

Chair's Report for 2018-19

We are now in our 5th year and firmly established in the local community for our activities with a certain section of the population – the retired and semi-retired. We run a monthly programme of interesting talks, always well attended with nearly 100 members each time, and a busy programme of about 90 varied Interest Groups.

The U3A as an organisation continues to expand and thrive. There are over 1,000 U3A organisations in the UK, with an average of about 500 members each, though some London groups have 1,500 members. While Dulwich & District U3A (D&D U3A) welcomes all new members we quite like keeping our numbers manageable, fluctuating around 700.

D&D U3A is affiliated to the London Region of over 40 U3As and to the South-East Network (SENetwork). As members we are able to attend Events, Study Days and Shared Learning Projects organised by both these bodies as well as Training days for Executive Officers and Convenors. Most recently there has been training on Financial matters and Volunteering.

Both nationally and locally we are keen to emphasise the Volunteering Ethos of the U3A organisation. We regularly repeat the call for volunteers to contribute their time, skills and expertise to this organisation that only thrives due to the time and effort invested by its members.

First amongst these volunteers is the Executive Committee, which meets monthly, and works hard in between times to plan and organise events, monthly meetings and interest groups, finances, membership, new member's teas, communication and publicity, health and welfare. They all carry responsibilities as Trustees of the organisation and collaborate on much of the decision making involved.

Secondly we need to celebrate the energies, commitment and expertise of over 80 of our Interest Group Convenors. It is they who organise our huge range of different groups, on a regular basis, some now for many years. Many of our members also host Interest groups in their homes, adapting their kitchens or living rooms to accommodate other members, often with a degree of disruption.

Thus Volunteering is essential to the way we work and the reason we are able to offer our activities at minimal cost, even reducing our annual subscription this year.

U3A National Office is now drawing attention to the ethos of volunteering in its national and media publicity conversations and demonstrating how U3A members are involved in learning, sharing and enjoying the company of others.

We have worked this year to develop policies and guidance for the Executive Committee to address the health and welfare and rights of our members. This includes ensuring that the public premises we use are accessible to all wherever possible.

One of our continual challenges is of premises, both for our monthly meetings and for larger interest groups to assemble. We are very grateful to the Dulwich Society, with respect to Rosebery Lodge, and to Bell House for letting us use these premises free of charge. We are always looking for local venues to use.

The Interest Group Fair we ran last September brought us lots of new members and raised awareness of our activities amongst members and the local community. We communicate with prospective and existing members through the D&D U3A website and via email. The monthly Newsletter keeps members informed of past and future events, monthly Open Meetings and changes to Interest Groups.

We publish a Programme Booklet which includes details of each Interest Group and contacts, also an Activity Report for the AGM. We continue to think of new ways of doing things and share good practice in our Convenor meetings.

We still have some subject gaps in our programme, for example, psychology, economics, chess, walking football, more languages etc. Do you have a special interest, hobby or pastime? Perhaps you would consider sharing your expertise with others? D&D U3A is a volunteer led organisation. Please do approach any member of the committee with your ideas and offers of help and support.

We have made many good friends and acquaintances in the local neighbourhood through our U3A activities that help us to feel we belong in our busy urban environment. We hope that D&D U3A continues to thrive by attracting new and active members and encouraging members to be more actively involved.

Liz Day

Chair

Dulwich & District U3A