

Introduction

How many times have we heard of service commitments struggling to be filled? This is a continued theme at all levels of NA service.

Whatever the reason it does not have to stay like this. The reasoning behind this pamphlet is to dispel the misconceptions about NA service through simple information.

What is service?

Our literature says that our primary purpose in Narcotics Anonymous is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We do this by being of service. Service comes in many forms and can be undertaken by anyone.

Why do service?

This is easy to answer as we only keep what we have by giving it away. Our greatest tool for carrying out our primary purpose is the NA group, and without individuals doing service the NA group would not survive. In our Basic Text it says that 'our survival is directly related to the survival of the group and the fellowship'¹.

We have also found that service is an integral part of personal recovery in NA and allows us to receive the full benefits that this programme has to offer. Again our literature says that 'the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel'².

Forms of service within the group

There are many different forms of service within the group, including 'making coffee, clearing up, setting up for a meeting, opening a door, chairing a meeting and passing out literature'³. Some of these are elected positions and some are not, but they are all equally important. Anyone can get involved, if they choose, from the first day of their recovery.

Service Structure

- Taking a meeting in a prison or hospital
- answering a phone call from a desperate addict
- informing professionals about NA
- editing a magazine for recovering addicts
- designing your local website
- helping a single parent get to a meeting
- helping out at a convention
- helping develop NA literature
- liaising with other NA communities across the globe
- transporting a using addict to their first meeting

All the above activities and more are essential in fulfilling our primary purpose in NA, and yet how do they work? Who runs them? How are they funded and how do they operate?

Groups on their own would not be able to do this without being diverted from carrying the message in their meetings.

Our first concept states:

'To fulfil our fellowships primary purpose the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole'⁴.

UKNA service structure

NA Groups

Group Service Representative (GSR)

Area Service Committee (ASC)

Regional Committee Member (RCM)

Regional Service Committee (RSC)

Regional Delegate (RD)

World Service Conference (WSC)

European Delegates Meeting (RDM)

As it says in "It Works How and Why",
'Our groups work as well as they do because they keep it simple... Yet for all its emphasis on keeping things simple, Tradition Nine is not an excuse for dis-organised service work; instead, it recognizes that our fellowship does require a certain degree of organisation to fulfil its primary purpose. Rather than recommend that NA groups themselves become organized, the Ninth Tradition suggests that groups organize separate board and committees to serve their needs'⁵.

Just as one addict can help another addict through their shared experience, one group of addicts can help another group of addicts. Because of this groups generally come together geographically to form an Area Service Committee (ASC). This connects the group to NA as a whole and forms unity, always remembering that the Group is at the top of the service chain. Because it is unfeasible for each member of each group to attend Area (ASC), a Group Service Representative (GSR) is elected by the groups to regularly attend Area on their behalf. At the local Area a Group can get its literature and be plugged into the needs and requirements of the local area, and also the Area can be plugged into the needs and requirements of the Group.

But how do people find out about NA?

The Area coordinates vital services by creating subcommittees, it carries the NA message through the community, it lets people know that NA exists: doctors, parents, prisoners, police, both addicts and people who regularly come into contact with them. One can always find out about service at the local area.

Just as groups come together to form Areas, Areas come together to form a Region. In the UK Region at the moment there are over twenty Areas, each of which elects a Regional Committee Member (RCM) to represent them at the Regional Service Committee (RSC) meeting. Region in turn has its own subcommittees, and indeed its own representatives, the Regional Delegates (RD's) who carry its conscience through the World Services Conference, which is like an ASC for the World's Regions, and in this Region to the European Delegates Meeting (EDM). It is in this way that each individual addict or Group, if they so choose, is connected to NA as a whole.

Much further detailed information can be found in **"The Guide to Local Services"**.

1 Basic text page 59 4 Concept One from the Twelve Concepts
2 Basic text page 18 5 It Works How and Why page 189
3 Basic text page 55

Personal stories

But ultimately, just like the therapeutic value of one addict helping another, there is no better way to explain the benefits of service than personal experiences of addicts themselves:

- My first service position was tea person. That meant I had to speak to everyone in the meeting to find out how they took their drink. Through this I started to build relationships with other recovering addicts. I started to feel part of the fellowship, I was working with other addicts towards a common good. It gave my recovery more value than if I'd just put money in the pot because I was working for it. Being productive helped my self image. I took on other posts. My favourite was and is secretary of a meeting. I get to be front line with newcomers, help to make them feel welcome. I've learnt how to diffuse situations when people get disruptive or share for too long. This gives me negotiation skills I can take into the world. But most of all service makes me feel I belong in Narcotics Anonymous.
- I will probably never know who put up the helpline poster that got me to my first meeting or who the voice on the end of the helpline belonged to, but I can show my gratitude by doing service that gets the message to more addicts like me.
- My first elected service position was making tea and I took it very seriously. Some nights it was the only reason I did not use.
- By being of service to others it helps me to focus on working the program. It takes me away from my problems by sharing my experience, strength and hope with others, and I learn.
- When I first arrived in NA I didn't feel part of the fellowship, didn't work the program and couldn't stay clean. Simply by stacking chairs or washing up at the end of the meeting I felt more involved. I began to feel like an NA member and not a fly on the wall.

- Service means being able to give back. It makes some sense of my using (as that made no real sense) and, the experiences that I've survived can show a using addict that recovery IS POSSIBLE. I've sponsored and helped others, guided them through the steps: After my relapse the fact that people held service positions meant that meetings still happened on TIME and got me clean again.
- I should do service everyday of my recovery because NA does me the ultimate service of keeping me alive everyday.
- My first experience with NA was when I was in prison and we had a few meetings that were run by prisoners and a couple where H&I came in and chaired for us, carrying a message of hope and a promise of freedom, giving us new messages and fuelling the light that was burning inside of me. I was wrapped in cotton wool and given lots of suggestions to help me stay clean once I was released. I took on all the suggestions, got a sponsor, went to meetings, did service and eventually went to my local H&I subcommittee where I took on a commitment and have continued to work ever since. In grateful fellowship.
- Service is the heart of NA. It is also at the heart of my recovery. NA taught me the healing power of selfless giving. I never knew about that kind of giving: 'we keep what we have by giving it away'. I feel part of something amazing that was there to save my life. I want to make sure it's there for someone else in the future - when they need it. Service makes me feel I have a purpose beyond satisfying my own ambitions and dreams. My dreams are dependant on my continuing abstinence from drugs. For this I am dependant on the fellowship of NA. NA is there because of people who give their time in service to keep the meetings running.

- Service helps me with my college work, gives me reason to keep coming back to meetings and give something back to NA. It has helped me look at myself and overcome fear, prejudices and resentments - inside and outside of NA. Seeing old timers still around gives me hope that NA works, NA needs people to stick around in order to grow or newcomers and old timers won't get any help. Service gives me confidence, assertiveness and makes me feel good - although sometimes the rewards come sooner rather than later! Service in small groups can be difficult but if you ask for help these difficulties can be overcome.

Contact

Contact your local Group and area to find out about vacant service positions. Alternatively try the website on www.ukna.org or the UK helpline.

national helpline
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FREEDOM

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**Narcotics
Anonymous®**

United Kingdom Regional

Service Information Leaflet

*We keep what we
have by giving it away...*

PI - Public Info
NAWS - Narcotics Anonymous World Serv
GSR - Group Service Repr
ASC - Area Service Committee
World Service Conference
NAWS - Narcotics
EDM - E
H&I - Hospital
RUM - Regional Committee
P&C - Parents and Carers
NAWS
RD - Regional Delegate
ASC - Area Service Committee
F&E - Fundraising and Entertainment
EDM - European Delegates Meeting
P&C - Parents and Carers
GSR - Group Service Representative
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