

MINUTES	
Meeting Title:	GROUPS COORDINATORS NETWORK (GCNet)MEETING
Date/ Time:	22nd January 2021, 14.00-16.00
Venue:	Online with Zoom

	TOPIC	ACTION BY
1.	<p>Welcome See Appendix 1 for list of Attendees.</p>	
2.	<p>Useful Group Coordinator Documents Rikki thanked everyone for their responses to the survey sent in October.</p> <p><u>Welcome pack</u>: It was generally felt that the Welcome Pack was a Committee responsibility, influenced by the Groups Coordinator (CG), but not produced by the GC alone. Some u3as had a thorough welcome pack; others just a welcome letter. Some sent the welcome pack/letter to prospective members, others immediately on joining.</p> <p><u>Handbook</u>: There was a lot of variety in how Groups Coordinators provide guidance to Group Leaders/Convenors. Some have no printed guidance; others have everything in a handbook.</p> <p>The London Region committee is promoting handover notes to facilitate succession. In addition to a handbook for Convenors, Liz felt that Group Coordinators should have something too.</p>	
3.	<p>Convenor/Leader Handbook A list had been disseminated with potential topics for a Convenor/Leader handbook (see Appendix 2 of these meeting notes.) In Breakout rooms, participants were asked to prioritise which topics from the list were essential and which optional.</p> <p>Feedback from the groups included a number of critical factors affecting what type of information to communicate, when, and how – not always via a printed handbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Topics suggested as early priorities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role description ○ How to start and advertise the group – what does the group want? ○ u3a ‘ethos’ (not top-down) ○ ‘Code of conduct’ sounds too severe – Prefer ‘Members’ Guidelines’ and disseminate to all new members in Welcome Pack ○ Attendance register/importance of being paid-up members/Insurance ○ Risk assessment and accident forms ○ Emergency contact details ○ GDPR ○ Handling money (from tea/coffee and materials to tickets/outings). 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Personal communication:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two-way conversation recommended, especially in the early stages, to understand the needs and aspirations of a group, and to communicate what they need to know and when. ○ Not all groups need the same information – huge variety. ○ In smaller u3as with fewer groups it’s easier for Coordinators to maintain personal communication with several Leaders/Convenors. ○ Some larger u3as with many groups have several Coordinators, each responsible for supporting a small cluster of groups. ○ Regular emails/’phone calls to keep Leaders/Convenors up to date ○ Organise regular informal meetings for Leaders/Convenors enabling them to ask questions, exchange information & ideas, discuss issues, share good practice, and training opportunities. ○ Administration is not popular: consider having 2 Leaders/Convenors – one for admin, and the other for learning activities • <u>Short, simple starter booklet/welcome pack:</u> Alongside personal support & advice, a small, simple booklet (friendly/not formal) can help to convey essential information in the early stages without frightening off potential/new Group Leaders/Convenors – they are difficult to find. This is particularly so in small u3as. Encourage questions. Blanks spaces for notes recommended. • <u>Comprehensive handbook/Website:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Useful for later reference as and when needed. Larger u3as might have more administrative information to convey, but don’t be too formal, and discuss in stages as needed, ○ Print is often preferred but expensive and difficult to keep updated. Information on websites can be more easily/economically shared and updated 	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Interest Group Activities Document/Webpage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directory/prospectus of interest groups to include activities/timetable/venues/contacts etc. As with printed handbook, this can be expensive and difficult to update especially where there are many interest groups. ○ Website easier to keep updated. Indicate which groups which are new/looking for members and which groups are active/dormant. Question: what is meant by ‘active’ (just keeping in touch, or actively pursuing group interests?) ○ Use newsletters/bulletins (printed & digital) to disseminate news and describe the interesting activities of different groups ○ Emails– do members read them? If using Beacon, can follow up members who don’t open their emails ○ Monthly meetings – whether in-person events or on Zoom. Can update members and include talks by groups to generate interest. 	

5. Changes made during Lockdown period you might wish to carry forward in 2021

Technologies such as WhatsApp, Facetime and Zoom have become widespread and popular during lockdown, making it much easier for groups to keep in touch and pursue their activities online, and for committees to meet and provide support online.

Zoom meetings are easy and economical to organise and attend, doing away with the costs and constraints of venue hire and travel time/costs. They are more inclusive of members with mobility or other access difficulties and because members can participate via many different devices, including landline, they are inclusive of members without internet technology. Online meetings will continue even after Lockdown.

Vivek's presentation and subsequent discussions

- Blended/hybrid meetings involve a mix of in-person and online participation. There are potentially several ways to do this and to some extent was already happening before Lockdown e.g. use of online talks/short courses (many sources available) watched and discussed by in-person interest groups.
- The technology still being developed to improve the hybrid activities allowing simultaneous participation in integrated digital/real-life in meetings. More sophisticated cameras, microphones and speakers are required.

Small groups are likely to benefit first from technology such as the 'Zoom for Home' range. The DTEN ME27 monitor has inbuilt cameras, microphones and speakers. It is about the size of a desk-top computer, is light-weight, simple to use, and costs about £500. However, other companies are also developing systems and cheaper devices will become available.

The technology for larger meetings is expensive and complex. Currently, it is mainly available via services offered by commercial organisations in central London venues, and likely to be unaffordable for u3as for a while. However, more venues are gearing up, and Vivek suggests looking for services offered by educational institutes, local councils, and places of worship which cater for large audiences and may be more affordable for u3as.

- New models for u3a
Vivek advised that we are just at the start of this journey but need to start thinking about the impact on u3a activities and different models of how to make it work.

There was some concern that online participation might allow non-local u3a members to participate, which could throw out the dynamics when life returns to normal.

However, while u3a members must be fully-paid up in one u3a but can legitimately become 'associate members' of several u3as in order to participate in activities that interest them.

	<p>Vivek gave examples of members from other u3as travelling long distances to participate in Islington u3a activities, including several members with second homes in different parts of the UK or abroad. Online access has made it easier for them to continue participating, and hybrid meetings would enable this to continue without unduly upsetting the group dynamics.</p> <p>Michaela mentioned the example of the national High Street Project. This has shown that Shared Learning Projects, which have traditionally involved nearby u3as working together, can now involve regional or national collaboration.</p> <p>To prevent non-members from attending events/activities online, it is advisable to request the u3a name and membership number during registration for an online event/activity and to send the meeting link/password via secure email only to those who have registered shortly before the event, asking them not to share the link. To increase security, use unique meeting links for each event in a series.</p> <p>There is not much that can be done about a non-member 'sitting in' online beside a registered member, but it should be emphasised to members that non-members cannot actively participate in u3a activities. This should be a recruitment opportunity.</p> <p>Enabling online participation could 'raise the u3a profile' – hence the idea of the Trust u3a -- all participants must be fully paid-up member. About 50% are fully paid- up members of a local u3a who have taken out associate membership of the Trust u3a.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Risk Assessments/Insurance</p> <p>It appeared that very few (if any) u3as completed Risk Assessment Forms before the pandemic, but as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic this now seemed to be an issue -- How to complete them, who does it, who keeps the forms, where does the ultimate responsibility lie etc. It is important to emphasise that Risk Assessments are not arduous or complicated but as Groups Coordinators, we need to have the full facts in order to explain them in simple and straight forward terms to Group Leaders/Convenors.</p> <p>Jane Bailey, the Third Age Trust Volunteer and Advice Manager, had been invited to this meeting to clarify some of the above questions along with the current requirements for risk assessments and implications for insurance, but was unavailable. In the meantime, copies of all existing risk assessment forms can be found on the national u3a website under Support for u3as\ advice \risk assessments https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/risk-assessments (NB password required to access all Advice)</p> <p>In the current climate of Lockdown, with even outdoor group activities not permitted, the only Risk Assessment needed would be for on line physical activities https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/risk-assessments/risk-assessments/u3a-kms-frm-015-remote-activity-risk-assessment-checklist</p>	

APPENDIX 1

<p>GCNet Steering Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rikki Wallman, GC Net Coordinator (Redbridge) • Messody Adler (Stanmore) • Judith Altshul (Islington) • Daphne Berkovi (Hampstead Garden Suburb) • Diana Pavey (Crouch End) 	<p>LRU3A Committee support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Day, Learning Development Coordinator (Dulwich) • Vivek Nanda, Communications Coordinator (Islington) • Catherine Ware, Talks & Summer School (Merton)
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ATTENDANCE

U3A	Name	Last	Role title	Attended 22.01.21
Abbeywood & Thamesmead	Linda	Husband	<i>Secretary</i>	
Barnet	Johanne	Carstairs	Trainee Groups Coordinator	Y
Barnet	Henry	Cohen	Groups Coordinator	
Beckenham	Anne	Crouch	Groups Coordinator	
Bexley	Cynthia	Allen	Groups Liaison	
Brent				
Bromley	Carole	Blacher	Group Liaison Officer	y
Bromley	Sandy	Boden	Group Liaison Officer	
Bromley	Peter	Browne	Group Liaison Officer	
Bromley	Celia	Thompson	Group Liaison Officer	Y
Bromley	Mary	Garside	Group Liaison Officer	
Crouch End	Diana	Pavey	Groups Coordinator	ApoI
Crouch End	Maria	Streeter	Trainee Groups Coordinator?	
Croydon	Carol	Milgate	Group Co-ordinator	Y
Dagenham	Melody	Cohen	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dagenham	Trudi	Keddie	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dagenham	Marion	Keegan-Wyatt	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	David	Beamish	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	Pam	Cohen	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	Y
Dulwich & District	Susan	Elias	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	Sarah	Howell-Davis	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Ealing	Georgine	Carter	Interest Groups Coordinator	
Enfield	Christine	Burnikell	<i>Chair</i>	
Hackney	Wendy	Powell	Group Coordinator	
Hackney	Henriette	Roelofs	Group Coordinator(Temp)	Y
Hammersmith & Fulham	Neville	Rowden	Groups Coordinator	
Hampstead Garden Suburb	Daphne	Berkovi	Group Co-ordinator/ <i>Events, Speakers, External Relations, Newsletter/Delegate</i>	Y
Haringey	Sheila	Forteau	<i>Former Chair</i>	
Harrow	Rhoda	Luer	Study Group Coordinator	
Havering	Graham	Fenegan	Groups Coordinator	
Hillingdon	Freda	Longhurst	Interest Groups Coordinator	
Hillingdon South	Annette	Kerrison	<i>Delegate</i>	

Groups Coordinators Network Meeting 22nd January 2021: Minutes (Final)

U3A	Name	Last	Role title	Attended 22.01.21
Hounslow	Marion	Vian	Groups Coordinator	Y
Islington	Judith	Altshul	Groups Coordinator	Y
Kenton & District	Peter	Rummer	<i>V. Chair</i> & Interest Groups Coordinator	Y
Kenton & District	Louise	Bennett	<i>V. Chair</i> & Interest Groups Coordinator	Y
Kingston	Shirley	Miller	Groups Coordinator	
Merton	David	Drummond	Groups Coordinator	
Mill Hill	Yvonne	Hay	Groups Coordinator	Y
North London	Henrietta	Cohen	Groups Organiser	Apol
North London	Candiss	Waldram	Standing in for Henrietta	Y
Northwood & District	Anne	Smith	Groups Coordinator/ <i>Delegate</i>	Y
Norwood	Jane	Antos	<i>Chair</i>	Y
Orpington	Janet	Holmes	Groups Coordinator (Shared)	
Orpington	Sue	Howe	Groups Coordinator (Shared)	
Palmers Green & Southgate	Val	Girling	Groups Coordinator	Y
Redbridge & District	Liz	Kite	<i>Chair</i> & Acting Groups Coordinator	Y
Redbridge & District	Rikki	Wallman	Former Groups Coordinator/ LRU3A Mailchimp Adviser	Y
Richmond	Norma	Cook	Groups Coordinator/ <i>Delegate</i>	Y
Sidcup	Sandra	Applegate	Groups Coordinator	Y
Sidcup	Trevor	Ford	Groups Coordinator/ <i>Delegate</i>	
South East London	Susan	Mead	<i>Chair</i> & Groups Coordinator	
Stanmore	Messody	Adler	Groups Coordinator	
Stanmore	Sheila	Dobin	Groups Coordinator	
Sutton	Max	Edward	Groups Coordinator	Y
Tower Hamlets	Leslie	Armstrong	<i>Chair & Delegate</i>	
U3A in London	Amalia	Michaels	<i>V. Chair</i> & Groups Coordinator	Y
Upminster	Courtney	Moita de Deus	<i>chair</i>	
Waltham Forest	Lesley	Searle	Groups Coordinator	Y
Wandsworth	Helen	Long	Groups Coordinator	Y
Wanstead & Woodford	Liz	Wills	Assistant Groups Coordinator	Y
Welling	Pat	Pitney	Groups Coordinator	Y
LRU3A Committee Support				
Dulwich & District	Liz	Day	LRU3A Learning Development	Y
Islington	Vivek	Nanda	LRU3A Communications/ Group Leader Islington	Y
Merton	Catherine	Ware	LRU3A Talks & Summer School Coord'r	Y
GUESTS				
West Pennine Villages	Maggy	Simms	National Shared Learning Project Coordinator/High Street Proj Steering Grp	Y
Woodhall Spa	Michaela	Moody	High Street Proj Steering Grp/Trust Archivist/U3A Science Network Organiser	Y

APPENDIX 2

CONVENOR/LEADER HANDBOOK - DISCUSSION LIST FOR BREAK OUT ROOMS

Priorities for a handbook

- Essential would be immediate/early on
- Optional/would be for a future meeting/session

Role description

When, how, where to start a group

Attendance report

Registration form (with in case of emergency numbers –voluntary)

Risk assessment forms

Group leader/convenors meeting

Accident form

Where to go for help within own u3a

(e.g. other committee members and/or non-committee members)

Where to go for help outside own u3a e.g. subject advisors, other U3As

Advertising the interest group-where, how often

How does it all work?

Costs, tea/coffee/ materials

GDPR

Information about the u3a Nation office resource centre

Insurance

Code of conduct

Discrimination

How to handle members that are no shows consistently

How to manage disagreements with members of your group

Buddy system

Coffee mornings with several new group leaders

Activity group timetable both face to face and zoom

Information on the website