

AFINet: Chair of Trustees report

For consideration at the AGM to be held on Thursday, 14 September 2023.

Who are the Trustees?

Fourteen members have served as Trustees since 2023:

Gallus Bischof (Chair of Trustees; Germany), Richard Velleman (Treasurer; England), Emmi Kauppila (Secretary; Finland), Cassandra Borges Bortolon (Brazil), Rob Campbell (Australia), Eileen Farrar (USA), Candice Groenewald (South Africa), Ruth McGovern (England), Tuuli Pitkänen (Finland), Ed Sipler (Northern Ireland), Joel Tremblay (Canada), Alicia Ventura (USA), Anne Whittaker (Scotland), Zeliha Yaman (Turkey). Since the last AGM in September 2023, Trustees have held four virtual meetings.

Several subgroups of Trustees had additional meetings focusing on various AFINet projects: planning and editing three books, one based on invited contributions, the other two based on contributions from the 2023 and the forthcoming 2024 conferences; forming a research group aiming to promote research on the 5-Step Method; establishing a communication strategy; and planning both the 2024 online conference and the forthcoming 2025 Quebec face-to-face Conference.

Who are AFINet Members?

The last year again has been a successful one in terms of regularly increasing membership which now (as of 18th September 2024) stands at 849 members from 57 countries across all of the world regions, having increased by 165 members since the last AGM. Membership is open to everyone with a bona fide interest in promoting the wellbeing of family members affected by addiction. Our members include (but is not restricted to) researchers, clinicians, policy makers, as well as experts by experience. Membership continues to be free. Networking, opportunities for collaboration, and access to on-line resources are the main benefits of membership.

What is AFINet?

AFINet is officially a 'small charity' (a small NGO) registered in the UK. This gives us some recognised status as an organisation without too much bureaucracy, which is why we have decided to remain in this status until now. Changes might be necessary if expenditures and income keep growing.

AFINet Newsletters

Many thanks are due to Eileen Farrar, who puts together and edits our Newsletters. Planning for the next one is ongoing and it will be published by mid-December 2024. We strongly encourage all AFINet members to send contributions about what's going on in their countries or to provide feedback regarding AFINet's activities. The Newsletters currently are produced twice a year, with the last one being published in July 2024, and the one before that in December 2023; and it has been redesigned into an email clickable format. We are always welcoming input about ongoing AFINet-related work from our members, and we would love to see more contributions from all of you.

The fifth AFINet Conference and further Conferences

In addition to the face-to-face conferences in Newcastle and Rotterdam held in 2018 and 2023, we had two virtual conferences (held on-line instead of face-to-face due to the pandemic) in 2021 and 2022; and this AGM is being held in the middle of the current virtual conference, our 5th one. These virtual conferences have all turned out to be successful and showed increasing numbers of participants and submissions. Given the continued success of online conferences after the pandemic, we are aiming to continue interchanging a virtual and a face-to-face conference, each in alternate years.

Thus for 2025, we are planning another face-to-face conference: it will be held in Quebec, and hosted by Joel Tremblay, with support from Melissa Côté and Audrey Bourassa, on 21-23 May, 2025. The initially planned dates for June 2025 had to be changed by the decision of the Dean of the University of Laval due to a major sporting event. We apologize for the change, but the organizing team had no control over the situation. There will be pre-conference workshops on Wednesday, May 21, and the main conference will take place on May 22 and 23. We anticipate higher attendance from clinicians at the Wednesday workshops compared to a Saturday. We expect around 100 registrations from within the province and slightly more than 100 international registrations.

Keynote Speakers: Professor Jim Orford from England will be the opening speaker, providing an overview of research on addiction and family interventions – past, present, and future; Professor Sharon Dawe from Griffith University, Australia will present on the Parents Under Pressure program and will lead a half-day workshop on May 21; Professor Myriam Laventure from Université de Sherbrooke, Canada will present a program for families where parents are substance users; and there will be a joint presentation (from colleagues from Quebec and Dr Pauline Stewart from New Zealand), focusing on families of First Nation people struggling with drug problems.

AFINet Webinars

Given the huge impact of the Covid pandemic on AFINet, we decided to start a monthly series of Webinars on AFINet-related topics (organised by Richard Velleman), available for everyone in- and outside of AFINet, which started in October 2020. The Webinars have been promoted not only within AFINet, but also through other organisations dealing with topics relevant to AFINet. From January 2023 we decided that these would move to a bi-monthly mode, and the day of the Webinar (which always used to be Tuesday) would be more flexible in order to enable members with commitments on Tuesday afternoons to participate. Hence in the last 12 months, 6 Webinars have been successfully realized and further Webinars are planned on alternate months. The 30th Webinar in the series was presented in July, and Webinars are already scheduled for 27th November 2024 (Francine Ferland and colleagues (Canada) on working with CSOs of people with problematic internet use) and January 22nd 2025 (Tobias Elgan and colleagues (Sweden) on Web-based intervention programs for children of parents with problematic alcohol use) and March 2025 (date tba, Debrielle Jaques (US) on alcohol dependent mothers insensitivity to children's distress and children's blunted emotional reactivity). Further information can be found on the AFINet website [<https://www.afinetwork.info/webinar-series/upcoming-webinars>]. The Webinars are always recorded and made available on the AFINet Website within a few days following each Webinar. AFINet members interested in presenting a Webinar on an AFINet-related topic should contact Richard Velleman (hssrdbv@bath.ac.uk).

AFINet books

We finally were able to obtain funding for open access publication from UKRI and the University of Bath for our edited **International Handbook on Addiction and the Family** (thanks to Richard Velleman for organizing this) and currently are in the process of signing the final contracts (these needed to change due to the move from solely paper to both OA and paper). We hope to see the book published in late 2024 or early 2025.

Two other books are currently planned, one containing contributions from last year's (2023) conference in Rotterdam that will be edited by Candice Groenewald, Emmi Kauppila and Geoffrey Maina; and another with contributions from this year's (2024) conference, which will be edited by Emmi Kauppila (supported by other AFINet members) and is scheduled for early 2026.

My thanks to other Trustees

As Chair of the Trustee group for the last five years, I would like to express my thanks to the other members of the Trustee group, especially to Richard Velleman who organises the webinars and most of this year's conference and who serves as treasurer, to Emmi Kauppila, who serves as secretary and is an essential supporter not only for the technical organisation of all remote AFINet activities (together with Sari Jurvansuu and the Team of the A-clinic foundation – a big “thank you” to them as well) and to Eileen Farrar, who has been supporting AFINet by producing the majority of our communications material (Newsletter, Conference, etc). I would also like to say thank you to Gill Velleman who, although no longer a Trustee, has done a great job in organising logistics behind this conference; and to all other trustees who volunteer to take AFINet forward.

Gallus Bischof, Chair AFINet Trustees September 2024