

National Telephone Sub Committee

N.T.S.C. News July, 2017

"Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope."



Welcome to this edition of the Telephone Newsletter. My name is Peter; I am an alcoholic and Trustee for Telephone Service. My own forte around telephone service is 12 stepping. I have done over 100 12step calls during my Sobriety and every one of them was a success because I haven't taken a drink.

My home life circumstances meant that I could not answer the telephone in the house to do AA related work therefore now I am Trustee for the Telephone Service, I have become very much aware of the tremendous amount of work and dedication that goes into running a local and national Telephone Service. I am in awe of the work that you guys do to run our telephone services and look forward to meeting many of you during my time in service as your Trustee.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Newsletter and find it informative and helpful in your service work.

Peter S GSB Trustee (Telephones)

The Worldwide Helpline of AA

I would like to highlight how amazing it is to be part of the Worldwide Fellowship of AA. It also makes me feel humble to relay this story:-

A chap in America had an online chat with a young man who was troubled by his drinking. It transpired that he was from the North of Scotland. The Online Responder "Scottish John" knew a member of the Fellowship who lived in Inverness and called him. This member was visiting London when he took the call, so he telephoned the Inverness Helpline. The duty Responder called a 12-Step Responder (who was working in the middle of a field at the time and ran to his Land Rover for a pen). He made contact with the young man and arranged to take him to a meeting that night.

The amazing journey of a telephone call: America ->London->Inverness->Forres->AA

John M (Highland RTLO)

"I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

Regional Roundup – or Not!

Sadly, the only news from our Regional Telephone Services was from your Editor (Eastern RTLO), where all's going smoothly! Please send us something to include in the October issue!

Someone rings AA. Someone Answers.

A Life Is Saved

It was the phone call that saved my life. My marriage was over – it was a cold, miserable Monday morning in January, and the weather matched my mood.

What could I do? My wife of nearly 25 years had had enough. My drinking had driven her to tell me – in front of our young son at breakfast: “It’s not working any more “.

“Marriage to you is purgatory”, she said. The marriage wasn’t working, I wasn’t working. And my promises to clean up my act weren’t working.

What could I do? Ring AA was the only answer. It was the only trick I hadn’t tried; the only stunt I hadn’t pulled; the only rabbit I hadn’t plucked from the hat.

But that didn’t work either. After I realised the divorce was still on, I drank again – and carried on drinking. I crashed the car, more than four times over the drink-drive limit – three months AFTER my first meeting. That’s how much I wasn’t listening in the rooms of AA. “I’m not as bad as them”, I told myself. And I was right – I wasn’t that bad. I was WORSE.

After 18 months of hell, the compulsion to drink left me. If anyone is new or wavering, I can prove from first-hand experience – if someone with a drinking problem enters AA and continues to drink, it gets worse – and worse.

So at my first four meetings of AA without a drink, the same passage was read out – *Chapter Eleven, A Vision for You*. It told my story – I knew someone, somewhere, was trying to tell me something. Someone, somewhere had been watching over me, all those years.

The woman who answered the phone that morning is still alive, still sober in AA and still well. She kept it simple. I dialled the number, she answered the call. I didn’t know at the time – but it was the phone call that saved my life.

Jeff B (Coventry and Warwickshire)

“I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

Our Statistician Reports – and Challenges!

Call volume has continued to increase when compared with Q2 2016.

In Q2 2017, total calls nationally were 23,124, a 25% increase from Q2 2016. However, this wasn't a uniform trend across the UK. As I mentioned in my last Newsletter report, metropolitan areas e.g. London, Manchester, Glasgow, saw a larger rise in call volume compared with more rural areas e.g. SW Region, Wales and Borders, which saw a slight decline. This has continued.

Calls to the 0845 number continue to decline as expected – Q2 2016 1295 calls compared with Q2 2017 947: a 27% decline.

The percentage of RTNR (Ring Tone No Reply) calls remains at 16% of total calls but it should be noted that around 9% of RTNR calls last less than 10 seconds. The average call length has been 4.8 minutes in Q2, less than last year and the number of calls lasting more than 1 hour (36) is also slightly less. Calls from landlines continue to decrease while calls from mobiles increase, which, as we know, might lead to more calls being routed to the wrong area. There are other factors involved but no-one seems entirely clear as to why a call from Aberdeen can land up in Wales.

(Prize for the longest distance between where call made and where received at the RTLO Meeting in August!)

Jonathan P (NTSC Statistician)

The 12th Step

In 1989 my then sponsor Dan suggested that I go onto the 12th Step List and try to help the suffering alcoholic who called on the telephone line. Back in those days there was only one treatment centre in Bournemouth where I got sober. In the next two years I had on average one 12th Step call every week; it was very active on the telephone service. I was taught very quickly that there should always be two of us going out on a call and that men for men and women for women was the rule.

Dan told me that it was very common to go out to somebody on a Saturday when they were feeling low and depressed and with a promise to come to a meeting on Monday. I would leave them but on Monday very often I would get a call to say they had forgotten that they had booked a dinner party with friends and could not make it to come to a meeting. Funny how a couple of days without a drink can cure one!

In 1991 I got a new sponsor and he was a great example of service. He told me not to be disappointed if my prospect didn't get sober and that I was going on the 12th Step call to keep *myself* sober. One day I got a call from the telephone service about a young fella who needed help. I rang my friend Tony W and we went out together to visit the young fella. We found a

man in desperate need of stopping drinking; he had tried to do something about it himself but had found that he just couldn't stop. Tony and I gave him the full works and true to his word, the young man came to a meeting with us. That was many years ago. Today I still see him doing service at my regular AA group as happy as Larry and a fine specimen of AA in action.

These days it is quite usual for me to go three months or so without getting a 12th Step call, this is probably because many of us go to treatment centres or contact AA via the website. This is particularly true of the younger generation. However, I feel it is vitally important that we still use the tried and tested formula of visiting the suffering alcoholic in his home or in a public place such as a café. This is far better than simply telling him (or her – ed) where the nearest AA meeting is.

I think that in general, experience is the thing of supreme value in this world; the experience of my sponsor was to do 12th Step work and service for AA. Therefore I have always been in service and on the 12th Step List. Today I have about 10 sponsees, most all of them do service in the Fellowship and are prepared to carry out 12th Step work because they have learnt that it keeps them sober, not anybody else, just them.

I have a friend in the Fellowship who we shall call JJ. My friend never had a home group as such but he was a great 12th Stepper. If the telephone went and a call out was required he would always put on his coat and get on with the job. A few years ago he said to me that he hadn't had a call in some while. I asked the local TLO if he was still on the list and was told that as he had not got a home group he had been removed. What a shame that was, to lose an experienced old-timer from the Helpline. Perhaps it is important not just to check home group lists but to ask Responders about whether or not a person on the list who is in doubt is an active 12th Stepper or not. That way we wouldn't lose good people.

In conclusion, if you are new to the Fellowship and want to help the still-suffering alcoholic who is in the place that you were a short time ago, have a word with your sponsor and your group's GSR. Remember the words of Bill Wilson in his story in the Big Book “. . . when all else fails, work with another alcoholic saves the day.”

Peter S GSB Trustee for Telephones

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Out and About Around Our Intergroups

From The Highlands of Scotland to the Home Counties, from Pembrokeshire to Norfolk, and all points in between, the two main concerns of our Telephone Services are the continuing difficulty in finding committed members to fill duty slots on the Helplines and, coming to the forefront for the first time, how to access the details of calls in to their linkline number. Never fear, help (with this second topic) will be at hand at our annual RTLO meeting in just a few weeks!

Ringling Off

This Newsletter has chosen, so it seems, its own theme – 12th Stepping! I hope that you have enjoyed reading the articles as much as I have, and now seems an appropriate time to ask for suggested themes on any aspects of our Telephone Service for future issues. This will, of course, depend on your willingness to write in! We are also planning a possible regular feature around the FAQs from new Responders to their TLOs; some already in hand, but more required.

At the RTLO Meeting, I will be hoping for so many suggestions as to how *you* would like your Newsletter to be that I won't be able to note them all down, so please ask your Intergroup TLOs as well for their ideas.

I wish all our readers a very pleasant summer, whatever your plans are.

Allie F (Editor)

Please note: deadline for contributions to the October issue is September 20th

telephones.sc@aaemail.org

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