

ONLINE/ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS FAQs

Q1. Is there such a thing as an online/electronic Convention?

A1. Yes, there are online/electronic Conventions. Any Convention, physical or online/electronic, that wishes to use the Al-Anon name must be associated with an entity that has permission to do so, such as a District, Area or Al-Anon Information Service office. In other words, a Service Arm. Individual Al-Anon members coming together as a convention committee do not constitute a Service Arm. Committees that operate independently of Service Arms may wish to organise a Convention, but they cannot use the Al-Anon name to publicise it.

Q2. Can online/electronic Conventions use the Al-Anon name?

A2. Yes, it can call itself an Al-Anon Convention as long as the Convention is associated and accountable to a Service Arm (see A1 above). This is because registered Service Arms have permission to use the Al-Anon name. By extension, an event hosted by that same Service Arm can use the name.

Q3. Are online/electronic Conventions required to inform or register with the World Service Office (WSO) or the General Service Office (GSO) within their structure?

A3. No. WSO does not register Conventions or short-term events of any kind. WSO and GSO register Groups and Service Arms (i.e., Districts and Areas). If the Convention is associated with a Service Arm, no action is needed. If the event is not associated with a Service Arm, it cannot use the Al-Anon name.

Q4. If an online/electronic Convention is associated with a Service Arm can they create a flyer and advertise using the Al-Anon name?

A4. Yes. We rely on the local members who are part of the Service Structure to take on the responsibility of ensuring the Traditions are being followed. GSO requests that flyers are sent to the office prior to circulation to the fellowship to check for accuracy.

Q5. Are meetings, Conventions and events that take place online/electronically and are associated with a Group/Service Arm advertised on the al-anonuk.org.uk website?

A5. Yes our policy is, that events associated with a registered Service Arm will be considered for publication. They must also fulfil other criteria such as anonymity (i.e., making sure no one's full name is used on the flyer), use of the Al-Anon logo (i.e., no alterations can be made to it), and general adherence to the Traditions. Events not associated with a Service Arm, cannot use the Al-Anon name, and cannot be publicised by WSO, a GSO or any other Service Arm.

Q6. Can Service Arms in the UK & Eire participate in and use the Al-Anon name with online/electronic AA Conventions?

A6. Yes. Tradition Six supports the idea of co-operation with AA. It should be confirmed that these events are associated with AA Service Arms. If not, they would be considered outside entities and Al-Anon would not participate.

Q7. Can online/electronic meetings post Conference Approved Literature (CAL) online.

A7. No. Meetings of any kind are not allowed to post CAL online as it is a violation of WSO's copyright and trademark. Electronic meetings registered with WSO can apply for permission on a yearly basis to use a short excerpt (maximum of one paragraph) from Conference Approved Literature during their online meeting.

Q8. What is defined as a registered online/electronic meeting?

A8. Registration is a process wherein a contact person for a new online/electronic Group completes a WSO form to indicate the name, time, day of week, and format of a new Al-Anon meeting and submits it to WSO. On this form the contact person confirms that the meeting will be open to any Al-Anon member worldwide and will abide by the Twelve Traditions. This results in a record being created in WSO's database, an ID number assigned, and a whole host of other actions to welcome the Group and begin correspondence. It also makes the meeting information available on al-anon.org - the WSO website.

Q9. Can GSOs register online/electronic meetings that are set up within their Structure?

A9. No, technically, there are no 'UK & Eire online/electronic meetings'. All permanent online/electronic meetings must register with WSO. WSO know of no way to determine in what structure the online/electronic meeting exists. Structures are currently defined by geographic boundaries. By their nature, online/electronic meetings are not associated with any single geographic location and because all AI-Anon meetings are open to all members, online/electronic meetings can be (and frequently are) attended by members who live all over the world. There is no equitable way of limiting the number of structures a meeting could register in. Take, for example, a meeting that is registered by a member in the UK, but the treasurer is a member from Germany. The UK member is the contact person for the Group and she wants to register the meeting in the UK so she gets all the current news from her local GSO. The treasurer is from Germany and wants to register the meeting there so that he can get information from his local GSO. Now the same meeting is registered in two Service Structures. When the treasurer rotates out of his position and the new one is from Spain, does the Group deactivate its registration in Germany and register in Spain? What about when the contact person rotates out of her job and it's taken over by someone in the US? You can see that it gets very complicated very quickly. These examples may seem far-fetched, but they are not. Online/electronic meetings really are attended by multi-national collections of people.

Q10. Why can online/electronic meetings only register with WSO

A10. The definition of online/electronic meetings is that they occur globally as well as locally without geographic restrictions. They are not a part of any single structure because the members who attend come from multiple structures (and multiple Areas and multiple Districts). It is not possible to integrate online/electronic meetings into the existing Service Structure, which is based on geography, so WSO takes responsibility for registering and supporting them. This is consistent with long-standing policy. For many years it has been the responsibility of WSO to register and support meetings that are not a part of any other structure. The meetings have a voice at the World Service Conference through the WSO Staff and Board members who interact with meeting contacts. (Think about how this works in a country that is starting its first AI-Anon meeting. There is no organisation in place at all. No service volunteers. No meeting list. Nothing. These Groups register with and are supported by WSO until such time as they establish their own structure. This is the situation with online/electronic meetings.)

Q11. Does WSO inform GSO of any online/electronic meetings from the UK & Eire who register?

A11. No, WSO does not know the geographic location of an online/electronic meeting because, by its nature, it does not have a physical address. Online/electronic meeting information can be found on al-anon.org – the WSO website.

Q12. What service does WSO provide to registered online/electronic meetings?

A12. WSO have a standing online/electronic Meeting Work Group that is a sub-committee of the Board. It consists of WSO Staff and Board members who meet bi-weekly to formulate an ongoing approach to building a relationship with the online/electronic meetings. This has led to the creation of an AI-Anon Family Groups Connects Community for these contacts, managed by a WSO Staff member. WSO Staff also plan and host regular video conference calls with contacts for online and phone meetings (held separately because they have different needs and concerns). WSO interpret policy, make recommendations for new policies, process meeting registrations and changes, process contributions from the online/electronic meetings and publish meeting information on al-anon.org – the WSO website.

Q13. If all online/electronic meetings can only register with WSO can those Groups donate to the UK & Eire General Fund?

A13. No, GSO's financial policy and Tradition Seven would prevent financial contributions being accepted from any Groups not registered in the UK & Eire structure. However, individual members from the UK & Eire who attend online/electronic meetings can make contributions directly to the General Fund.

Q14. Can GSO accept donations from online/electronic meetings that have been set up while the face to face meetings are unavailable due to the pandemic?

A14. Yes, as they are considered temporary and are not registered with WSO. Online/electronic meetings associated with a UK & Eire Group that is registered with GSO are encouraged to support the General Fund.

Q15. Can temporary online/electronic meetings use the Al-Anon name?

A15. Yes, if they are associated with a registered face to face meeting that is unable to take place due to the pandemic.

Q16. If individual Al-Anon members meet online/electronically but are not associated with a specific registered Group, e.g. members drawn from a number of other registered Groups but meeting on a different day or time, can they use the Al-Anon name?

A16. No. Only meetings set up because the registered face to face meeting is unavailable due to the pandemic can use the Al-Anon name.

Q17. How do we let newcomers know about temporary online/electronic meetings?

A17. The Helpline volunteer gives the Group contact details to the caller who will signpost them to a meeting.

Q18. Can members give out information about temporary online/electronic meetings?

A18. Yes, but great care should be taken about where and to whom the information is given. Providing information on social media or online is not advised as Groups have been disrupted by non-members. Additionally, meeting information can go out of date.