



Regional Memory Newsletter Issue 4

28 February 2014

A very Happy, if late, New Year to you all! I hope you are managing to survive the inclement weather. Thank you to the twenty-four of you who responded to my latest request for information. This is much appreciated and demonstrated that there is still a great deal of interest in the Memory Course. However, I am concerned that this is still only 26% of U3As in the East Midlands and there is no way of knowing whether the 74% of you who have not responded simply ignored it or the appropriate people just didn't get the request...

Network Responses

Well done to the Derbyshire Network, where nine of the 11 U3As have responded to date. Six of these have shown interest in the Memory Course but, so far, only one has been able to deliver a Course.

In Leicestershire & Rutland, seventeen out of twenty-one have responded to date. Four are interested in the Memory Course and two have delivered. One reports little or no interest after approaching members and one is anti or seriously concerned about the Course. One other has delivered a quite different course of their own design.

In the Nottinghamshire Network, thirteen out of 24 U3As have responded to date. Six are interested in the Memory Course and three have delivered. One responded that they were anti or seriously concerned about the Course.

In Lincolnshire, ten out of twenty-six U3As have responded to date. Three are interested in the Memory Course and two have delivered; one reports little or no interest after approaching members.

Finally, in the Northamptonshire Network, four out of ten have responded to date. One shows interest in the Memory Course; none has delivered.

Comments

Some Memory Course Contacts responded at length, with details of their interest, progress and opinion. The most common comment is that, where there is interest in the Memory Course, there has been delay in delivering, or an inability to deliver a Course due to members being unsure, unconfident or, simply, unable to commit to

the task (initially, a great deal of time and commitment goes into familiarising oneself with the material and developing delivery strategies). A small minority has commented that the structure of the delivery material, they believe, is unsatisfactory, delaying and/or preventing delivery. One has commented that it is the content of the Course that is of concern and that the Course should, in their opinion, be led by 'experts'.

Despite some initial opposition or concern about being capable of delivering a Memory Course, where Courses have gone ahead, Presenters report unanimous, positive responses from participants to the end-of-Course response sheets: participants enjoy and benefit from the Course, recommend it to friends in U3A and, in some cases, continue to meet as a group to share experiences and keep their memories active and healthy.

In all cases where a first Course has gone ahead, Presenters appear to have delivered subsequent Courses with much increased confidence and belief in their abilities. Plus, it takes far less time to prepare a second Course. With the help of members who have run a Course, I have been able to give prospective Presenters additional information, to allay fears about delivering a Course, or to refer them to other U3As with experience.

Moving forwards

In U3As where several Memory Courses have now been delivered, and the number of members wanting a Course has decreased, some Presenters have offered to be available to help members in other U3As, to set up and present a Course to their membership. In essence, this is a simple solution for those who would like help, at least, to begin with. But, practically, this presents an even bigger hurdle in terms of synchronising time, availability and effort across and/or within Counties – but it is possible with planning.

In U3As where there is still some considerable interest but a Course has not yet been delivered, stumbling blocks still hamper progress. The first is a decision from the Chair or Committee that interested parties can look at the viability of a Course being run in their U3A. Where this has been approved, sometimes the Chair or Committee decide members will not be offered the Course. In some of these cases, members themselves are not consulted. The decision to offer the Course is sometimes based on one or few opinions that the material or the delivery of the Course is unsuitable and/or improper.

A second stumbling block is that despite continued interest, some U3As have not been able to deliver a Course because prospective Presenters are thought not to be appropriate deliverers of the Course. Other obstacles include: funding the Course: hall hire and admin fees as well as Course books amounting to £150-£250 per Course, but this is still only £20 per full Course, per member for all four Sessions; feeling the need to be trained to deliver a Course (some believe training must be

offered or are not confident without); and the logistics of delivery: getting a venue and all taking part being available at the same time.

If individual U3As feel unable, or ill-equipped to deliver a Course to their members, then, in future, it may be possible for members from other U3A to help them. Whereas, I am able to get some expenses, a U3A will need to fund costs of delivery of the Pre-Course Seminar and/or a subsequent Memory Course, should this be wanted. I can also - and, indeed, have - attend U3A committee meetings, if requested, to talk to the Committee in more depth about the Course. Where U3As have spaces on Courses, prospective Presenters in other, local, U3As have been invited to join in, enabling them to cascade the Course in their own U3A.

With it being a Memory Course, members could be forgiven for not thinking that this includes information about dementia, necessarily. However, when memory fails us, it is only a short step to worrying whether memory loss could be the start of something more sinister. Thinking and learning about dementia is a big part of the A & O Memory Course and, with dementia being big news currently, it is important to do what we can to allay members' fears as much as possible.

With the current interest in dementia in mind, U3As facing funding problems, might consider applying for a grant to facilitate a Course. Some U3As have, successfully, used grant money to fund the Course for their members. Other U3As have subsidised the funding, so that a Course could go ahead more cheaply for members.

If offering a Memory Course to your members really isn't possible, you may like to follow the example of one U3A which passed on information, tips and ideas from the Memory Course material through their in-house magazine.

Finally, there is to be another **Regional Memory Course Seminar on Friday 03 October** (more details to follow). Here, we hope to have people, from Each Network, who have successfully presented the Aughton & Ormskirk Memory Course to their members. The day will also be for anyone who is interested in taking more detail and enthusiasm back to their own U3A with the hope of presenting the Course themselves in the future and for looking at where we go with Memory next.

I hope you have found this Newsletter interesting and useful. If you are not the person who can pass on this information to your members, please make sure that they get it – or print it off and hang it on your notice board for all to see!