

NETWORK LINK MEETING

12TH OCTOBER 2018 11.00am-3.30pm
At the Wesley Hotel, Euston Street, London

NOTES

1. Welcome and Introduction

(Presenters: Hilary Jones and Ian McCannah)

Ian welcomed everyone present including Representatives of 33 Networks, the Trustees, and National Office Staff. New members of the Board of Trustees include:

- Ian McCannah (Chair)
- Hilary Jones (Vice Chair)
- Richard Teare (Treasurer)
- Jean Hogg (Trustee for East Midlands)
- Chris Winner (Trustee for Wales)

2. A Network Constitution

(Presenter: Ian McCannah)

a) New model constitution for U3As:

From January, all new U3As will be provided with a new model constitution. This has been taken from the Charity Commission template and includes more notes. Any existing U3A can use it, not just new U3As. It is currently being tested but is expected to be announced officially in the New Year.

b) Two model constitutions for Networks:

These were intended to be ready by October, but have been delayed partly because of consideration being given to creating a new category of Trust Membership for "Networks"

- i. For Networks that are or wish to become charities (about 10 so far) -- a slightly amended version of a) above
- ii. For Networks that do not want to become charities

c) Network Membership of Trust:

d)

The Trust are considering a new category of membership that will allow Networks to become members, if they so wish.

Benefits:

- i. Formalising the use of the copyrighted Trust logo
- ii. Easier to set up bank accounts
- iii. Easier charity registration
- iv. Formalising access to Insurance cover (same as individual U3As)
- v. Formalising funding from the Trust, assuming purpose is to support member U3As to be more effective (not educational events)

Notes:

- i. Although a member of the Trust, they will retain their own charity registration number
- ii. Unlike individual U3As, they will have no voting rights on Trust matters
- iii. Networks shouldn't assume that they are a charity just because they have a constitution. Need to check whether their Object Clause is the same as the Trust's / U3As rather than just a mutual support network for member U3As.

3. The Third Age Trust Development Plan

(Presenter: Ian McCannah)

Using the PowerPoint presentation from the Plenary session of the AGM, Ian discussed the Trust's draft 3-year Development Plan (2019-2022).

(A) Working Groups will be established to implement (a) the plan based on the Trust's four Aims:

- i. Promote & support self-help learning
- ii. Provide advice & support across the U3A movement
- iii. Raise the profile of the U3A movement
- iv. Facilitate the growth of U3A

A widespread consultation process was conducted, and the outcomes distilled into 6 key Topics:

- i. Create a relevant on-line presence
- ii. Issues surrounding the 'U3A' name
- iii. Raise the Trust's profile with print and social media
- iv. Raise the U3A profile externally
- v. National and regional growth
- vi. How to implement and fund the plan

The Topics were discussed by the Board at their recent October meeting, and the initial Working Group has now been replaced by three Working Groups to advise on implementation:

- i. Digital transformation
- ii. Marketing
- iii. Operations

A co-ordination group will oversee the process and further consultations as required. Board approval of the Plan is expected in December and Implementation is expected to begin in early 2019.

Comments from network representatives:

Topic iv:

- a) Ann Beeching (Southampton Network) had shown a copy of 'Learning Not Lonely' at a meeting of her Local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who were impressed. She now has a place on the Group which is an opportunity to promote U3A.
- b) June Brown (East Devon Link) was reticent about pursuing this due to financial issues. Helen Davison (Leicestershire & Rutland Network) is also a member of her CCG. More information required on how to get copies of 'Learning Not Lonely'.
- c) Carol Loughlin (North Wales Network): when presenting 'Learning not Lonely' to Parliament, don't forget the devolved regions.

[After Note: "CCGs commission most of the hospital and community NHS services in the local areas for which they are responsible". <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ccgs/>
"Nearly 50% of CCGs in England are now investing in 'Social Prescribing' which enable healthcare professionals to refer people to community 'services' instead of offering only medicalised solutions. The community activities range from art classes to singing groups, from walking clubs to gardening, and to many other interest groups. It is taking off across the country, particularly with people who are lonely or isolated; people with mild mental health issues who may be anxious or depressed; and, those who struggle to engage effectively with services".

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalised-health-and-care/social-prescribing/>

4. Third Age Matters (TAM)

(Presenter: Francis Beckett)

- 1) Background: TAM began as a simple newsletter in 1999 with 12-16 pages. Produced 3 times per year by Saga (they saw it as an exclusive marketing opportunity). Trustees began to think they would do better by producing it in-house with a freelance journalist/business manager and

selling advertising space. This changed the nature of the publication from a newsletter to a professionally-produced magazine, produced 5 times a year. Advertising is essential to TAM's success and it is a popular advertising vehicle because advertisers know precisely how big the circulation is (the agency has the list of over ¼ million homes to which TAM is delivered). Articles get edited – they have to be interesting and attractive to readers and occupy the space available.

2) Tips on successful articles & photos:

- The first sentence or few lines in the story should tell the readers the essence of the story, the key facts of what the article is about.
- To be appealing, articles must be about interesting individuals or small groups (not large amorphous groups).
- Don't say 'it was wonderful/important/successful' – that should be obvious.
- Photos must be of reasonable quality and show action – no 'people in rows'.

3) 'Coast to Coast' – articles need to illustrate broadly what U3As do and why. Not possible to be comprehensive due to space restrictions in print, and most stories that are submitted are reduced by 35-50%. As from April 2019, the magazine will focus on the especially interesting, spectacular/unusual. Reports on individual U3As will be transferred to Sources Online where space is less constrained.

4) 'Letters' – anything controversial brings in a delightful floods of letters. Lively and interesting. But there are risks and editorial judgements necessary if letters are too 'political' or 'bonkers'.

Comments/questions from network representatives:

- a) Q: June Brown (East Devon Link): Is 'In my Write' also going on-line?
A: Yes. As there are so many members who self-publish now, there is not space in print, and too many are less interesting for the reader. TAM will focus more on subject features rather than regions, especially where there is a Subject Adviser.
- b) Q: June Brown (East Devon Link): Are advertisements still required for revenue?
A: Yes, due to increasing costs (e.g. postage). Some adverts rejected (e.g. Cooperative Funeral Service). The larger the readership, the more we can charge for advertising.
- c) Q: Bill Woods: Advert for Riviera Holidays promised that anyone booking a holiday with them was eligible for a donation to their U3A. What is the view of U3A?
A: Sam Mauger is in discussion with Riviera Travel about this discount and will advise the Board on the outcome.
- d) Q: Catherine Ware (London Region of U3As): With 'Sources' now on-line, how will TAM cover learning and research? Will they be featured by subject also? And can articles give contact details to enable follow-up.
A: Learning and research will still be important, especially SLPs. Maybe clustered into subjects. There will be a Sources Section in TAM

5. Treasurers' For a within Local U3A Networks

(Presenter: Catherine Stevenson – SE Northumbria U3A Chairmen's Network)

This session was primarily delivered with the assistance of an entertaining animated presentation that promoted the benefits of networking in general, and how to set up, promote and manage a successful network – in this case a Treasurer's network, but others included a network for Chairmen and Business Secretaries. For copyright reasons, the presentation cannot be uploaded to the national website, but for further information contact Catherine at NewcastleU3A@hotmail.com

1) Attracting interest:

- Stuck with the same ideas, alone?
- You're never alone...

2) Getting started:

- 1) Research: existing needs/interest; is there a demand; who else would like to join?
- 2) Initial meetings to get things going: need a leader; agree the network purpose; Terms of Reference;

- 3) Structure: informal – no constitution; no Minutes (summary, yes); no handbook, aims or objectives; focus on support that's relevant to needs of the group (e.g. Treasurers)
- 4) Publicity: inform regional Trustee; speak at regional meetings; regional newsletter; regional website; send invites via direct email; word of mouth
- 5) Benefits: (over 86 benefits listed); share best practice; mutual self-help; group thinking to find solutions; contacts; buddying
- 6) Maintaining & sustaining: communicate; meetings; support; sense of humour

6. Network Publicity Trifold

(Presented by Hilary Jones)

Unfortunately, Auriol Ainley (West Midlands Regional Trustee) who had been working on ideas for a new trifold was unable to attend the meeting. However, her draft ideas were presented for discussion. Eventually the following order of priorities was suggested for planning the next leaflet:

- 1) Definition of a network:
Voluntary grouping for mutual support
- 2) Beneficiaries: Keep it simple – everyone.
- 3) Activities: Don't confuse activities with benefits; focus activities on members' needs; don't control expectations
- 4) Benefits: Mutual support; not working in isolation; sharing best practice, resources, activities; joint problem solving; regional/local network benefits
- 5) Format: Trifold (allows more information); Postcard/series of postcards for different networks; Website; Newsletter articles

There was not time to expand further, and Hilary said a copy of the old trifold and Auriol's draft would be disseminated for ideas and suggestions within a given time frame.

7. Group discussions (one Trustee per table) – general feedback and comments:

1) How are your U3As represented at a network meeting?

- i. Quite varied, from loose and informal to more structured
- ii. Each U3A committee nominates one or two Committee members as network representative(s)
- iii. Chair + one other officer (may be themed)
- iv. Representative elected at AGMs of member U3As
- v. Committee member, but not an officer
- vi. Reps vary, may be theme-based (e.g. Publicity)
- vii. Each U3A takes it in turn to host a Network meeting, but the Network Chair/Coordinator keeps the agenda, notes, etc.

2) What activities do your networks share?

- i. Shared talks/external speakers (that U3As can't afford individually)
- ii. Shared Learning Projects and other active learning projects
- iii. Joint study days/conferences
- iv. Training workshops (Trust or other)
- v. Workshops/presentations on particular themes e.g. Research
- vi. Shared activities with nearby university or other institution (e.g. research, study days, lectures, workshops)
- vii. Peer group networking/buddying (committee and other roles)
- viii. Shared Interest groups
- ix. Subject group networking/activities e.g. Language convenors; craft groups;
- x. Visits to places of interest (e.g. shared coach)
- xi. Shared funding or Network either per U3A or through shared activities
- xii. Network funding to support local U3A activities
- xiii. Shared venues
- xiv. Shared resources (e.g. equipment, learning resources)

- xv. Social activities e.g. competitions/quizzes/exercise or sport days/dances/barbecues
- xvi. Summer School (network U3A members + external U3A members)
- xvii. Public event e.g. craft fair (stalls filled by network U3As); songfest
- xviii. International exchanges
- xix. Publicity/web-links
- xx. Engagement with local community and organisations
- xxi. Launching new U3As
- xxii. Trouble-shooting

3) How can Networks use their Trust Volunteers?

- i. Creating new U3As
- ii. Trouble-shooting
- iii. Training/mentoring
- iv. Q&A at general network meeting

8. Next meeting: Provisionally 17th May 2019 in London

Important Post Meeting Note:

The notes of the May Network Link meeting incorrectly reported the Charity Commission's financial thresholds.

Please note that income of over £25K only has to be approved by an independent examiner. Income over £250K has to be either independently examined or fully audited.

**Hilary Jones
Network Link**