

## **ANALYSIS OF DARLINGTON U3A'S QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS WINTER 2022/23**

**BACKGROUND:** The Branch had reconvened in the autumn of 2021 but the Committee was experiencing increasing difficulty in achieving effective communication with Members, possibly but not exclusively due to a) fewer members attending the monthly meetings at the King's Head than had previously attended Bond Gate, b) the lack of time for social interaction (coffee break) at the monthly meetings and c) the demise of our Newsletter.

A questionnaire was designed to gather information about Groups, Monthly Meetings and Communications to inform our future development.

The questionnaires were sent out to the 153 people who were members of Darlington u3a at the beginning of December 2022. We received 106 responses giving us a response rate of 69.3%.

### **RESULTS:**

**Groups:** Members were asked  
which of the existing 15 groups they attended currently,  
which of 8 proposed new groups they would be interested in attending,  
whether they would like to suggest additional groups or activities (and whether they would be willing to help organise their suggestions).

#### *Existing Groups (15)*

Five members did not attend any group – two being new members and two citing health reasons. The remaining 101 members reported attending 201 groups, so an average of two groups per member. However there were members who attended only one group whilst two members reported attending five.

- 30 members attended 1 group
- 49 members attended 2 groups
- 14 members attended 3 groups
- 5 members attended 4 groups
- 2 members attended 5 groups

### Proposed New Groups (8)

All eight proposed new groups were met with sufficient enthusiasm to make them potentially viable, especially as there are a further 31% of the membership who did not respond to the questionnaire but may be interested in them too.

Of the eight proposed groups, Art, Darts and JollyFit have all commenced, and Wine Appreciation is scheduled to begin at the end of March 2023. History of Art has received an enthusiastic response, as has Tai Chi for which we are in discussion with a potential instructor.

The highest response was elicited by Walking (32 members were interested in Walking 2-4 miles and a further 8 were interested in Longer Walks). We have identified walk leaders' training, an online course promoted by u3a in conjunction with the Ramblers' Association, to ensure we can plan walks safely and responsibly.

We have two members who have indicated they may be interested in undertaking the course, but clearly it would be preferable to generate a resource of 5 or 6 members who could share walk planning and leading responsibilities so the role did not become too onerous for any one person. More volunteers are needed.

### Suggested Additional Groups

Members suggested 17 further groups and activities:-

Basic computer skills	Crafts	Current affairs
Garden visits	Gardening	Musical Instrument
Photography	Poetry	Pottery
Reading group	Scrabble	Sign language
Singing / Choir	Stately home visits	Theatre
U3a holiday	Whist	

Sheets for each group or activity will be available at the monthly meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March for members to express an initial interest to enable us to assess likely viability. Members who are not present will be asked to express interest following publication of this report.

NB. Of the groups and activities nominated two people said they could organise their group and two more said they were willing to help. We therefore need members to come forward to help us develop new initiatives.



## **INITIAL CONCLUSIONS:**

**Groups** continue to be the cornerstone of our u3a and there is a strong interest in developing new groups and activities. However we need to encourage existing members to help to organise new initiatives, and additionally we need to encourage new members who have the will and expertise to help us run activities.

It is possible that in collating expressions of interest in groups and activities suggested by members we might be able to recruit helpers and organisers if we can offer support (eg finding a venue, publicising the group etc).

**Monthly Meetings** Members' suggestions to improve The Monthly Meeting Experience were constructive and helpful, and are being actively explored by the Committee.

Of the reasons given for not attending, 14 / 22 were due to members' busy schedules, conflicts in commitments and other activities which cannot be mitigated by u3a. Of the remaining eight responses we will contact members to discuss ways in which attendance could be made possible.

**Communications.** We are now able to communicate with over 70% of our members electronically (by email, website or both) which therefore allows us to reduce our printing and postage costs by focussing them on the 30% who need or prefer paper communications. This will also save a considerable amount of Committee members' time.

We are in a position to assist members who have requested help using email, and also to set up a WhatsApp group for those members who have expressed interest.

We have also been provided with some helpful insight into why members do not use the website, and can hope to address these in the near future (if not already addressed).

Report compiled by **Victoria Laing** 17 February 2023

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