

How to Find an AA Group After Leaving Prison



Why it helps

Leaving prison can be a big change. Joining an AA group can give you:

- A safe place to talk about your experiences
- Support from people who understand recovery
- A sense of structure and community
- Help staying sober and building a new life

You don't have to be "fixed" to start — just willing to show up.

What you'll need

You don't need anything special to attend an AA meeting — just yourself.

But it can help to have:

- A phone or internet access (for finding meetings)
- A postcode or town name (to search for local groups)
- A contact name or number (if given by probation or support workers)

You don't need to pay or register. AA meetings are free and open to anyone who wants to stop drinking.

Ways to find an AA meeting

Option 1: Search Online

Go to the official AA UK website:
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Then:

1. Click “Find a Meeting” at the top of the page.
1. Enter your postcode, town, or county.
1. Choose from face-to-face, online, or telephone meetings.
2. You’ll see meeting times, locations, and contact numbers.

Option 2: Call the AA Helpline

You can phone 0800 9177 650 (free, 24-hour helpline).

Say something like:

“I’ve just come out of prison and I’m looking for an AA meeting near me.”

They’ll tell you where and when meetings are held and can even put you in touch with a local AA volunteer (called a “12-step contact”) who can meet or talk with you before your first meeting.

Option 3: Ask Someone for Help

If you find it hard to look up meetings yourself, ask:

- Your probation officer or key worker
- Staff at your approved premises, hostel, or recovery house
- A drug and alcohol recovery service (like Turning Point, Change Grow Live, or local charities)

They often have contact lists or can help you make the first call.

Types of meetings

AA meetings can be:

- Open – anyone can attend, including supporters or family
- Closed – only for people who want to stop drinking
- Face-to-face – held in community centres, churches, or halls
- Online/Phone – useful if you can't travel or feel nervous at first

You can attend any meeting that feels right for you — you don't need to stick to one group.

What happens at a meeting

- Meetings usually last about an hour
- You'll be welcomed — you don't have to speak if you don't want to
- People share their experiences and support one another
- You might hear about the 12-step programme, sponsorship, and home groups

You'll never be judged — everyone there knows what it's like to struggle with alcohol.

If you're nervous about going

That's completely normal.

You can:

- Bring a friend, support worker, or AA contact
- Start with an online meeting to see what it's like
- Call the AA helpline before you go — they'll talk you through what to expect

If you're in urgent need or relapse

If you feel at risk of drinking again, or unsafe:

- Call AA helpline: 0800 9177 650
- Contact your probation officer or support worker
- If you feel unsafe or unwell, call NHS 111 or 999 in an emergency

Extra support services

Once you're getting PIP:

- NHS Alcohol Support: www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/
- Change Grow Live (CGL): www.changegrowlive.org
- Turning Point: www.turning-point.co.uk
- SMART Recovery UK: www.smartrecovery.org.uk
(Offers group support similar to AA, but with a more structured approach.)

Quick Checklist

Step Task

- 1 Decide you want support to stop drinking
- 2 Go to the AA website or call 0800 9177 650
- 3 Find a local meeting (in person or online)
- 4 Go to your first meeting — you don't have to speak
- 5 Keep going regularly for support

Done

☐☐☐☐☐

Who we are

New Connections is an organisation which provides support for prisoners and ex-offenders with addiction and mental health challenges who are preparing for Parole or release after a substantial period of imprisonment.

New Connections provides support and guidance in prison through individual and group sessions and the agreement of individual recovery plans to give the ex-offender the opportunity to recover from their addiction and change the direction of their life away from drugs and crime.

If you are interested in hearing more about our work, have any questions, or know someone who could benefit from our services, please contact us via our website.



71-75 Shelton Street
Covent Garden
London, WC2H 9JQ

info@newconnections.org.uk

0208 066 6828

newconnections.org.uk

Disclaimer:

The information contained in this publication is for general informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided, New Connections makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability of the content contained herein. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore strictly at your own risk. New Connections reserves the right to make changes or updates to the publication without prior notice. New Connections assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this publication. The information is provided "as is" with no guarantees of completeness, accuracy, or timeliness. In no event shall New Connections be liable for any loss or damage arising out of or in connection with the use of this publication or the information contained herein.