

# East of England Region NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2016

## REGIONAL VOLUNTEERS: WHAT WHY & WHO,

One of the problems with any rapidly growing organisation such as ours is that it is easy to take for granted that all new U3As and our members are aware of everything that has gone before. It is also easy to forget that Committees change and not all the knowledge gained by those departing the scene is instantly absorbed by the newcomers.

This fact hit home for me when recently I was taken to task for referring to 'our RVs' and assuming all in the audience were aware that I was talking about our Regional Volunteers. Some people present had not heard of such beings whilst others were unsure as to their role. With the new year upon us I thought a look back at what our RV team found themselves involved in during 2015 would be a useful reminder for us all.

Over the year Regional Volunteers, singly or in conjunction with others have:

- been involved with the formation of twelve new U3As within the Region
- supported the activities of the county based networks and cluster groups
- worked on the series of Autumn Seminars [report of which elsewhere]
- identified areas of need with regard to future support for U3As and
- worked with the Committees of U3As who have found themselves in need of support and guidance.

Training in the role is provided through the National Office and all of our RVs became involved following a few years serving on the Committee of their own U3A. In other words they have a bit of experience.

Currently our team consists of

Margaret Wainwright	St.Albans
June Welton	Huntingdon
Margaret Jowett	Harlow
Lyn Gray	Sudbury
Maureen Dennis	Broxbourne/Cheshunt
Keith Baker	Ashingdon & Rochford

together with Jennifer Simpson who is the Shared Learning Co-ordinator for the Region

In addition we have Brenda Copping [Potters Bar] and Joyce Woodham [Heybridge] who are actively involved with the team and awaiting training.

Whilst some work very closely with their county Network or Association it has been important that they are all prepared to work across boundaries if the need arises

On a personal note, without this team life would have been very difficult for me over the past three years; the continued growth of the Region makes it important that we do have people around the Region willing to give some time to aiding others who themselves voluntarily contribute to this great movement of ours.

Inevitably for one reason or another people come and go, so there is always room for others to become involved and I would be pleased to hear from anyone who thinks they could be interested in joining the team. I look forward to hearing from some of you

Adrian Breacker  
East of England Region Trustee

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## Autumn Seminars

Such was the overall success of these we found ourselves having to put on an additional event that took us into 2016. In total we had over 90 of our 130plus U3As and in excess of 350 Committee Members who took part in one or other of the five events across the Region.

The positive feedback from the Seminars gave us pointers to what might be included in a similar exercise this Autumn.

Thanks are well deserved for our RV team and special mention should be made of the local U3As who provided the necessary admin support and ensured we were all well fed and watered.

Those people who saw the Seminars as providing information they would want to share with non-attending members of Committees will find copies of all the papers distributed at the events on the East of England U3A website

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## UPCOMING SITUATION VACANT

Early Notification:

In August the current East of England Region Trustee, Adrian Breacker will have completed his three year term of Office representing the Region on the National Executive Committee of the Third Age Trust.

The Constitution does not allow for the re-election of retiring Trustees.

Formal notification of this will be sent to all U3As in the Region early in the summer along with official notice of the national AGM.

Anyone seeking nomination for the position will need to be proposed by their own U3A and seconded by another U3A.

The election will be by a postal vote and the result confirmed at the A.G.M. The successful candidate will have been invited to join the rest of the Trustees at the National Conference that precedes the AGM from 23rd August.

Anyone interested in taking on the role and wishing to know more is welcome to speak with Adrian about what it entails.

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REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016  
ST.IVES CAMBRIDGESHIRE

See the region website and Business Secretary mailings for full details and booking form

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1,000<sup>th</sup> U3A – an event certain to arrive very shortly and quite possibly within the Region

This is a good moment for any existing U3A, county network or cluster of U3As to seek greater awareness of U3A locally.

If you wish to do something remember there is financial help available.

**OPEN DAY**

A maximum of £200 to help towards the cost of organising an open event to increase awareness of what U3a membership offers to third agers in their local community.

*The event must be free to members of the public.*

**EXHIBITION**

A maximum of £500 to help towards the cost of taking a stand/exhibition space at a local or county show

**WORKSHOP/SEMINAR**

A maximum of £500 to assist with the organisation of workshops/seminars on topics relevant to the running and future development of U3As. *Networks or cluster groups of U3As only*

These grants are additional to the Regional budget. To apply, e3mail [info@u3a.org.uk](mailto:info@u3a.org.uk)

If you interested in going for any of these grants, to maximise their value you might find it useful to speak with any of the RV team or to the Regional Trustee about what else might be happening.

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## Paid Tutors Revisited: Recurring concerns *Adrian Breacker*

It is a year since, the then NEC Chairman Barbara Lewis along with her Annual Message to all U3As circulated a paper entitled ***Paid Tutors? Advice to U3A Committees.*** Remembering the time and consideration that went into the production of this advice by the NEC I have been disappointed at some of the comments that have come my way on the question of payment. Some of these clearly show that there are U3A Committees who whilst sanctioning paid tutors within their activities programme have not fully considered, or not understood the effect upon their U3A of that part of the paper which is titled ***Practical Advice – Potential Problems Concerning Paid Tutors.*** [A copy of the full paper can be found on our East of England website.]

A current 'fact of life' is that the Charity Commission and HMRC are becoming more interested in the activities of groups such as ours. A good question for a U3A committee to answer would be, 'Is your U3A Charity Commission legal, or are you collectively taking personal responsibility for all its activities?'. You could add, are sure HMRC won't regard you as an employer with all that such status will require of you.

The following are just a few of the personal thoughts that have come to mind over the year in response to some of the specific comments people have made.

The mention of payment in early documents by Peter Laslett [one of our trio of founders] relate to the requirement of some local authorities for one of their employees to be present when U3As [and any other organisation] were using sports halls and the like for badminton etc. The costs to the Authority of the person was included in the hire fee. It was not planned that they be paid by U3As to instruct/teach.

We do not have a National Curriculum. There is no requirement to meet every demand members may make for activity groups. If there are no members singly or together, willing to organise an activity, it does not have to run.

I've been told 'the Aussies pay all their group leaders/tutors', [I don't know if that is true and in this context it is not important], or that such-and-such a U3A pay for x, y or z. Do we really have to follow? Can we not think for ourselves and take pride and believe in what we are doing: it is us for us.

If individuals looking to start up an activity, or existing groups want to employ a tutor, conductor or pianist, why can't they do it outside of the U3A, and take responsibility themselves for the arrangements. By providing a paid tutor we are denying members of the opportunity to experience the learning we all go through when taking responsibility for organising our own activities. Think empowerment and there is no reason why a U3A Committee can't help in the process without taking responsibility for the eventual outcome.

Finally I do find it ironic that some of those who employ tutors are keen to talk about U3A needing to move with the times and the likes of us who do not favour paid tutors etc. as some kind of reactionary dinosaurs. The start of U3A 30 some years ago was a breath of fresh air, building upon the then interest of Government and Local Authorities had in encouraging communities, groups and individuals to take responsibility for areas of their lives that had previously been left to the professionals. 'Capacity Building' was a handy bit of jargon.

Those of us who want to see us dilute the Principles of this great educational movement of ours in the belief that to do so enhances our U3As are the real reactionaries. Unwittingly [hopefully unwittingly!!] they would lead us back to a time when we were dependant on others for things we are quite capable of dealing with for ourselves.

Adrian Breacker  
East of England Region Trustee

#### Regional Trustee Contact

Adrian Breacker    Tel: [Mobile] 07587 157446 [Home] 01480 385424  
Email: [adrian.breacker@ntlworld.com](mailto:adrian.breacker@ntlworld.com)

