



CHAIRS' LUNCH

6TH FEBRUARY 2023 10.30am-3.30pm

LIFT Islington, 45 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PW

REPORT – POINTS TO TAKE AWAY

POINTS TO TAKE HOME:

- Try out '1st Renewal' meetings – to develop the volunteering culture; celebrate; social event; draw them into doing more
- Use focus groups to find out what members want (rather than using Committee knows, or surveys)
- Meet your membership; as much as possible; try to remember names & persona details
- Set up 'Teams' (not sub-committees) of volunteers; short term for a specific issue; but develop list of who will do more then
- Can be an 'Outreach' team to provide ideas to the Committee
- Meet 'demands' of the members; listen to what they want
- Share gripes across neighbouring u3as; maybe they can help
- Can use 'associate membership' to join neighbouring u3a to share event attendance; but can also just implement a sharing, open door, policy for eg an Interest Group that needs more members; or a Monthly Talk, or a coffee morning; or event Role sharing
- Try out 'Bite Size' interest groups. Works as a taster. Can then grow in to longer term (using Coordinator/Leader from those wanting to carry on). Can use online material or just members knowledge. Use Vivek or Stuart for inspiration / assistance.
- Membership if using a manual version: ask 'Where did you hear about us' and 'What would you like to get from our u3a' (their aspirations)
- Environment (see separate presentation): can be used as a 'connection' from/to many other groups; should be on their objectives as well (eg Craft groups – 'are we using sustainable materials?' Could we set up a London Wide Shared Learning Projects; or a subject Peer Support Group? Harness the 'London Green City Award' scheme
- Tracking new member activities: Beacon doesn't keep attendance records but can show you membership per 'Group' (Events can be classed as a 'Group'). Or barcard reads can give you Excel files on attendance. Needs work to collate data then what are you going to do with it? Plan ahead. Ask ones not doing much what they want – before they leave
- Non renewers: follow up with 'Why have you left us? (survey or phone calls). Has shown that 2/3rds leave due to circumstances beyond your control (eg moving away, death, new grandparenting duties, illness) but the other 1/3 are things you can do something about (eg need a new book group as others full, such a Coordinator isn't friendly, that group is too cliquy, etc)
- Better management: more data/ information. But what are you going to do with the info? Don't raise expectations then not deliver.
- Buddy scheme: for new members. Help them into contacts, opportunities. Don't wait for them not to renew
- Estimate members life expectancy: target younger ones for staying on & for new ideas, and for volunteering more
- 10 to 1 ratio: generally most u3as have an average ratio of 10 members to each 1 interest group; if you want to attract more members then need more Interest Groups; and as you get more members you get more volunteers (& Interest Group Leaders)
- No right size of u3a. Even in London size various from low hundreds to several thousand per u3a. Nationally tends to be the smaller ones that struggle. Consider 'clustering' small neighbouring u3as to help each other; or amalgamate at Committee level can still have events spread over different areas.

- Try to help members with their IT skills (help coffee morning; contacts for issue support, insist they use email for Newsletter receipt)
- TAM Magazine: some offer this within their membership fee either as included or paid extra (an option within Beacon)
- Use the Community two way. They will want to engage with u3a – invite to events or to Monthly Meetings. They then get to know about you, they can share your publicity, and provide future members (when they stop full time employment)
- Co-chairing works; or even a team for ‘Membership Secretary’, ‘Finance Team’ (covering renewals, member follow up/ contact, Beacon admin), ‘Groups Team’ (covering New Groups Coordinator, overall Groups Coordinator, Beacon updater, Faculty Leads)
- Social events: can have a learning element so all support your Constitutions Object clause. Mental health support is also covered/ allowed by Charity commission
- Campaigning (ie influencing) on local issues is also covered within you Object clause. But only take on issues that your members want (eg lack of public toilets in the Borough). They can be ‘political’ as long as they are not (Party) Political.
- Develop better processes. Helps allow better management but also allows easier handover; succession planning
- Try to overcome ‘old school ideas’ with pressure from: focus groups/ outreach teams/survey data/ anecdotal information from members or Coordinator. Support people with new ideas and strategies
- Communications, communications, communications – many aspects come down to the need for good communications, lots of communication. Stay in touch.
- Say thanks: it needs 3 thanks to match 1 criticism (psychological effect). Hence encourage members to grow from a small task to eg a committee role.
- Not just local: while many members just want local things, or just their one Interest Group. But others do want more (eg London Region Talks programme). For those: sell the benefits, eg National programme of workshops and talks. National events, eg ‘Off The Wall’ programme.
- More members, younger members, expect more info from Social media encourage groups to use FaceBook &/or Whats App (to publish next meeting date etc). Some won’t like it but to attract young new members, they will expect it.
- Keep it fun; vibrant
- Use us: we are here to help. That’s either London Region committee members or each other – other u3as (chairs or other post holders – eg share speaker lists)
- Disseminate remember Chairs are our conduit. Please feed back what we’ve covered today to your Committee & memberships. You can use that as an ‘influencer’. And it’s two way, if you get questions arising and you are not sure of, ask us (LRU3A Executive Committee)
- Come and join us (the LRU3A EC) if you think you can help across the region