

## INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE U3A GROUP LIAISONS

The Canvey Island U3A would like to extend a warm welcome if you are about to become (or are thinking of becoming) a group liaison for one of our many interest groups.

As you will be aware the main purpose of the U3A is to advance the education of its members by providing activities that are conducive to learning and personal development.

This is achieved by having monthly meetings with a speaker on various topics, and by having numerous special interest groups who meet as and when the members of each group consider appropriate.

The main meetings are organised by the U3A's executive committee. The interest groups are run and organised by their Group Liaison. Where it is appropriate, the group liaison role may be shared by two or more members of the group – this sometimes occurs for larger groups.

### WHAT DOES BEING A GROUP LIAISON MEAN?

The main duties of a Group Liaison are:

- Maintain a list of the members of the group (this is easily done using the U3A's web based "Beacon" database;
- Ensure that members of the group are kept advised of when and where the group meets;
- Act as a point of contact for U3A members who are interested in joining the group and want more information about the group;
- Ensure that the group is run in accordance with the U3A's policies and procedures.

### WHAT DOES BEING A GROUP LIAISON *NOT* MEAN?

The role of a Group Liaison is that of a facilitator and **not** that of a teacher or leader. The role of leading meetings of the group can be taken by any member and may be best if it is shared/alternated amongst the members.

### STARTING A NEW GROUP

There are various things that need to be done when starting a new group and the U3A's Groups' Coordinator can help with these.

The main issues are:

- Having a first meeting;
- Agree with the group what the aims and objectives of the group are; and
- Decide how often, when, and where the group should meet.

These issues are covered in more detail below.

#### **First Meeting**

An initial meeting of interested members should take place to make important decisions about the running of the group.

For this reason, you may wish to meet in The Paddocks (which is booked until 4:00pm) at the end of the general meeting.

Things to be considered at this initial meeting are covered below:

## **Aims and objectives**

The members of a prospective new group may well have different interpretations of what they think the group will be doing. For instance, if the group is called a gardening group – some members may want to visit local gardens, some may want to exchange plants and cuttings etc.; others may want to discuss plants and which positions in the garden will suit them best.

It is important that a discussion takes place with the new group's prospective members to agree amongst you exactly what you all want to achieve within the group.

## **How often, when and where to meet**

During this discussion members need to agree on how often the group should meet – some groups meet weekly, some every other week, and others monthly. There are no rules regarding how often a group should meet – it is entirely up to each group to decide amongst themselves.

Once the group has decided how often to meet, it must decide on what day at what time and where it should meet.

There are several alternative venues available for use by groups –the most suitable is usually determined by the proposed activities of the group and the size of the group.

For example, the badminton group meet in a local sports hall and the ten-pin bowling group meet at a local bowling alley. Others require a space that can accommodate from ten to forty members, whilst other small groups may be able to meet in the home of one of the members.

Details of halls and other venues can be found on Beacon and on the U3A website. Also, the U3A's Groups' Coordinator maintains a list of local meeting venues and can assist you on this issue.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

As mentioned above, one of the roles of the group liaison is to ensure that the group is run in accordance with the U3A's policies and procedures. These cover the following areas

- Finance
- Data protection and privacy
- Safeguarding

Each of these are considered below.

### **Finance**

For financial reporting purposes groups may be split into four types according to their method of operation, and these are:

1. Groups that meet in the home of a member;
2. Groups that meet in third-party venues, where no costs are incurred;
3. Groups that meet in third-party venues, where any costs incurred are covered directly by those members in attendance;
4. Groups that meet in third-party venues and/or have other events where significant costs are incurred.

Details of the U3A's Policy for Group Liaisons and Finance can be viewed via the U3A website or in the policies folder that is available at the back of the hall at all general meetings.

## **Data Protection and Privacy**

The U3A is governed by the General Data Protection Regulations and this requires that Group Liaisons must keep all members personal data secure and that such data must not be shared informally nor outside of the U3A. Details of the U3A's full data protection and privacy policies can be viewed via the U3A website or in the policies folder that is available at the back of the hall at all general meetings.

## **Safeguarding**

Canvey Island U3A is committed to promoting the wellbeing of all its members and seeks to create a safe and welcoming environment where members can learn and socialise together, whilst being protected from harm, discrimination and abuse. Details of the U3A's policy for safeguarding can be viewed via the U3A website or in the policies folder that is available at the back of the hall at all general meetings.

## **Other Matters**

### **Membership lists**

Group liaisons must maintain an up to date list of members on Beacon. The Groups' Coordinator can assist you to do this.

The group liaison must ensure that all members of the group are members of the Canvey Island U3A. By using Beacon, only current members of the U3A can be added to the group's membership list.

### **Insurance**

Public liability and home contents insurance is provided via the Third Age Trust and covers members for public liability and for damage to the property of any member whilst their home is being used to host a U3A event.

### **Risk Assessment**

Assessment of risk is something we all do all the time – when we look around us to look for trip hazards, blocked fire exits etc.

When using third-party venues for meetings, the third-party provider should have done their own risk assessment, but it is worth doing your own as well. Risk assessment checklists for venues, venue (day of use); and walk leaders will be available to upload from the U3A website.

Hopefully you have found this information useful, if there is any other information you require please contact the Groups Coordinator or a member of the executive committee who will be able to help you.