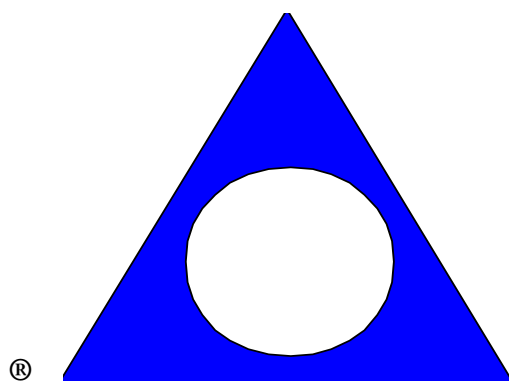


**GUIDELINES**  
for  
**AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS**  
In the  
**UK & Eire**



**Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire**  
**57B Great Suffolk Street**  
**LONDON SE1 0BB**

**Helpline:** 0800 0086 811 10am to 10pm daily  
**General Office:** 020 7593 2070 9am to 5pm weekdays  
**Email:** [enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk)  
**Website:** [www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)

This leaflet is only an introduction to starting and running an Al-Anon Family Group. For details of the structure and policies, please refer to *Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual*.

## **The Purpose of Al-Anon**

The Al-Anon Family Groups consist of relatives and friends of alcoholics who, by sharing their experience, strength and hope, can better solve their common problems. The purpose of Al-Anon is to welcome and give comfort to the families of alcoholics. Whether the alcoholic seeks help or not, there is a great deal that the families can do to help themselves. The only qualification for membership in Al-Anon is that you feel your personal life is, or has been, deeply affected by close contact with a problem drinker.

### **1. Starting a Group**

A Group may be started in one of several ways:

- Any two people whose personal lives are, or have been, deeply affected by close contact with alcoholism in a non-professional capacity, may start an Al-Anon Group.
- Members of an existing Group which has grown large may decide to divide to offer more opportunities to meet.
- Groups within a District may identify a local need for a new meeting and arrange to support it themselves.

*NB: There are special legal requirements, laid out in Policies & Practices Concerning Alateen, which must be fulfilled before starting an Alateen Group. Refer to the General Service Office (GSO) for further information.*

### **2. Registering a Group**

Having decided when and where to meet, it is vital to register the Group with GSO in London. GSO will supply a Registration Form on request. Details of the Group will then be recorded and included on the Index of Groups at GSO. This will ensure that telephone enquirers, newcomers and Al-Anon members can be told about the meeting. It will also enable the Group to be kept fully informed about local and national Al-Anon/Alateen activities.

On registration, some basic literature will be sent free of charge from GSO, a catalogue of Conference Approved Literature (CAL), an order form for further literature and the *Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual*. Remember, once a meeting has been included in the Index of Groups it must always meet, in case a new member or an Al-Anon visitor arrives. (In the event of unforeseen cancellation please inform GSO.)

### **3. Structure of a Group**

The organisation of a Group should be kept simple. Even a small Group, however, needs a Group Representative, a Chairman and/or Secretary. All officers are elected for a fixed term; rotation gives all members the privilege of serving. Keep in mind – ‘our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern’. It is the responsibility of all officers to read and study these

*Guidelines and the Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual*; they should encourage other Group members to do likewise.

### **The Group Representative**

The Group Representative (GR) is a vital link between the Group and the wider Al-Anon structure. The office is usually held for three years.

Responsibilities are:

- a) to attend all meetings of the District and Area Assemblies
- b) to represent the Group at these meetings and to report back to the Group
- c) to keep the Group informed about Al-Anon as a whole
- d) to report to the Group on correspondence from GSO
- e) to provide GSO with their name and address as the Group's Current Mailing Address (CMA) or to provide the name and address of another willing and responsible member
- f) to ensure the Annual Record Check Form is completed each year.

### **The Chairman**

It is preferable that the service of Chairman rotates every three months to a year.

Responsibilities are:

- a) to open the meeting with a moment's silence and then read the Suggested Welcome and/or Preamble
- b) to close the meeting by reading the Suggested Closing and leading the Group in saying the Serenity Prayer
- c) to introduce speakers and/or announce the meeting topic and encourage all present to share
- d) to chair the Group conscience meeting.

In the absence of a Programme Chairman, the Chairman carries out the duties for both offices.

### **The Secretary**

The service of Secretary should rotate, preferably every twelve months, but at a different time from the Treasurer.

Responsibilities are:

- a) to handle Group correspondence
- b) to consult with the Group and then order Conference Approved Literature (CAL) in sufficient quantity to supply the Group's needs
- c) to notify GSO of any changes to the meeting details, including Group telephone contacts
- d) to make announcements at meetings
- e) to keep, if the Group decides, a confidential up-to-date list of members' names and telephone numbers
- f) to act as Treasurer until the Group elects one

- g) to hand over these Guidelines and any other relevant material to the incoming Secretary.

### **The Treasurer**

The service of Treasurer should rotate, preferably every twelve months, but at a different time from the Secretary.

Responsibilities are:

- a) to act as collector, custodian and disbursing officer of funds
  - b) to organise the collection at Group meetings
  - c) to ask another member to help count and record the collection
  - d) to keep a record of all receipts and expenditures
  - e) to submit a financial statement to the Group at regular intervals
  - f) to pay the Group's expenses which may include:
    - i. rent for a meeting place
    - ii. Group Representative's travel costs to District meetings and Area Assemblies
    - iii. travel cost of guest speakers
    - iv. contributions to the District and Area
    - v. refreshments – tea, coffee etc
    - vi. literature for the Group's use
  - g) to contribute to the General Fund at GSO, in order to support the work of Al-Anon in the UK & Eire
  - h) to ensure that only sufficient funds to meet the Group's needs are held.
- Note: separate collections should be made for conventions and similar events.

### **The Programme Chairman**

It is preferable that the service of Programme Chairman rotates on a one,-three- or six-month basis.

Responsibilities are:

- a) to plan meetings and arrange for speakers in good time
- b) to invite speakers either from within the Group or from other Groups
- c) to let members know about future topics and speakers.

### **Further Information**

It is only possible to provide an outline in this leaflet. For further information Groups should consult:

*Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual*  
*Public Information Guidelines*  
*Guidelines for Group Representatives*  
*Policies and Practices Concerning Alateen*  
*Safeguarding Policy*

All Al-Anon literature mentioned in these guidelines and any further information you require can be obtained from GSO. (Address on front of this booklet.)

### **3. Suggested Format for Al-Anon Family Groups Meetings**

The Chairman opens the meeting on time with a moment of silence (to remember why we are there) and welcomes everyone; in particular new members (see suggested Preamble, Welcome and Closing in the *Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual*). The speaker is then introduced and shares his or her own story or speaks on a suggested Al-Anon theme.

When the speaker has finished, each member is encouraged to share, but no pressure should be brought to bear on any member to speak. Here, the role of the Chairman is to guide the meeting.

If all members of the Group are new to Al-Anon, it is suggested that the District Representative be contacted in an endeavour to arrange for more experienced Al-Anon members to visit the Group and give some guidance on how to become established along the right lines. The Group is part of a District and other Groups will be glad to share their experience with a new Group if distance and transport allow this. It would also be helpful if members of the Group could visit other Groups within the District.

#### **Points to Remember**

- Don't let one member monopolise the meeting.
- Discourage constant criticism of the alcoholic.
- Avoid gossip, criticism and discussion of religion.
- **The anonymity of members must be preserved at all times.** Al-Anon meetings must be absolutely confidential and problems arising should never be discussed outside. A member's telephone number must not be passed on to a third party without express permission.
- Members must be allowed to work out their own problems without pressure or persuasion.
- The meeting should conclude with the suggested Closing and the Serenity Prayer.
- No fees are required from Al-Anon members, but it is customary to take a voluntary collection at each meeting to cover the Group's expenses and for the support of the work of GSO and Al-Anon in the UK & Eire.
- The time for refreshments can play an extremely important role in the Group, as it gives members an opportunity to share on a one-to-one basis.
- There are various types of meetings; for details see *Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual, Part 1: Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work*.

At all times it is strongly suggested that the Traditions of the Al-Anon Family Groups be borne in mind. Application of the Traditions to Group problems is

discussed in detail in the book, *The Al-Anon Family Groups (Classic Edition)* A2.

Group members are especially urged to read and study the Traditions for the general good of the Group. If problems arise and cannot be resolved at Group level by using the Twelve Traditions, *Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire Service Manual, Part 3: Policy Digest* – or a Group conscience meeting, help can be sought from the District Representative, the Area Delegate or GSO, whose role is to ensure that any problem is directed to those who can best help.

#### 4. Reaching the New Member

To enable other people to find the help they need from Al-Anon it is important for the Group to be involved in Public Information (PI) work. There are many ways of informing people of the existence of the Group.

- Display Al-Anon posters as widely as possible having first obtained permission to do so.
- Consider sending details of the meeting to local newspapers which have ‘helpline’ columns, having first obtained the permission of the venue. It is not desirable to use Group funds for paid advertisements.
- The Group may contact local organisations to whom CAL catalogues and order forms for non-members can be given.
- Local AA Groups may co-operate by announcing that a new Al-Anon Group has been formed, mentioning the time and place of the meeting.

**It is essential that all PI work is carefully planned.** The booklet *Public Information Guidelines, UK 14*, should be studied before doing this. Public Information literature is available for purchase from GSO (See Literature Order Form).

#### 5. Welcoming Newcomers

- Greet them warmly. It is most helpful if new members can be met and made welcome before the meeting.
- Introduce yourself by your first name only – explaining the reason for anonymity.
- Before and after the meeting include them in any conversation.
- Explain the form the meeting takes (see Preamble) and that an opportunity will be available for them to ask questions. Newcomers should not be pressed to speak or to read. Group members should make a point of sharing with them after the meeting.
- At the first meeting give them suitable literature if the Group has decided to provide leaflets for newcomers.
- Suggest they make use of the list of members’ telephone numbers (see *Sponsorship, What It’s All About, UK 44*).
- Tell them about other local Al-Anon meetings.
- Suggest they attend open AA meetings.

- Encourage them to attend at least six meetings. Stress that we understand and look forward to seeing them again.

### **Suggested Al-Anon Welcome**

We welcome you to the ..... Al-Anon Family Group and hope you will find in this fellowship the help and friendship we have been privileged to enjoy.

We who live, or have lived, with the problem of alcoholism understand as perhaps few others can. We, too, were lonely and frustrated, but in Al-Anon we discover that no situation is really hopeless and that it is possible for us to find contentment and even happiness, whether the alcoholic is still drinking or not.

We urge you to try our programme. It has helped many of us to find solutions that lead to serenity. So much depends on our own attitudes and, as we learn to place our problem in its true perspective, we find it loses its power to dominate our thoughts and our lives.

The family situation is bound to improve as we apply the Al-Anon ideas. Without such spiritual help, living with an alcoholic is too much for most of us. Our thinking becomes distorted by trying to force solutions and we become irritable and unreasonable without knowing it.

The Al-Anon programme is based on the Twelve Steps (adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous) which we try, little by little, one day at a time, to apply to our lives along with our Slogans and the Serenity Prayer. The loving interchange of help among members and daily reading of Al-Anon literature thus make us ready to receive the priceless gift of serenity.

Anonymity is an important principle of the Al-Anon programme. Everything that is said here, in the Group meeting and member to member, must be held in confidence. Only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds and hearts, for this is how we help one another in Al-Anon.

### **Suggested Preamble to the Twelve Steps**

The Al-Anon Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength and hope in order to solve their common problems. We believe alcoholism is a family illness and that changed attitudes can aid recovery.

Al-Anon is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organisation or institution: does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. There are no dues for membership. Al-Anon is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions.

Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practising the Twelve Steps, by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics and by giving understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic.



## **Suggested Closing**

In closing, I would like to say that the opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you liked and leave the rest.

The things you heard were spoken in confidence and should be treated as confidential. Keep them within the walls of this room and the confines of your minds.

A few special words to those of you who haven't been with us long: whatever your problems, there are those among us who have had them too. If you try to keep an open mind, you will find help. You will come to realise that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened.

We aren't perfect. The welcome we give you may not show the warmth we have in our hearts for you, but the warmth is there and you will soon start to feel it.

Talk to each other, reason things out with someone else, but let there be no gossip or criticism of one another. Instead, let the understanding, love and peace of the programme grow in you one day at a time.

Will all who care to, join me in the Serenity Prayer to close our meeting?

### **The Serenity Prayer**

**God grant me the Serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change  
Courage to change the things I can  
and Wisdom to know the difference**

### **THE TWELVE STEPS**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

### **THE TWELVE TRADITIONS**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Al-Anon or AA as a whole.
5. Each Al-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics. We do this by practising the Twelve Steps of AA ourselves, by encouraging and understanding our alcoholic relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of alcoholics.
6. Our Family Groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity we should always co-operate with Alcoholics Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Al-Anon Twelfth-Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. The Al-Anon Family Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and TV. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all AA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

### **THE TWELVE CONCEPTS OF SERVICE**

1. The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon Groups.
2. The Al-Anon Family Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to their Conference and its service arms.
3. The Right of Decision makes effective leadership possible.
4. Participation is the key to harmony.
5. The Rights of Appeal and Petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.
6. The Conference acknowledges the primary administrative responsibility of the trustees.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management of the Al-Anon Headquarters to its executive committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service the Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Service responsibility is balanced by carefully defined service authority and double-headed management is avoided.
11. The World Service Office is composed of Selected Committees, executives and staff members.
12. The spiritual foundation for Al-Anon's world services is contained in the General Warranties of the Conference, Article 12 of the Charter.

## **GENERAL WARRANTIES**

In all its proceedings, the UK & Eire Service Conference of Al-Anon shall observe the spirit of the Traditions:

1. that only sufficient operating funds, including an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle;
2. that no Conference member shall be placed in unqualified authority over other members;
3. that all decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by unanimity;
4. that no conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy;
5. that though the Conference serves Al-Anon, it shall never perform any act of government, and that, like the fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups which it serves, it shall always remain democratic in thought and action.