



u3a Recruitment

30 November 2021

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1. What's the problem?
2. General intro and background to recruitment Working Group
3. New members? What new members?
4. *Mobilising your u3a*
5. Small group discussion: what's working for you?



What's the problem?

- Slow down of annual growth in national membership to 1.8% pre-pandemic
- Declining proportion of under 65s in national membership – from 21% (2001) to 7% (2019)
- Long term problems accentuated by pandemic
- Word of mouth promotion not sufficient

u3a Recruitment Working Group

- 14 u3as represented
- 3 Regional Trustee members

Without their efforts.....

60+ Pathfinder u3as

- Recruitment widely advertised
- Commitment to recruitment activity
- Representative of different types of u3a
- 2 u3as in Scotland

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Who are these new
members that we are
trying to recruit?



Recently retired prospective members: Research design

- 500 people aged 55–70 across the UK, retired and non-retired, participated in a quantitative survey
- Twelve participants were recruited for telephone interviews (between the ages of 58–67, pre-retirement, without a degree) to test indicative themes from quantitative research

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- A quarter of respondents had heard of u3a
- 75% of respondents were interested in joining a group to learn or develop a new skill in retirement
- Some respondents were less interested in a group because they wanted to pursue independent learning or didn't feel they needed a new skill
- Respondents approaching retirement generally did not identify with activities marketed at those who are already retired

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- The top reasons people would consider attending an interest group for over 55s were that they want to keep their brain active (75%), like learning new things (74%) and want the opportunity to meet other people (47%)
- Qualitative research showed participants discovered activities through apps with local filters like Meet Up or Next Door. They also looked at local community social media pages and newspapers
- All qualitative respondents most liked the message that u3a can keep your brain active. Some also liked that keeping mentally active can combat dementia
- The majority of qualitative respondents did not yet associate with retirement or old age, and did not like brands like 'Saga'

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Respondents were largely interested in opportunities to keep their brain active, meet new people and have fun

The younger age bracket (60%) were more keen to attend to get *out and about* compared to the older age group (47%)

Respondents were most interested in reading, watching films and listening to music

Most respondents researched information online but also took recommendations from friends

Many respondents saw cost and time commitments as a barrier to attending regular interest groups

Recommendations

1. Focus on messaging around learning new skills – this held most power to attract new participants
2. Don't lead with retirement as a key message to attract younger audiences – prioritise messaging around keeping your brain active through learning new skills, staying healthy, keeping busy and meeting new people
3. Tap into existing apps, local community websites and social media pages – as a way to reach a younger audiences
4. Update the look and feel – people want to join groups with like-minded people and people 'like them'. Promotional imagery needs to reflect younger audiences

Tools in the recruitment toolkit

- *Introduction and guide to the Retention and recruitment toolkit* (introduces the 57 tools in the toolkit WITH LINKS TO EACH TOOL)
- Several guides on using social media, particularly Facebook, writing for the web, advertising on Facebook and Ebay/Next Door and getting and keeping traffic to your webpages and social media
- Guide and video about *Transforming your website into your shop window*

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Mobilising your u3a



Possible Issues

- Difficulty of finding Committee members and/or interest group leaders/convenors
- Can't get new interest groups started/ interest groups 'full up'
- Not enough people/energy on your Committee
- Committee exhausted/unconvinced that recruiting new members is necessary
- Members don't understand/ believe in/commit to the u3a ethos

u3a Tools in the Recruitment toolkit

- *Making your committee bigger and better*
- *Building support for recruitment in your Committee*
- *Developing a shared recruitment project with your members*
- *Why we need to recruit more members*
- *Making your u3a offer irresistible – let's talk about interest groups*
- *7 steps to recruiting more interest group convenors*
- *Checklist: Preparing to recruit new members*

Bigger and better committees



General principles

- Sell the benefits

- *Working with others*
- *Developing new skills*
- *Making and deepening friendships.*
- *Achievement*
- *Fun and enjoyment (yes, really!)*

- Don't sell negatives

- Let the light in

- *Observers*
- *Shadows*
- *Apprentices*
- *Articles/endorsements in newsletter*
- *Profiles of committee members*

What is your context?

- Dealing with a crisis
- Medium term strategies
- Longer term strategies

Dealing with a crisis

- Nuclear option
- Challenge to section of membership
- Video (!)
- Interim Chair
- Other.....?

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Medium term

- Personal approaches to individual members
- Developmental opportunities
 - *Shadowing committee roles (Radlett; Waltham Abbey)*
 - *Observers at committee meetings (Eastwood)*
 - *Apprentice or assistant roles (East Suffolk)*
 - *Co-options without a specific role (to begin with) (Beeston)*
 - *Involvement of members in task groups and sub-committees*
 - *Helper group*
- Sharing roles and tasks

Longer term

- Making your committee bigger
- Starting as you mean to carry on
- Responding to new/different ideas
- Nurturing your team and *having some fun*



Finding the toolkit

1. Use the links in the *Introduction and guide to the retention and recruitment toolkit*
2. Look up 'recruitment' in the u3a national website
3. Google 'u3a recruitment'



6 minute break out:

Topic: That's all well and good, but what about.....

- Agree your spokesperson
- 6 Minutes to discuss
- Message about coming back together after 5 mins
- Spokesperson to share with other groups