**Edinburgh and Midlothian Intergroup – Group Inventory**

28 July 2022

**Present:** Ash (Edinburgh Primary Purpose rep 1), Chloe (Lipstick with the Winners), Grace (Chair, minutes), Mark (Murrayfield Step 11), Jemma (Region Rep), Sarah (Edinburgh Primary Purpose rep 2)

**Apologies:** Jeanette, Richard, Paul

Facilitated by Mags D (Belfast)

Mags welcomed us and thanked us for the opportunity to be here to do service. Mags is a member of Belfast Recover Group and is passionate about the Traditions and our contribution to enabling the still suffering alcoholic to hear the AA message. Mags has experience of group inventories and is of service within the Belfast Area structure. In Belfast there are also challenges in bringing people in to the service structure.

This inventory is to establish what things are like now.

**Questions Considered:**

1. **What is the basic purpose of Edinburgh & Mid Lothian Intergroup?**
* To support groups to do what they can’t do alone and support them in carrying the message and to communicate through the service structure
* To make sure there is unity and consistency across meetings in the area so that members have a wide recovery community
* To act as mediator between groups and Region, to support groups within the area in carrying the message and their group purpose
* To serve the groups, to enable them to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to newcomers, to hold Region accountable, to support work that groups can’t do to reach out to carry the message (e.g. PI)
* Serving and supporting the groups, pulling together and combining collective resources to more effectively reach the still suffering that we can’t do as individual groups
* A two way flow of information – to clear a channel between Region and the group, so that messages are consistent, to benefit from pooled resources, to ensure we have enough people in service to deliver
1. **What more can Edinburgh & Mid Lothian Intergroup do to carry the message?**
* Lack of people who want to be involved in Intergroup, seen as something to observe in the past but this isn’t happening so much now – is that because it’s on zoom and there is less fellowship happening now?
* Helping people to come together to share experiences around common issues e.g. money, helping people to understand the role of Intergroup – what it actually does, seen as being ‘where the experts go’ – to demystify what it is, that it is there to serve
* Innovative ways to combat ignorance/antipathy – people don’t know what they don’t know – few groups are represented at Intergroup, do people know what it is and how groups link to the service structure? How could we combat this?
* How do we attract people into service at this level – have had the benefit of someone explaining the structure, this is important – once you understand the structure this makes it much easier to understand. Demystifying what happens at Intergroup, people might be put off thinking they will have loads of jobs to do, some clarity on roles might help people see it as doable.
* Being clear on that we are all learning – have learnt a lot by doing in Intergroup, not expected to arrive knowing everything and there is room for growth, encourage groups to bring up Intergroup at their meetings, that it’s mentioned so people think about it
* Could we be doing more to carry the AA message outwith the fellowship – approaching professionals in our community, using our website more effectively to share literature and information about what we have to offer
1. **Is our group attracting people from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross-section of our community, including those with accessibility issues**
* No, it’s a small group of people who mostly attend the same meetings, the same people show up. We have a group chat with 25 people few of those come, but it’s usually the same people who come or who send apologies
* No, there isn’t a good cross section
* Agreed, 50+ groups in the area but it’s a small section of those groups who are active
* No there isn’t a good representation, only around 5-10 groups represented, some groups are showing up and doing what AA suggests we do but this is a small proportion, being online makes it more accessible (vs travelling in the evening for an in person meeting)
* Agreed, few groups are represented, of those most are online/hybrid meetings that participate in the structure
1. **Do new members stick with us, or does the turnover seem excessive? What more could we do to retain people?**
* New people do stay but there aren’t many new people, what would help is understanding of the purpose and that people aren’t expected to be experts, having discussions that are meaty and about issues groups care about
* Would help if people realise what Intergroup is and what their role is in it, if people don’t attend for a while then they don’t remember and it fizzles out
* Understanding of traditions helps people stay but many people might not have had that opportunity – could we offer peer support to GSRs who are new?
* We don’t advertise this meeting very well, we could do more to tell people about, there isn’t a reminder about when they are – that might help, we have Intergroup as an agenda on group business meetings and share minutes but don’t get enough information down to group level
* Have had a big turnaround as an Intergroup, some new and stuck, some voted in at AGM and have never returned to meetings. How do we support new GSRs and explain how things work, education on the structure that could then be fed down to groups
1. **Do we emphasis the importance of mentoring? How effectively? How could we do it better?**
* Initially came in on a ‘team’, join a team without committing to a position alone, could do more to bring that back to groups, a way of being gently sponsored in to Intergroup
* Came in through interest but wasn’t ‘sponsored’ in
* Came in as GSR but had support from group members, that was helpful, someone to run over thoughts with and help to understand after meetings, helped with the fear of not knowing, feels very lucky to have had that but aware not all will – could we offer more support
* Rely a lot on support from my group and our focus on traditions, has helped to go for positions
* Are we active in approaching people to take on positions or could we do more?
* Ideally we would have positions filled and new people could be mentored in to new roles when rotation happens, with so many vacant this is difficult, but could be an opportunity to start fresh in those positions and offering additional support
1. **Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of groups and other AAs outside the meeting rooms? Do we use this information in the right way?**
* We use the information to plan and strategise but it’s not identifiable to any group
* Anonymity from group members is preserved because it is filtered through GSR, never any individual disclosure – it’s passed under the umbrella of the group not a specific member
* The groups rarely ask Intergroup anything – there is a misconstrued understanding that are above groups when we aren’t – so they aren’t asking us things, anonymity is preserved because they aren’t doing this nor holding us accountable
* There have been issues raised by groups but those groups haven’t been identified in minutes in the past, this seems to be working well
1. **Is adequate opportunity given to all members attending to speak and participate in all discussions?**
* Agendas are sent in advance with reports so there are opportunities to consider them, people are able to engage in discussion in the way the meeting is run, but overall there is lack of engagement and knowledge – this is the issue, not how things are run
* In the last year we have changed the agenda from a rolling agenda which was less efficient and personally felt less informed in the past so this has been an improvement, are we educating about changes as we go – explaining why they are happening, would this make it less intimidating?
* There is opportunity to participate, the issue is people taking up the opportunity
* You have to be technically able (using and accessing technology) to participate, does this block anyone?
* In home group if it’s been identified there is a gap in knowledge have added in items to share information, this has been helpful, build this in where needed
* There is the opportunity but it can be intimidating – there has been a lot of change, maybe explaining this more to people (plus about the traditions and concepts) would be helpful – we need to explain why the changes are happening, have more patience with how things move
1. **Are Edinburgh & Mid Lothian Intergroup Officers picked with care and consideration on the basis that all service positions within Intergroup carry a great level of responsibility?**
* At the moment it’s mostly about willingness to be of service, we don’t have many people coming forward so there isn’t any ‘competition’ – but what more could we do to support people to understand roles and what that will mean for them
* Have questioned why people are qualified in the past, but balancing this with ‘continuing to be a student’ – aware of what we don’t know and seeking to learn more
* Need to understand what the role is and what the commitment looks like – some of the positions are very time consuming, need to have a ‘spec’ to make an informed decision
* Having information is really important but we do also have the opportunity with a fresh start – we don’t have to do what has always been done
* Finding the balance between encouraging active participants and giving honest job specs
* There is responsibility and in the past willingness has trumped being qualified, there has been a lack of questioning over moving into roles, a lot of learning can be done on the job but there does need to be progress – are we holding people in office accountable in a supportive manner, offering help to stay in positions
1. **Are we doing all we can to provide a safe, accessible, and attractive meeting place?**
* Some groups have specific people to welcome people in, they are service positions, we don’t have that at Intergroup
* Accessibility- yes if you have ability to log in, if this is a barrier to some? I feel safe to say what I need to, especially online, safety doesn’t feel like a problem, we have a passcode. Don’t know if attractive – what’s meant by that
* Agendas and orderly running is well presented, but feels quiet and flat, groups aren’t bringing things to meetings so the agendas are slim, there isn’t the energy and engagement – this may not be attractive to people coming. We have lots of vacancies so a lack of examples for attraction to those positions
* Minute taking, reporting etc done well, it feels safe as a GSR to know that there is a record, things can be checked and you can go back and find things. Feeling flat in meetings a result of a lot of things talked about, this would maybe be resolved by more education and engagement, welcomers might be a good idea and an intro service position
* intergroup has felt flat and rigid historically, in groups where there is ‘blood pumping’ this has been a great changed, this is happening in groups but not in Intergroup – there is a culture of it being seen as about arguing (not the reality). Is this a new opportunity to get new life into it?
* Being online is safe and accessible – wouldn’t be possible to be involved if had to travel
1. **Does our group do it’s fair share towards participating in the purpose of A.A – as it relates to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service?**
* We as Intergoup could create opportunities to share and educate groups and members on the Traditions and Concepts
* Traditions may be better covered at group level
* Is education something that we should be promoting, where there is a lack of understanding, could be built into meetings? People don’t know what they don’t know
1. **What has our group done lately to bring the AA message to the attention of professionals in the community – the physicians, clergy, court officials, educators and other who are often the first to see alcoholics in need of help?**
* We do very little at the moment, PI and other Liaison roles currently vacant and it’s been a struggle in the past to get people to do service in schools talks
* One member did a one off presentation about AA – this wasn’t in an official capacity
1. **How is our group fulfilling it’s responsibility to the Seventh Tradition?**
* We are the biggest contributor to the Region area – over the past year we have done well in contributions, reviewed prudent reserve and this was a great improvement, rolling prudent reserve to accommodate annual costs
* Since the beginning of the pandemic in particular there have been a number of contributions where it’s not been clear if it’s an individual or a group contributing – treasurer has asked about this but not had answers, could be that members are skipping the service structure and we would discourage this
* There is a lack of information about where the money goes, do groups need more information on this? What happens once it goes to Intergroup?

**Other comments/points raised:**

* Do groups realise Intergroup is there to serve them? No, groups don’t seem to have that view, can make them feel they need permission to do things
* Having opportunities for people to speak – a sharing session format where every member is called on to speak (but can pass) is useful and more encouraged to speak