

Regional Trustee report for the 2015 East Midlands AGM

When I looked back over the last year, it was easy to see that the demand for new U3As and support for existing U3As had shown no signs of abating. My third year as your Regional Trustee has been a time of research, planning, consolidating and implementing ideas to enable us fulfil the needs of the Region and their Networks as well as responding to national initiatives. I am very conscious that I am a National as well as a Regional Trustee and need to fulfil both national and regional expectations to the benefit of both.

There were very mixed reviews of last year's Conference which we took into account when planning this year's Conference, including your requests for Breakout groups. I hope you will enjoy it.

Change

Several changes occurred in July and September 2014: the Regional Education and Development Officer stood down at the East Midlands AGM and the Third Age Trust published their three year plan, Going Forward 2014-2017. As Regional Trustee, I had been involved in the development of this plan and had started to think about ways in which we in the East Midlands Region could put some of its proposals into practice. Two members of the RRC agreed to act as Assistants to the Trustee so that we could engage more proactively with the Networks – the geography of the Region means that we need to provide help at local levels where we can.

National standards

As a member of the NEC Development Sub Committee, I have been engaged in helping to develop a set of national standards for the training of Regional Volunteers and Trustees. We had identified the need for national standards to support the ever-growing number of U3As and their members as we knew that Trustees and their Volunteers were extremely stretched. A pilot using volunteers to address this need had not been successful so after much deliberation, a proposal was put to the NEC to increase the size of the National Training team. An advertisement appeared in the June issue of Third Age Matters asking those interested to apply for the new posts.

Communication and keeping up to date

Communication at all levels, and across what some see as boundaries which shouldn't be crossed, is vitally important in what we are trying to achieve. It forms the keystone of all the Development Strategies which have been produced in the last 12 months. It is also something that we are all not very good at so I urge you to share things with people and communicate with them as your Development Strategy documents suggest. It is a misconception that sharing information dilutes and weakens the message. It actually makes everyone stronger.

A very large number of documents are sent as email attachments which individuals download and print. This creates a number of differing versions and leads to inaccuracies and confusion. Using Dropbox, I have created a system to hold regional and network documents centrally which can be accessed, with appropriate permissions, by members of the RRC and the Network Development teams. Because documents are continually synchronised, the most recent version of a document is always available: essential for those involved in starting new U3As and in responding to queries where up to date information is vital. It has also proved useful with papers for Regional meetings where the final documents can be downloaded one week before the meeting. The idea has appealed to some U3As for their Committee papers and we'll help those of you who are interested to take the idea further.

New U3As and Regional Volunteers

Edwalton Gamston & District was launched in September 2014 with 4 planned for Spring 2015: Stapleford, Daventry, Bolsover and Annesley Newstead. The first three were launched successfully but not enough people came to the Annesley Newstead launch to make a U3A viable. You'll be pleased to know that we actually learned a lot from the experience. So the total for the year is 4. The Pre-Launch phase for 3

Regional Trustee report for the 2015 East Midlands AGM

additional new start-ups in the autumn is already under way and some of next year's proposals are already in network development plans.

To make sure the Development teams were all fully prepared for the new launches, additional RVs were trained at national training sessions in late 2014. A refresher workshop was then held for all Regional Volunteers shortly before the start of the new U3A start-up programme in February this year. Regular refresher training each year is envisaged to keep RVs (who are involved in dealing with queries from U3As as well as the development of new ones) up to date. It also helps to build a team spirit with people who are scattered across the Region.

Workshops and projects

A successful regional workshop on Constitutions and Committees was attended by 100 delegates in October 2014. Delegates suggested Treasurers and Groups Co-Ordinators as the topic for the 2015 workshop which will be held in Loughborough and has been advertised. Individual Networks have organised smaller workshops on topics identified by U3As through their network meetings. They have been well attended and successful, with output details circulated to all networks for information. They are planned to continue.

Several Shared Learning Projects have also been undertaken: one on the Grantham Hall Book and one on the effects of ageing on Sleep.

Awareness sessions

A number of U3As have held awareness sessions, open to the public, which is very much in the spirit of the Guiding Principles of the movement. A national awareness campaign is currently underway and many of you will have seen quite large articles in the national press. An additional grant of up to £500, to enable U3As to take stands at local shows, is now available so we hope that some of the Networks will take advantage of stands at county shows in the future with an opportunity to attract a wider audience.

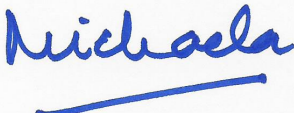
Regional Summer school

The outline programme for the 2016 Summer School has been drawn up and is being advertised at the Regional Conference. Those interested will be asked to register their interest at the Conference so that we get a feel for the number who might attend. After this, details will appear on the Regional website and will be circulated via the County Contacts. Application forms will be available in late Autumn.

Proposal for regional changes

You will all be asked to vote on a Proposal to adopt planned changes in the Region at the AGM. Considerable work has been undertaken across the region to encourage individual U3As in the county networks to be more proactive outside their own U3As. This increases levels of communication and enables us to respond more readily to the needs of those U3As and their networks. It has been very heartening to see greater interest and discussion emerging from Network meetings across the Region over the last 12 months.

I believe that we now have a good framework to support U3As in the Region and we should like to send you a clear message that these changes, once agreed, will be implemented over a "transitional year" that will allow national and local initiatives to be brought into line.



Michaela

Michaela Moody
East Midlands Regional Trustee