

SHARED PRACTICE GUIDE (020) – RECRUITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rev 01-1 draft

1. INTRODUCTION

Shared practice guides (SPG) are a vehicle to share knowledge between the u3as in the London area. They are created by collating knowledge and experiences from those u3as. They are only a guide – what worked for one u3a might not work for your u3a. If in your experience something is wrong or you disagree with something, please write in to allow an update to be created and published. It's hoped these Guides will grow over time with more shared experiences.

2. SCOPE

This particular SPG provides suggested methods for recruiting members onto your Executive Committee (EC). It does not repeat the general guidance provided on the national website (see References), but instead provides a checklist of suggested methods.

3. BACKGROUND

Many u3as express problems, not just in general recruitment but specifically recruitment onto their ECs. Why this is can be for a number of reasons which need to be understood before methods are applied to overcome these and be successful at having a full EC. The main reasons are, members not wanting:

- the responsibility of being a Charity Trustee
- or even just the responsibility for their u3a
- the time commitment
- the hassle

Maybe others can be listed. This SPG suggests a number of methods than can be deployed to overcome these negative views.

4. LEARNINGS

Many London u3as have faced this challenge, recruiting to their EC, and have used various methods to overcome. These are not individually credited here. Also some of said this method works better than that. Again this SPG does not try to judge, or weight, which method is better than another. Often it's the application that can make a difference in outcome. This SPG primarily is to provide a checklist of all the methods that have been used. You chose which you want to employ.

5. SPECIFICS

The checklist of all methods, all ideas, is contained in Appendix 1. Against each is a description of how or what that specific method could be. You may wish to ignore some ideas versus others; you may want to tailor some to your specific needs.

The national document groups the methods, the ideas, into three categories:

- Sell the benefits,
- Don't sell negatives
- Let the light in

These should be remembered as each method is deployed.

If you feel you can only think of the negatives remember these positives:

- Working with others is a rewarding and shared endeavour.

- Help growing your u3a as part of a team effort – what could be more satisfying?
- Developing new skills including technical skills such as chairing meetings, public speaking, mentoring, marketing, social media, on line meetings.
- Better still, developing your skills further if you already have them.
- Making and deepening friendships.
- A sense of achievement from helping your u3a go to the next stage
- Fun and enjoyment(!) It might seem odd to suggest that being on the committee can be fun, but the steps outlined in the rest of this guide should help to make your committee enjoyable as well as being effective.

6. REFERENCE MATERIAL

The Third Age Trust's website, under the Advice section has a wealth of documents on Retention and Recruitment. Specifically it has a document covering recruitment of committee members. Reference should be made to this document and many of the methods include in this SPG are also explained in the national document.

[Making your Committee Bigger and Better](#)

7. CONTACT POINT

The national office can be contacted regarding this general subject. But also regarding this specific document the following can be approached:

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APPENDIX 1 – CHECKLIST OF ALL METHODS

No.	METHOD TITLE	DESCRIPTION	UTILISED?
1	Observers at a Committee Meetings	Allow prospective EC volunteers to come along to one/ some of your Committee Meetings.	
2	Shadowing	Cultivate a shadowing method (trial successor). Work on a one to one basis, before exposing to the full EC / Trustee role.	
3	Co-Option	As a trail co-opt a member on to the committee. This way they don't feel so committed. If they then like it, then they can stand at your next AGM. Co-options without a specific role to begin with (General Members)	
4	Meeting with potential new EC members	The Chair should have a friendly meeting with prospective candidates. To provide encouragement but also to explain roles.	
5	Meet the Committee	After meeting the Chair can hold another 'meeting' (lunch?) with more of the Committee. Reel them in gently.	
6	Transparency of Committee matters	If members can see what goes on, what the Committee does, then it can be less off putting.	
7	Hold a "Find out about your u3a" meeting.	Three months prior to your AGM hold an open meeting (or as part of your Monthly Meeting) to explain what the EC does, what roles are open. Publicise widely, offer some attractions. Take questions. Create a friendly atmosphere.	
8	Create a crisis	Highly the severity of the problem – u3a will close if there isn't an EC. Can prompt newer members to think hard about how they can help.	
9	Empty chair(s)	Try starting a Monthly Meeting with only empty chair on the platform – demonstrate what this means if no one volunteers	
10	Advertise	Try to raise the visibility. Your website & newsletters should list vacancies. Use all publicity means (inc Facebook?).	
11	Advertise - video	Make a recording of the Chair appealing for members to volunteer for EC roles, explaining roles & need for help.	
12	Personal Approach - Letter	Consider writing (a letter) to each member (highlighting the need for new committee members). Even if cost precludes issuing by post, could be a PDF sent out by Beacon, with personalised address (token).	
13	Personal approach - conversations	Utilise personal contacts – every EC members should have conversations on the topic with all their contacts/ networks; a direct approach to recruiting	
14	Sharing roles and tasks.	Apprentice or assistant roles; adopt a team approach for specific roles (eg Membership, Groups, Finance). Members are much more likely to volunteer for roles if they are shared roles or part of a team. For some Committee roles have a team of 4 with one person as the Committee member which allows a sharing of workload but ensures the Committee has a member with responsibility for the role. Or establish an 'Assistant' model which also has the benefit of developing individuals to take over the main role in due course.	

15	Sub-Committees / Teams; Making your Executive Committee Bigger (effectively)	To relieve the load on Committee members and deliver vital developmental tasks, these sub-committees (or 'Teams') each have a committee member as link and each has a specific remit, but then acts within that remit and report monthly (usually) to the committee. These sub-committees take the load off of committee members. If you adopt the strategy of team approaches and/or a wide deployment of sub-committees and task groups, there is virtually no limit to the amount of people you can have to help you deliver your committee roles and tasks.	
16	Start as you mean to carry on / Catch them early	For all new members, as soon as they join, instil the understanding of u3a being run totally by volunteers. They need to do their bit. Hold a 'New Members' event and ask them what their first impressions are, how they felt the u3a could improve things, and how they can contribute. Might not get many immediately volunteering for an EC role but plants the seed to build on.	
17	Responding to new/different ideas	Don't recruit just as your image. Can the role be changed or split or don differently. If there is someone willing to join the Executive Committee but is different or has different ideas or methods, be open and inclusive. Otherwise you might find that new member to the Committee resigns shortly after starting as they are frustrated that the ideas which they have brought to the committee have been neither welcomed nor supported. Not every new idea may be a good one, but this does suggest that if you want to harness and benefit from the energy and enthusiasm of a new committee member, you may need to move a bit out of your comfort zone and/or be willing so do things differently.	
18	Nurturing the team and having some fun	There are strict formal responsibilities with being a Trustee but you can also make the experience enjoyable, or even fun! Look to opportunities for the Committee to have light hearted moments or events. Consider holding eg Thank you meals, evening drinks, coffee mornings.	
19	Skills Assessment	Understand what a member wants or can offer if they join the Committee. Then suggest a role or adapt a role to suit. Make the task acceptable; capitalising on individual strengths and skills. Might not be exactly what you were originally looking for but shape the team/Committee around the skills available.	