Despite the upheaval our Liaison Officers have still been doing what they can to carry the message and I hope you appreciate their efforts which haven't been easy. Our ECLO Alan has been working with the new TLO Greg and the new 12 step Co-ordinator Clare M to ensure the telephones carry on as usual. Because of this commitment and other projects, Alan has stepped down from being Interlink Editor and for the time being Sinclair has stepped into the breach to



help, but we will still be putting the vacancy forward alongside the other IG vacancies. Please remember any outgoing GSR's are welcome to apply for this excellent piece of service keeping you in the middle of the AA bed.

As you may have been hearing there have been reports of normal meetings opening again. This is of course down to each group's conscience, the availability of the venue and in accordance with the venue's own rules and regulations. There is a 15-step guideline list that has been published on the AA website will be sent to the GSR's to consider when they decide to open their meetings in due course, and we ask you to adhere as closely to them as possible please for the health and wellbeing of your group. There is also a link attached on here for your perusal.

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members/Coronavirus-news>

At the moment, Leisure centres are still closed so the August Assembly will be conducted via Zoom on the original date of [Wednesday 12 August](#). Moggs Mead have articulated they expect to be one of the last venues to reopen as they will struggle to maintain the social 2-meter distancing rule. Everyone will be notified in due course when we hear of any changes, this includes the Conscience meeting scheduled for September.

The Steering Committee have been conducting Keep in Touch (KIT) meetings with the GSR's asking them about any concerns they may have an agenda has been sent out for them to take back to their groups to go through. Some have already been done with just a couple more to conclude. Once we have received the feedback, we will take it to Assembly and talk about it in GSR's Forum. If there are any other issues the GSR's would like to talk about, please could you let Clare our Secretary know so she can put it on the Agenda accordingly.

Could I take the opportunity to remind people that our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. With this in mind, I would encourage meetings to be inclusive and not to exclude anyone with a desire to stop drinking, in accordance with our Traditions – namely, 1, 3 & 4. This includes limiting meetings to home group members only or withholding information from the Intergroup so details are not published promptly on the website.

One – Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Three – The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Four – Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups, or A.A. as a whole.

I look forward to seeing you all again in the Zoom meeting. Until then please take care of yourselves, stay safe and healthy.

Clare W – chair.southdown@aamail.org



Intergroup Vacancies

Vice Chair
Armed Services Liaison Officer
Steering Committee Member x 1
Interlink Editor
Employment Liaison Officer
Electronic Communication Officer (Q2/20)
Public Information Liaison Officer (Q4/20)
Archivist

Liaison Officers' Reports

Section A: Southdown Archives Report by Nick

In March, The Government made it illegal for more than two people to meet in public places, which has necessitated the closure of all meetings. A series of online meetings are now taking place. If you would like to make mention of the effect this is having on your home group, so it can be incorporated in the archives, please email: archives.southdown@aamail.org.

Southdown now has 34 online groups and concern remains for the newcomer and those without digital access. The telephone help line has been piloting mini 12-step online meetings, to introduce newcomers to the fellowship. Discussion is now veering toward hybrid meetings.

The Magical History Tour website has now been updated to include the Liphook recordings. For those who have not seen the site, it also includes many pages of our colourful history. The website can be found at www.themagicalhistorytour.org and recordings include:

Young Docker/Young Alcoholic/Try Again/The Love of AA/The Answer Is in The Rooms/Sobriety in Mexico/Hope/Are You an Alcoholic/AA Came to Me/A Way Out

Section B: The Southdown Legacy by Lucia

Work is now underway to publish the 5th edition of the Southdown Legacy, the Intergroup archive newsletter. If you are interested in participating in this edition, please contact Lucia on: southdownlegacy@outlook.com

The 2022 Darkness into Light project has made a start. It is sponsored by SE Region to celebrate 75 years of AA in the UK. The plan is for all eleven Intergroups in the region to hold a local display, for one month in 2022, to feature AA's work in the community. If you would like to be involved in this, please contact Ellie on: southdown@aadarknessintolight.org.uk

Section C: Telephone Service Liaison Officer & Twelve Step Co-ordinator by Greg & Clare M



I joined the Telephone Team back in October 2019 to help with the introduction of the new telephone helpline. Working with Una (TLO), Julia (12-Step Coordinator) and Alan (ECLO) we have involved the Telephone Responders throughout the whole process and held several consultation and orientation sessions for them. This ensured their buy-in and developed the installation schedule. Despite the emergence and development of the Covid-19 situation in March, we saw no reason to delay the system introduction. In conjunction with BT, our planning and hard work paid off with a seamless transition to the new system with no problems! Una and Julia deserve a huge vote of thanks for their contribution to this project and their service to Southdown Intergroup for running and maintaining our Telephone Service over the years, despite the constant resourcing challenges. Una and Julia have now rotated out of their respective positions but continue to do service as Telephone Responders, an example to us all. I was elected to the position of TLO on 8 March and I have recruited Clare M who has agreed to be our new 12-Step Coordinator.

In conjunction with the developing situation of online meetings, attention focused on the Newcomer and the Telephone Team has come up with an innovative way of using our 12-Step process to introduce Newcomers into specially organised Zoom meetings with just two or three AAs. This has the effect of gaining their trust and confidence before bringing them into a full online meeting which can be somewhat intimidating initially. We are not bypassing the 12-Step process – the initial phone call from a Telephone Responder to find a 12-Stepper who will then talk to a Newcomer is still being made as usual.

In the 4 months since the start of lockdown, we have been busy. The 12-step list is currently being formatted into a secure database which will be either available to use in soft (electronic) or hard (paper) format. The new database will allow responders to find suitable 12 step volunteers by using various filters like Sex, specific meeting, geographical area, and 12 stepper availability to be contacted.

To support this work, we have asked all the G.S.R's (Group Service Representatives) to contact the 12 step volunteers listed in their group and confirm they still want to be on the 12-step list. They are also gathering individual e-mail addresses so we will be able to contact 12 step volunteers directly in the future rather than placing the burden on the G.S.R's. Once this is completed, we shall be rolling this out and conducting training on its use with every responder.

We will be also contacting each 12-step volunteer to confirm if they are happy to visit a hospital, either St Richard's Chichester or Queen Alexandra Hospital Portsmouth or both. The willingness to visit a hospital will then be further filter in the search criteria.

Telephone Service

Any vacancies that have arisen have been quickly filled again and we have a full complement of responders at present. Virtual meetings and ensuring that they are fully supported in their attendance of these.

We continue to be especially mindful of the newcomer with regards to the use of these.



The telephone service also currently acting as a hub to existing members to confirm virtual meeting details.

Even though the BT Cloud software offers excellent reporting facilities no definite trends have been identified yet.

Greg B - telephones.southdown@aamail.org

Clare M - 12step.southdown@aamail.org

Section D: HLO Report by Danny

- Due to current situation with COVID19 all upcoming meetings/presentations with local MP, Hospitals and AA conferences etc. have been cancelled/rescheduled
- Hospitals have received (updated/ongoing) relevant information for online AA meetings.
- Hospitals receive newcomer's patient packs when needed.
- **IOW Hospital St Marys** - Open communication from GSR Anne E re 12 steppers is consistently ongoing. Chaplaincy department is just getting up and running again so hopefully will hear something soon regarding returning to volunteer for 12-stepping.
- **QA Portsmouth** – Difficulties re flowing communications with Alcohol team is ongoing,
- **St Richards Hospital Chichester** - Communications/learnings re Alcohol teams in understanding the importance of it being the potential Alcoholic reaching out for help (making first contact to 12 step responders) is ongoing and improving. Forthcoming and open to 12-step helpline way of working and are eager for AA to come back and present to professionals.
- **Portsmouth Chemists - Doctors surgeries and public toilets** are continuously updated and stocked with appropriate AA information leaflets (ongoing)
- Have been involved in the speedy set up of online AA meetings and supported in guiding these in adhering to our traditions.
- Have been involved in helping our Intergroup in supporting our GSRs in these unprecedented times.

Please see below a "Keep it simple" ABC guide for professionals that has been sent to QA, St Richards Hospital and St Mary's IOW when helping the potential alcoholic in our current circumstances.

A.B.C. Guide – Hospital Covid-19

A – Access to newcomer packs and other relevant info online which is free to read. A shortcut to this page is: <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/aboutAA/newcomers/starter-pack>



B – Legal AA Helpline 023 9258 0776

C – Direct message to a recovering Alcoholic Anonymously – shortcut to this link is:

<https://www.alcoholicsanonymous.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 currently in the process of being printed on the back of our wallet sized “Do you have a drinking problem?” AA cards. These are to be carried and referred to by health professionals and passed to potential Alcoholics in a simple and anonymous way.

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 E: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS by Alan H

- Working with others in the Telephone Team to implement the new Helpline including consulting with, briefing the Responders and writing and disseminating new documentation. Liaising with BT and bringing the new service online on 30 March 2020. Helping to recruit new Responders and 12-Step Co-ordinator. Assisting in the transition of roles from TLO and 12-Step Co-ordinator and the moving of documentation and procedures online. Keeping the whole team up to date on developments with telephone matters and online meetings.
- I have been working with our TLO (Greg) and 12th Step Co-ordinator (Clare M) on ratifying the existing 12th Step list and developing a new process to manage the list for the future.
- Keeping the Southdown website up to date with meeting closures as they happened. An enormous and at times hourly task spread over several weeks!
- Researching various online conferencing tools and advising Intergroup members on the use of Zoom and Skype. Writing and publishing general online meeting user guidelines and technical hints and tips for Zoom. Keeping Zoom hosts up to date on developments. Creating a section on the Southdown website to contain a list of all internet-based meetings in our area. Providing regular and frequent reports to Intergroup Steering Committee and GSRs. Out of 66 Groups, we currently have 34 online that I have been advised of. Again, another massive task.
- Working with hosts to assist them in setting up online meetings and individuals to assist in joining. Providing general, one-to-one, Zoom and PC training. I have sent out 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 passwords if they don’t have the information to hand.



- Sharing our experience with SE Region ECLOs and using that as a platform to advise GSO how best to manage data on the AA website.
- In conjunction with others I've been participating in meetings for newcomers - two or three of us with various lengths of sobriety conducting a Zoom call with the newcomer to help familiarise them with AA and put them at ease for when they join their first group meeting.
- The Southdown website has suffered from several technical problems and I've been working with the Helpdesk to get them resolved. Currently one issue is outstanding, and this is preventing us from uploading and displaying documents from Filestore.

This period has been the busiest of my tenure as ECLO by far! It became apparent by mid-March that due to the Covid-19 situation, coupled with the autonomy of every Group, meeting closures were going to occur rapidly and unpredictably. The 'Urgent Meeting Changes' of the website was constantly being updated. Once closures were underway attention turned to finding substitutes. Some early work by individuals with Skype led to the first online meetings and as a result of that I undertook to study the various teleconferencing platforms available. Zoom turned out to be the favourite and was quickly being adopted across the Intergruop by the time all meetings had stopped. With Zoom growing internationally and exponentially it soon became the target of hackers (Zoom-bombers) and there has been a strong focus on advising groups on how best to protect themselves. Unfortunately, this has inevitably led to meetings becoming somewhat 'exclusive'. Innovative ideas from the Telephone Team have sought to address this issue and solutions are being developed and trialled.

Section F: Criminal Justice by John K

All meetings for the IOW Prisons have been suspended until further notice due to the current pandemic.

Johh K – prisons.southdown@aamail.org

Section G: PUBLIC INFORMATION – by Ellie

The article referenced below was published online on Friday 27th March and was printed in The Portsmouth News on Thursday 2nd April. The aim of the article was the spread the message that A.A. had responded quickly to the current situation and within a week, online meetings had been established.



Some extracts from the article have been included in an extra edition of PI Service News which was published on Wednesday 8th April. PI Service News is a monthly newsletter which gives an update on PI activities taking place throughout the UK. If you would like to be added to the distribution list and receive the newsletter please email aainformation@gsogb.org.uk



Ellie - pi.southdown@aamail.org or call 07899796274

Section H: Report of South East Regional Assembly 187: Mid Covid – By Jim

Update from Southdowns Intergroup - May IG assembly on Zoom only dealt with finance. £5,000 was approved to be paid to region.

Liaison Officer Reports

Archives (Nick) Meeting of Archivists on Zoom in September. AA75 in Leeds publication to be approved by Poswick institute. Darkness into Light.

See www.themagicalhistorytour.org/recordings

Electronic Communications (John) had emergency meetings of ECLOs at end of April in response to the Wuhan Covid closures of meetings. Many discussions of security in relation to Zoom meetings and passwords and Zoom bombing. E12th stepping devised and it is gratifying that there are now newcomers that have found sobriety entirely online.

Further discussions as to how do we go back to physical meetings during de-escalation.

Possibility of Hybrid meetings, with shielding members connecting to a webcam in the meeting.

Further discussions of how groups can take payments in meetings, such as PayPal or for the non-technical sending cheques in post. Concerns over anonymity of electronic payments.

Finance necessary to pay for Zoom and possibly increased rents during de-escalation due to distancing and sterilisation.

Probation (Maureen) Plea for Regional reps to inform Maureen of their IG's probation officer details, she only currently has X3 Probation Los details.

Public Information (Roger) has sent out 55 emails asking for information of IG liaison officers but only received 3 replies. Roger endorses the use of Google ads, but it is expensive and perhaps best to use Google's analytics to discover if it actual works before IGs jump on the bandwagon. House of Commons PI event will be run in November if venue is available.

Share (Jason) Good to see that some Share reps have been distributing copies by hand. Plea for AAs to keep sending in copy during this period.

Southern National Convention (Clare Portsmouth) Cancelled this year due to Wuhan Covid, committee decided not to run an online form. Only a possibility to run convention next year. 75-year convention: At present still going ahead as in 2022. Tickets on sale from aa75.co.uk, they need helpers.

2020 Conference Update (Shirley committee 1) Conference was postponed from April to Oct/Nov, however concerns have been raised that with many people shielding and Covid continuing this will be unsafe for delegates.

Trustee's report (Charles) Charles was ratified by the board as no conference. Finances under constant review because of charitable status, contributions can be made direct to GSO. Huge increase in media requests due to Covid, has caused GSO to form a Media Committee group to unify responses. Safeguarding group has produced updated guidance that awaits approval by conference. At present Atlas room at Portcullis House not available for Parliamentary meeting, decided to delay rather than do online as all about networking. AA national survey delayed due to Covid.



Points raised: lack of transparency of finance by GSO. Groups unhappy with GSO requesting Trad 7 monies to be sent to GSO, disrupts service structure.

Treasurer (Brian) Takings as per 2nd quarter report is £46K down on same period last year, however the expenses have been reduced. After considering likely expenses assembly agreed to pay half the balance to GSO, approximately £18,000. Methodist insurance to be asked whether we can have a reduction in premium as we have been unable to use venues for 3 months.

Chair (Sue) Regional chairs meeting 1st August on Zoom. Sue is available to attend IG assemblies, even online.

JimH Southdown Regional rep.

