**Sussex ASC Inventory 29/05/21**

**In Attendance:**

*Kat M, James P, Ronnie E-H, Ade F.*

KM welcomed everyone and started the meeting with a moments silence.

James P read the Traditions.

We used the Area Inventory questions from the Guide to Local Services, using the following scoring system:

1 – Not at all

2 – Needs improvement

3 – Adequate

4 – Good

5 – Excellent

1.How well has the area served local groups this year? 4.

Even though there were some concerns regarding possible reduced GSR attendance at Area, we agreed that Area has responded to the lockdown situation really well by making Zoom platforms available to groups and subcommittees. We also agreed that having the ASC online has actually made it more accessible to members from the greater Sussex area, eg Hastings/Chichester/Crawley, as well as saving the Area from having to reimburse travel costs.

• How well does the area communicate with local groups? 4.

We felt that lack of participation was the main cause of any communication problems. We also agreed that all the other social media platforms/groups (eg Facebook, WhatsApp etc) have really helped with communication and getting information out there.

• How well does the area respond to the needs of local groups? 4.

We noted that Area tends to respond very well, eg in assisting groups with funds if their treasury money has been taken, providing cheques for venue security deposits, offering experience and advice in matters such as Public Liability Insurance and providing starter packs for new meetings and so on.

We agreed that the service position that has changed the most due to lockdown was Area Literature. The current Literature person has been sending out or delivering literature – demand has been lower due to meetings only being held virtually. However as meetings return to face-to-face, demand for literature is going to increase. It will therefore not be sustainable or practical to carry on sending literature. We felt that the creation of a monthly Literature Hub would improve accessibility to literature.

• How well is the area managing its donations and area treasury? 5.

We agreed that subcommittees continue to be fully funded and that we also maintain our prudent reserve. We felt it was good that a PayPal account was set up to facilitate donations during lockdown. We also acknowledged that Area has good treasury record-keeping and has accounts going back many years.

• How effectively does the area demonstrate responsibility and accountability? 2.5.

JP had prepared some comments/questions for this section. He cited Concept 6 and suggested that any major financial decisions should be given time for GSRs to take them back and discuss with their groups. He also cited Concepts 7, 9 & 11, in particular reference to the phone box advertising campaign. He felt that the reasons given for going ahead with this campaign were not in line with the concepts, and may even indicate a lack of planning, effort & accountability. He further felt that, given that other Areas are now going ahead with their own phone box posters campaigns, that some form of monitoring should be considered to ensure that NA funds are being used responsibly. He felt that a good way of doing this would be to monitor whether the Helpline receives an increase in calls from the areas where the phone boxes are located. It may be that this is possible via the phone/call handling system. The data extracted could also assist with making similar decisions in the future. He concluded that the case for any major financial decisions should be made in a more systematic way, including an assessment of effectiveness at a later date.

KM responded that the decision re the phone box campaign was voted for by GSRs at Area, and that GSRs are sent by the groups as trusted servants, given the authority by the group to vote on the group’s behalf.

JP still felt that Area has room for improvement in terms of structure when it comes to major decisions, especially those with financial implications.

RE-H felt that it may not even be possible to monitor the effectiveness of such campaigns. But he did agree that the decision was made via a Group Conscience.

• How fully does the area train and support members who serve on the area service committee? 4.

RE-H stated that he has observed members being fully 12-stepped into their roles. JP stated that he felt Area was being run much better of late, and various functions of the Zoom platform (eg raised hands etc) have helped with this. We all agreed that the effectiveness of any meeting depends on the strength and qualities of the committee.

• How well does the area service committee foster an atmosphere of courtesy and mutual respect? 4.

We agreed that this has improved lately, especially in the Zoom format. JP pointed out that since Area voted to change the way meetings give their reports, more time has been available for AoB or other matters to be discussed. AF shared his experience of ASCs in the past which he felt could be disjointed. He was glad to hear of the improvement. We all agreed that the current combination of personalities on the steering committee works well and means that the ASC is better for everyone.

• How completely does the area provide opportunities for communication about committee concerns to the local members and groups? 5.

RE-H felt this was very good. We all agreed that GSRs doing their job effectively is paramount in keeping the channels of communication open. JP pointed out that without participation, there can be no communication, either to or from the groups.

• How well is a sense of unity fostered within the area service body? 4.

AF stated that with the recent improvements, he feels that he would be happy to return to the ASC. JP pointed out that the overall atmosphere is conducive to effective business being carried out. RE-H agreed that our Area has good unity.

• How positively is a sense of unity shown within local groups? 4.

We agreed that the upheaval caused by Covid & the lockdowns makes it harder to assess this – what with meetings having to go on Zoom, some meetings stopping altogether, very few opportunities to meet face-to-face etc. AF mentioned that in the past he has attended or been aware of some meetings that are not run according to the Traditions or are “rogue” in some way – KM agreed that there have always been one or two meetings like this but this only emphasises the need to adhere to the Traditions to prevent the meeting and the fellowship from being brought into disrepute!

• What is the area’s experience with trusted servants? 4.

JP clarified that this includes anyone voted into a service position, and whether they effectively fulfil the responsibilities assigned to them. RE-H felt this should be scored as Good, as when people attend, things get achieved. We agreed that effective minutes are important, and that the consistent attendance of the subcommittees etc means that information is shared effectively.

• How well has the area fostered the willingness of the local fellowship to volunteer for service positions? 5.

We agreed that Service workshops, both in real life in the past, and more recently on Zoom, have been a great way to get information re service out to NA members. RE-H added that the Zoom format has also allowed members from other areas/countries to attend and share their experience. JP felt that the current atmosphere at ASC is much more attractive to members.

• How well does the area practice continuity and rotation? 5.

We discussed how new committee members are 12-stepped into the role. KM explained how she had done this with the new Area Treasurer – a full handover on Zoom followed by delivering all the Treasury paperwork and archive to the new Treasurer, as well as continuing to attend Area to offer support if needed. We confirmed that we have as full committee at present (though some of the vice positions need to be filled). AF agreed that we are doing well in this regard.

• How well does the area function in maintaining a full complement of trusted servants, with no open commitments? 4.

AF pointed out that if nobody puts themselves forward, then positions will remain unfilled… but that this is not Area’s fault as such. We agreed that Area does its best, and other committee members will stand in where necessary.

• How fully does the area create an environment where the conscience of the body guides the decisions and direction of the area? 3.

AF asked about the rules concerning the Area being quorate or not. KM clarified that if there are too few GSRs attending, proposals can still be voted on but any decisions made can be voted on again and potentially overturned in a future, quorate, ASC. Business still needs to done, regardless of quorum. AF continued that he was aware of a recent vote that was taken at an unquorate ASC regarding the allocation of funds…and even if the vote was overturned at a later date, the money would still have been spent. AF felt that important proposals like this should be postponed until the next quorate ASC. KM added that a balance needs to be struck between that and business being done – and that somewhere in the middle of that is a group conscience being taken, whether the meeting is quorate or not. AF suggested that when proposals include the spending of NA funds, then the meeting should be quorate for this to happen. KM suggested that he brings this as a proposal to Area. JP recalled that he had previously raised a question regarding the representation (or lack of) meetings at Area, especially in light of many face-to-face meetings not going onto Zoom, as well as new Zoom meetings being set up that had never existed in physical format. We agreed that the strange circumstances in which we found ourselves when lockdown happened required fast and untried solutions to ensure meetings were still available to addicts. JP added that as the lockdown eases, we may end up with some meetings going back to face-to-face, some staying on Zoom and some even in a hybrid format. We talked about keeping things simple. A meeting is a meeting, no matter the format, and a meeting requires a committee to run it. Of course, the lockdown rules may have necessitated the creation of additional service positions (sharing the reading cards online, track & trace, cleaning the venue etc), but the core service positions remain the same. JP cited Concepts 7 & 9. He stated that all GSRs should be given the opportunity to debate any proposals (as well as the opportunity to respond to any contrary points raised) - and that time should be made available at area for this to happen. He felt that Conscience-Based Decision Making (CBDM) is contrary to Concepts 7 & 9 and did not allow for full discussion to ensure all present had sufficient information to make an informed decision. KM disagreed, pointing out that the benefit of CBDM is that it is a means by which all can be brought round to the prevailing feeling of the group, thereby reducing the need for people to vote against or abstain. KM also pointed out that in CBDM, there is a platform for people to get heard, rather than a simple vote of yay or nay. KM added that at Regional and World level, CBDM is used regularly, and clarified that the early “vote” used in CBDM is better described as a straw poll; as a way of assessing the feeling in the room. Of course, if we do decide to move to CBDM, we would have to vote on this by way of a proposal at Area. JP added that his experience around the voting on the proposed phone box advertising campaign was somewhat negative. He felt that he had been shut down and was not given the opportunity to respond to points/concerns raised. KM clarified the role of the Chair in facilitating the flow of business at Area whilst also ensuring that time constraints are also adhered to. RE-H felt that the Area actually scores as Good in this regard and shared his feelings regarding the vote around the phone box advertising. KM asked JP to clarify what his overall score would be, if his feelings regarding that particular vote were put aside. He agreed a score of 3, but added that as that particular vote did concern a large amount of NA funds, he felt its importance should not be underestimated.

2. How well has the area done this year in making NA’s message more widely known in the larger community? 5.

We acknowledged that we have just run a phone box advertising campaign, which has been adopted by other areas! We agreed that despite the constraints of lockdown, subcommittees have been continuing with their work, eg LSC moving the weekly H&I meeting at the Worthing Lighthouse onto Zoom, as well as continuing to liaise with the prisons etc. PI have done poster campaigns etc. RE-H pointed out how good it is that subcommittees have survived and even thrived despite the constraints of lockdown We agreed that we have done the best we can, given the current circumstances. JP added that the introduction of a means of monitoring the effectiveness of subcommittee work/expenditure could only improve matters. He felt that it could probably be done quite cheaply and easily, given that the Helpline is national and centralised. KM felt that this is something that needs to addressed at a Regional level and suggested that JP brings it to Area as a proposal for the RCM to take to Region. RE-H added that our RCM may well know whether such info could be obtained but he also felt that as carrying the message is our primary purpose, and given that we were in a lockdown situation, that spending the money of the phone box campaign was a good use of funds. He felt that perhaps the time had come to move on from it. AF added that, was the information re the effectiveness of the campaign available, it might be really heartening and encouraging. RE-H concluded that if we act in faith, all will be well.

• How well is the area communicating with those in the community who interact with addicts? 4.

We agreed that we are doing our best within the constraints of the lockdown restrictions. KM added that regional PI have now purchased Microsoft Teams to enable them to make presentations to government and other organisations which don’t use Zoom due to security concerns. RE-H added that NA has been represented at a recovery festival as well. AF felt that LSC/PI has maintained its committee and activities as much as possible.

• How completely does the area respond to the needs of the larger community? 5.

KM raised some questions that had been put forward by an earlier member of the ad-hoc committee. That person wondered whether we are ensuring that people from the BAME & LBGTQ+ communities as well as people with disabilities are well-represented in our meetings. We all agreed that, as it says in the literature, we are only interested in what people want to do about their problem and how we can help. Anyone may join us, regardless of who they are or where they are from. We agreed that there are meetings out there (eg LGBT, In Times of Illness etc) that are there if people feel they need to access them. We also talked about the role of LSC/PI in offering presentations about NA to organisations working in the community. AF agreed that the purpose of NA is to provide meetings, while PI is the means of informing the community about the meetings and what we do.

• How well is the area using human and financial resources to carry NAs message of recovery in an efficient and effective way? 4.

RE-H stated that we have the people and the resources to carry the message. We manage this responsibly and this then enables the subcommittees to do their work effectively. JP pointed out that we could potentially monitor effectiveness better.

• How fully trained and supported are the trusted servants who interact with members of the community? 5.

KM felt this is done well. AF added that those who do this kind of service have usually consulted their sponsor and have a working knowledge of the steps and traditions. We also agreed that it is important to select trusted servants who have the right skill set for this work. RE-H added that there are actually more training opportunities available now via the Zoom platform - on local, national and even international levels.

• How well has the area built cooperative relationships with those in the larger community? 5.

RE-H said we have maintained the contacts in the community, despite the constraints of Covid, including very positive feedback received from the staff at a local prison. We also acknowledged the events Sussex NA attends or participates in every year, eg the presentation to medical students, the stall at Pride etc. RE-H also said that he mentions NA to clients at work too, thereby carrying the message further into the community. JP stated that he mentions NA to his GP and other practice staff whenever he attends.

• How easily can those in the larger community reach an NA member who is in a position to respond to their questions or requests? 5.

We agreed that the improvements in the website have made it easier than ever for professionals to access information about NA and also to send enquiries via email. We acknowledged the work of SAOC in making these improvements. JP further stated that many meetings have newcomer reps to ensure that any newcomers are shown a good welcome.

3. How well has the area cooperated and collaborated with the region and NA World Services this year? Overall, 5.

• How effectively does the area communicate with the region and with NA World Services? 5.

We felt that communication with Region has been excellent of late. We agreed that our RCM presents things in a thorough and timely fashion. Since Region now meets on Zoom, it is easier for RCMs to attend and participate without the need to travel and without the cost to Area for accommodation etc. We felt less able to comment on questions regarding communication with NAWS, as we thought this was more of a question for Region rather than Area.

• How well does the area respond to requests from the region and from NA World Services? How fully does the area share its needs and concerns with the region and NA World Services? 5.

RE-H said communication has been very good, for example Region’s guidance re listing face to face meetings during the various lockdowns. KM added that we also get the opportunity to comment on the proposals in the CAR report etc. We again acknowledged our current RCM’s good work in making this happen. RE-H also mentioned the NA Member Survey that is carried out regularly – the information from which is made available to even government departments to help shape policy.

• How reliably does the area forward funds to the region and/or NA World Services? 4.

KM pointed out that we did actually donate funds directly to NAWS last year, though we usually donate to Region when we have funds available.

• How effectively does the area use resources (such as written materials or experience from other trusted servants) that are available through the region and/or NA World Services? 3.5

We agreed that we don’t get that much stuff directly from NAWS (eg they used to send out the prison magazine Behind the Walls as well as copies of the NA Way but they haven’t done so for quite some time.) However we do access Regional resources eg PI/HI workshops etc. and we do ask for guidance from trusted servants at Region when required.

• How fully has the area formed a cooperative relationship with the region and NA World Services? 4.5

RE-H said that due to our current RCM’s consistent attendance at Area and Region, co-operation is better than ever. JP agreed.

• How well is the area creating a sense of unity with the region and NA World Services? 3.5.

We agreed that this is definitely improving.

• Is there any particular area of service and/or area function that you perceive is outstanding? Please identify:

Subcommittees have been functioning so well. Area has definitely been much more harmonious of late.

\*Is there any particular area of service and/or area function that you perceive would need improvement? Please identify:

Tools for monitoring the effectiveness of money spent.

RE-H led us out with the serenity prayer,

Thanks for letting us be of service.