Waiting Lists

The growth and success of the U3A movement speaks volumes for its relevance and appeal to third agers throughout the UK. It was the wish of our Founders that the U3A experience be available to all third agers who desire it and two of the fundamental aims of the U3A movement are to make U3As accessible to all older people and to encourage the establishment of U3As in every part of the country. When applying for membership of The Third Age Trust, all U3As agree to encourage and assist in every way the formation of new U3As so that U3A membership is available to all third agers who want it.

To have waiting lists other than as a temporary measure, are regarded by some as a sign of our success but they are contrary to our aims and therefore action must be taken to eliminate them, one way or another.

**SHORT TERM WAITING LISTS**

Short term waiting lists can sometimes be necessary and may be in place for a variety of reasons including:

- The U3A has seriously outgrown its general meeting accommodation and needs to locate a larger venue.
- Growth has been particularly rapid since the U3A started and the Committee needs time to catch its breath and take stock to ensure that the U3A is fulfilling its charitable purposes.
- There has been a sudden influx of people and there are few spaces available in interest groups.

**LONG TERM WAITING LISTS**

Conversely, long term waiting lists indicate a problem, for which the Committee needs to seek a solution. Long term waiting lists can be caused by:

- A decision by the membership to limit its membership to a particular number so that it remains small, friendly and cozy.
- No room in the general meeting venue, nowhere else to move and no other viable solutions.
- No space in interest groups.

Why is this a problem?

- No influx of members with time energy, enthusiasm and new ideas.
- No change to what is offered and is available to members.
- All getting old together; average age increases.
- A very bad impression of U3A to those who wish to join.

Whatever the reasons for long term waiting lists the end result is the same – an undesirable and unsustainable situation!

What can be done to solve the problem?

- Read ‘Growth Matters’ and ‘ Keeping your U3A Vibrant’.
- Lift the cap on membership and explain to your members the reasons for doing so and the dangers of not doing so.
- Research alternative accommodation for your general meetings and if there is nothing available consider other options; first come first served, tickets, back to back meetings or associate membership, which does not allow access to the monthly meeting. General meetings are important but interest groups are the lifeblood of a U3A.
- Don’t wait for group convenors to appear; encourage a group of interested members to set up their own group and make use of the Resource Centre.
- See whether some interest/activity groups could divide.
- Speak to other U3As in your network/region.
- Speak to the National Office.

If despite your best efforts, you just cannot satisfy the continuing demand for membership, a new U3A is obviously needed so please contact the National Office so that the process of getting a new U3A off the ground can begin.