Network Link meeting 13:10:20 via Zoom

For those of you who may be new to the Nottinghamshire, the Network Link was set up about 5 years ago and was instigated by the Third Age Trust (TAT) as there was a growing realisation that there were a number of u3a groupings which had a variety of names - the most common of which was 'Networks'. Some have constitutions, which ours does, some have charitable status, which ours does not, and some have formal meetings, which ours does. The Link meetings happen twice a year and are a forum to share good practice and a way to disseminate a two-way vehicle for information sharing from the National office to Networks and from the Networks to the National office.

Hilary Jones (vice chair of the Third Age Trust) now chairs these meetings, and the most recent meeting covered the following subjects.

Growing the Brand - Sue Stokes

There is a great deal of concern that our membership, even before Covid, was both declining and aging and it is realised that there is a need to attract new members from a range of age groups to keep the movement both alive and vibrant, hence the need to update the **u3a** brand (note the new name format). The aim is to gradually replace all of our posters, banners etc. with the new simpler and more attractive branding and much of the marketing materials can be found on the TAT website and can be customised to fit individual u3as. It is also planned to have a brand centre where a variety of products will be available to be purchased. It was emphasised that this change over to the new look u3a will be a gradual change and there is no need for every u3a to feel pressurised to make the changes immediately.

Recruitment -Paul Martinez

Sadly, with the growing number of people who have found themselves leaving full time employment due to the present financial crisis it is felt that there are many opportunities to attract new u3a members. The recruitment plan is in three phases and is being trialled by 63 u3as. The first phase is brainstorming how to find new members. The second stage is using a newly developed toolkit which has been created as an aid to recruit new members and the final phase will be to make the toolkit available to all u3as.

Trust u3a and AGM – Ian McCannah

Ian gave a short report about the AGM which is usually held at Nottingham University but was held as a Zoom meeting this year. There is normally about 400 members attending but this year 750 members tuned in so it is felt that there may be a way to incorporate a virtual content along with an actual meeting in the future when we return to be able to have face to face meetings. Another aspect of the TAT which has grown during the Covid crisis is the Trust u3a which is an online u3a which now has over 300 members, the structure and format of which is going to be discussed in the near future. Ian also explained that the Trust development plan was now coming to an end as the majority of it has now been implemented.

Beyond Lockdown- Michaela Moody

The main focus of the Development Committee was originally to attract new members, but this has now changed to supporting u3as with activities and ideas which will enable them to retain existing members. Much of the discussion centred around the problem of members who are not comfortable using IT and with ideas about how to encourage the use of zoom etc. The importance of u3a Newsletters, National Newsletters, using Subject Advisors and forward planning for Christmas to engage membership were all discussed.

Peer Support Networks – Derek Harwood

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as have already run many peer support groups although the focus of this discussion was primarily support groups for committee roles. It was suggested that support groups could be run using zoom as face to face meetings are not feasible for the foreseeable future.

If you wish any further information about any of the above please contact me on margot.nottsnetwork@outlook.com

Margot Gale (Notts. Network Contact)