

## Feedback from Group Leaders' Workshop, The Angel Hotel, Market Harborough, Friday 10 February 2017

### Context:

- ✚ To develop a sense of common identity between group leaders, the enablers and the committee
- ✚ Group leaders to share experience and learn from each other
- ✚ To find potential solutions to problems

### Topics for discussion (3):

**Succession** – encouraging group members to assist and/or succeed existing leaders



### Identify/coach/support

- Leader must make it known that he/she wishes to step down in good time
- Care must be taken to ensure that leaders are not made to feel they are being pushed out, ie have met their sell by date
- People with experience in the group and would regularly contribute, to be asked to come forward – again and again
- Know capabilities of group. Encourage capable members to lead. Support those who are enthusiastic but lack confidence. Teach skills to those who lack them
- Depending on what the 'subject' of the group is, and the size, encouraging participation, having a second in command and training to help.
- Already have a replacement who holds sessions when not available. Individual members contribute a specific session.

### Best practice within groups

- Small groups are worthwhile if only 3 or 4 want to meet.
- Each group has its own identity and works its own way of organisation. Small groups work differently from large ones. We don't all have to be the same.
- Asking group members to help when needed, not being shy in doing so.
- The complexity of need within the groups should be taken into account. Some are easy: others require a degree of specialised knowledge. Ask for help from Committee.
- Members of a craft group are fantastic, sharing knowledge and ideas and are happy to do the occasional demonstration.
- Ask a member to assist you in suggestion for week's activity – music, competition.

**New members** – attracting new members where group numbers are low



### Practical ideas

- **Taster groups** (*are these the norm at SLU3A or do we need to encourage this, eg new members' documents, new members' meetings and reinforce with group leaders, newsletter and website*)?
- **Specialist equipment** – accessible information for sourcing this, eg Golf – Ladies - new members needed. Own clubs necessary – can get them in charity shops. Suggest clubs required.
- **Additional meeting slots** - Why no evening groups? Majority of members don't go out at night – some do!
- Be **welcoming and supportive** when new members arrive.
- **Make new members really welcome. Tea and biscuits help.** Envelop them!
- Group leaders to **ask new members** to the group **what has attracted them** to join the group?
- Have **group members introduce themselves** to new members
- **Email group members 2/3 days before meeting – bring a friend.** Get members to declare their emails.
- **Rethink group name and purpose** - Despite regular invitations in the newsletter and a stall every year at the Open Day, numbers for all afternoon exercise and keep fit sessions remain low. *Other recent examples – Art Group renamed and reinvented itself and now has more members while Gardening failed to continue*
- Place appropriate **information on the website and newsletter**. *Is this always clear? Should it be on separate lists/posts?*
- **Newsletter** – leaders vary content to make more interesting/attractive.
- **Advertise group at monthly meetings** using the projection facilities.
- Post **newsletter into surgeries**.
- Leaders need to **make group sound exciting!!**
- **Comment on starting a second group** ... discussed at meeting and everyone is happy for this to be taken forward.

**New groups** – starting new groups where existing ones are at full capacity



### Practical ideas

- When trying to start new groups, advertise in the newsletter **and make it sound tempting and exciting!** News spreads!
- Downloading books onto Kindles is no doubt the way forward. *Embracing **new technology***
- Surely this would depend on what was available, when and what kind of **equipment** is needed.
- **Excess membership** – if this occurred would suggest new group at same venue or at a new venue
- No problem – both groups represented have **given birth to new groups**, and would do so again if required.
- Language – when the group became too big we had a waiting list which became the basic language. Improvers **supported this for a start** and is still a successful group in own right.
- If group full, it could **split into two to form the basis of two new groups** to all access to new members
- It is **not easy to split a group** because of friendships people have made, level of expertise, the actual day people can attend, etc
- Change the **format of the Open Day**. Five minute demonstrations of appropriate groups. Open day to be in Feb? (*ie shortly before new U3A year starts and members pay their subs*)

### Group Enablers

- **Liaison between Group Leaders and Group Enablers** - Book group – **setting up new group**. We are full pro tem but get several enquiries. Could we pass on their names and phone nos to the Enablers/Committee and suggest these hopefuls contact the above??
- When a **group is full the Enablers should ask for numbers on the waiting list/Leaders to advise Group Enablers** and then commence info to start another group by advertising in the newsletter
- **Group Enablers to advise on new group start up**
- When our group started **Chair/Group Enablers supportive** (very!) – planning, process + inviting potential new members to a preliminary meeting

### Other topics raised during workshop:

**Newsletter** – a chance for group leaders to discuss in the future

**Emails of group leaders in newsletter** below each group entry where possible, as an alternative means of communication

**Phoning group leaders** – perhaps not late into the evenings or very early in the morning, eg between 9 am and 8 pm

**U3A Resource** – Has a wealth of useful information (was used extensively when SLU3A was formed) - promote this excellent resource (*on U3A national website*)