

Update November 2021

Following the success of our October meeting and AGM, attended by almost 70 people, we will be holding meetings in both November and December.

The next meeting is on **Friday 12th November, 10.00am at Holmfirth Methodist Church**. The speaker will be Jeff Jacklin. Jeff will speak on **'Life in the NHS - It only hurts when I laugh.'**

Jeff is a retired IT Director having served 30 years in a number of NHS hospitals up and down the country. His talk covers the formation of the NHS and looks at the development of healthcare over the last 70 years and includes clips from Pathe News as well as comedy sketches.

We will start with an opportunity for you to chat informally over coffee with other members. Members of the committee will be present to answer any queries you have. All members are welcome and new members can join on the day or try out a couple of meetings before joining.

The December meeting will be on **Friday 10th December**. We will share more details soon.

Our Committee

There were 66 members who endorsed nominations for as officers and committee members in advance of the Annual General Meeting. That was endorsed unanimously at the meeting, with 42 people present who hadn't voted in advance. Thanks to all those who took part in the ballot. We welcome Keith Wilberforce as a new committee member and welcome back Ian McCulloch. Chairman David Barnett reminded us all that anyone is welcome to come along to a committee meeting to see how things work. We meet on the last Friday in the month at 10.00am.

Officers have defined roles, but committee members also take on specified tasks. One role we discussed at our last meeting was that of almoner. Barry Dale, our vice-chairman has undertaken this role for a number of years. Through our committee members and group coordinators we do try and offer support where we can to those suffering from illness or bereavement. Do let us know if you are aware of any members who might appreciate a friendly call.

Groups update

The majority of our groups are now back in action, either on Zoom or meeting face to face. While a number are fully subscribed there are some who would warmly welcome more members:

Indoor Board Games – 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month from 2.00 – 4.00pm.

Folk Dancing – 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month from noon – 1.00pm.

Advanced Spanish – Wednesdays from 10.00 – 11.00.am.

Please note that, because of the level the group has now reached, you would need to have at least GCSE level Spanish in order to join.

Mosaics & Messy Crafts – Alternate Mondays from 1.30 – 3.30pm.

Cycling – Alternate Tuesdays – all types of bike welcome

Bridge – Tuesdays and Wednesdays – beginners and experienced players welcome

Badminton – Mondays 2.00 – 3.00pm

Reading Group 1 – First Wednesday of each month

Gentle Movement – 2.30pm each Tuesday

An open letter to all u3a members from Chair of the Third Age Trust, Liz Thackray.

The past 18 months have been difficult for all of us as we have found ourselves living lives in ways we never expected. None of us could have foreseen a worldwide pandemic, lockdowns, and all the restrictions on our way of living. Although we are now moving towards a time when it is likely we need to learn to live with Covid, many of us are still nervous about returning to what was our normal way of life, while others cannot wait to meet up again. Whether we like it or not we have all been affected by the changes in our lifestyle and expectations over the past months. This is irrespective of whether or not we have ourselves suffered a Covid infection or have experienced the suffering – and perhaps death – of close friends or family members. We have all made adaptations in our lifestyle as we have adopted technology or gone out of our way in different ways to ensure we keep in touch with our friends, especially those most vulnerable. As u3a members, we have benefitted enormously from the work undertaken by our local committees, by the support provided by volunteers working directly with the Third Age Trust and the work undertaken by the staff team. Without the enormous amount of voluntary effort by so many people, our movement would not be continuing to thrive. However, unfortunately sometimes surviving through adversity can lead to us not always appreciating properly the support we receive.

As u3a members, we belong to a movement built on principles of mutual aid and self-help. Although we may join the u3a in order to learn a new skill or to enjoy meeting new people, we also join a movement where we are all volunteers with something to contribute – and that is our greatest strength! However, we also recognise that the mantra 'by the members, for the members' is not always sufficient. Changes in legislation over the past 40 years have led to all voluntary organisations needing to develop new procedures in order to stay legal – and never has this been more true than in the past months of pandemic.

The u3a is fortunate in that we have a small group of staff employed to support our movement. However, at times we need to remember that there are fewer than 20 staff members, not all full-time, supporting a movement of well over a thousand u3a's and over 400,000 u3a members. Those staff have suffered the same restrictions and pressures as the rest of us through the past months, but many of them have worked far more than their contracted hours in order to provide us with information, advice and support. Sometimes we all get impatient when we do not receive answers to queries as speedily as we would wish. Sometimes we do not like the advice we receive. Sometimes we want to argue and complain that information or advice is inaccurate. I would urge us all, including me, to remember the staff team are only human.

When we feel like complaining about not receiving a response to a query or difficulty accessing a named member of staff or getting the telephone answered or not being able to find information on the website, we all need to remember we are dealing with human beings who are doing their best under difficult circumstances. At this time, we all need to be even more kind and considerate to those around us than we might have been previously. We are all feeling the challenges of Covid and we need each other even more as we continue to live, laugh and learn together.