

Report from East Midlands Regional Trustee (2) January 2019

At the start of yet another new year, 2019, I would like to thank all those of you who are active within your own U3As, as well as in the Networks, for your commitment and hard work over the last year. We all know what a difference U3A makes to people's lives, and without your efforts that would not be possible. Let us look forward to more learning and laughter in our lives in 2019.

Network meetings

I have now visited five out of the seven Networks in the Region and look forward to attending the meetings of Derbyshire and Lincoln soon. I find it fascinating how differently the Networks function whilst providing mutual support for U3As in their area.

- Northamptonshire are planning a workshop for Groups Coordinators and Membership secretaries.
- Nottinghamshire hosted one of the national workshops on 'Communications,' and have just launched a new U3A in Wollaton.
- East Lincs are hoping to host the national workshop on recruitment.

Everywhere I go the main concern seems to be that of recruiting new committee members and group leaders. This does seem to be a good topic for discussion in your Networks as other U3As may have tried something you have not thought about. There is also a useful Advice paper on Recruitment on the national website. From my own experience I also feel that it is a good plan to review how your U3A structures itself to see if it is possible to create 'job shares' or assistants who may not need to be on the committee. It is important that you could honestly convince someone that being on a committee would be something they would enjoy as well as being worthwhile!

Board of Trustees

I attended my second Board meeting in December and was involved in making some difficult decisions to ensure that the Trust remains on a sound financial footing.

- Beacon

Those of you who use Beacon will already know of the changes that are planned. The Trust is fully committed to continuing to support Beacon but some changes need to be made. This useful administrative system, now used by about a quarter of all U3As, was originally devised by a member for use in his own U3A. As its popularity grew the Trust took over the management of it. However, two difficulties arose. The volunteer support group could no longer manage so that professional support was needed, with cost implications. Secondly the system is not constructed in a way that makes significant improvement possible.

The Trust cannot subsidise something used by a small percentage of U3As so the cost is rising to £1 per member. I still feel that this is good value for money as it makes the job of certain committee members, particularly Membership secretaries, so much easier.

Beacon 2 will be developed and will provide an improved facility that U3As will be able to transfer to with ease.

- Finance

The financial advice on the website has been updated. All the Advice is slowly being revised and the section made easier to use. Do remember that the latest advice should be accessed from the website. If you have specific queries about insurance or finance please direct them to the TAT office, rather than me!

Development sub committee

- The committee will be responsible for that part of the Development plan to do with growth, but a specific working party is being established, to develop ideas and plans for this.
- The Start-up document for new U3As is being revised and will be out later in the year.
- The committee is looking at the idea of 'Social prescription' and how to inform the medical profession about the benefits of U3A.

General information!

Get Creative Festival

could be involved in.

<https://getcreativeuk.com/>

Please have a look at this, as it sounds the sort of event that U3As

Get Creative Festival shines a light on all the great cultural activity that takes place right across the UK on a regular basis and encourages people to try their hand at something new and creative. This huge national celebration of creativity aims to give everyone the chance to get actively involved in a creative event in their local area.

*From **Saturday 11th – Sunday 19th May 2019** hundreds of organisations and community groups will be putting on events to help you get creative – and they're free or have just a small fee to cover costs. We had over 1,400 events across the UK during our 2018 festival and we're excited about growing the numbers in 2019 to celebrate and showcase creativity in every community.*

Support please!

Lastly, but not least, I would very much like to create a **working group to look at planning a Regional event in the spring of 2020**. If one person from each of the Network areas could help with this, I would be very – in fact enormously! – grateful. Though a Conference is a fairly obvious event, I have also been inspired by the account of the Wales U3A Coastline project, which is reported in Sources Online. Do have a look. There are some fascinating articles available.

Please let me know if you would like to help me to organise an event. At the moment I do not have the contact details of the Trust volunteers, so if you know of anyone who would not otherwise receive this report, and who may enjoy being involved, please do pass it on.

Thanks again and I look forward to seeing you again in 2019!

Jean Hogg

East Midlands Regional Trustee

jean.hogg@u3a.org.uk