

## East Midlands Annual Report 2013-2014

This has been a busy year for the Region which started a planning meeting for the 2014 Conference straight after the 2013 Conference and AGM. Our Derbyshire hosts had found a location so planning started with a visit to the venue. Great Oakley and Alferton U3As had been launched in the summer and autumn saw the Region and the Networks implementing their Development Plans.

Sadly the Caistor launch planned for August in Lincolnshire did not get off the ground at the Launch meeting in October as nobody was prepared to sign up for the Steering Committee. However, the autumn launches at Rainworth and Cotgrave in Nottinghamshire and at Dronfield in Derbyshire were all successful and the new U3As are doing well. So we added 5 new U3As to the Region during 2013 and 4 more are being launched in summer 2014.

After months of planning, 5 U3As in the Gedling Borough of Nottingham held a very successful Open day in November at the Civic Centre which had been made available free of charge. The theme was Celebrate U3A, designed to raise the profile of U3A in the area. Since then a number of networks have taken part in publicity events promoting a more general awareness of the U3A movement.

January 2014 started on a busy note with invitations for the Regional Trustee to speak at 3 AGMs followed by the first of three Development Team workshops attended by 22 members of the Network Development teams. Each Network planned the start-up phase of a new U3A and an event which would attract a large number of people. By July 2014, four new U3As will have been launched and summer events have been held.

Workshops were run for Group Leaders in Derbyshire, Leicestershire & Rutland and Northamptonshire and follow-on workshops have been planned.

The National Annual Conference and AGM were held from 13-16 September at the EM Conference Centre, University of Nottingham with 284 attending. I led 2 Breakout groups on 'Encouraging a culture of participation', one in the morning and one on the afternoon. These really brought home to me how much people are struggling with the whole concept of getting people to take part, to come forward as volunteers and to become committee members. They also highlighted how some U3As really do not understand a lot of the basics that they should know and understand as committee members. A large number of delegates took photos of the Regional and Network Development plans which formed part of our Regional display. I was also officially elected as your Regional Trustee at the AGM.

Work also started on finding a suitable location for a Regional Summer School planned for July/August 2016. The Brackenhurst campus of Nottingham Trent University has been selected and an initial meeting arranged to brainstorm the event. The Regional Development team met to plan a number of Regional activities including the annual 2014 conference where the theme is Participation: It's all about Taking Part. It will be an extension of the 2013 conference where the Networks were each encouraged to provide short sessions about events which attracted a large number of participants.

Given the need to encourage volunteers to take an active part in the running of their U3As, we hope that the 2014 conference will act as an inspiration. The demand for new U3As is growing so people are needed to join the Development teams to make this possible.

During the year I have visited many U3As and spoken at a number of your monthly meetings. Attending Network meetings enables me to keep up to date with Network activities so that we can make sure that we help committees to run their U3As successfully. At the Regional level, similar planning takes place so that regional and network activities can be dovetailed. There is never a shortage of challenges.