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**Group Coordinator Guidance**

Special Interest Groups are at the heart of the U3A and so thank you for taking on the role of a Group Coordinator. The U3A provides lifelong learning through self-help groups covering topics and activities chosen by members. Sharing and participation are highly valued and the leaders should not be making this learning journey alone. We hope the following notes will help you to make decisions with your group about how the group will develop. They also highlight what further assistance is available.

**Starting a Group - Issues to be considered:**

1. Is your group going to run for a specified number of weeks or throughout the year?
2. How much time do you want to give to this group and have you got the time to do so. Are you going to be the only organiser or can you share the responsibility?
3. What is the focus of the learning or activity, for example in relation to languages what level is the conversation at, if art is it creative or history orientated.
4. What would be a manageable number for this group?
5. Where would it be best to meet, when, for how long and how often?
6. Do you need additional equipment for the group to function?
7. How would someone with a disability access your activity, what difficulties might arise?
8. What risks might the activity create for the individual members concerned?

**Setting Up the Group**

Having considered these issues, you might put out ‘feelers’ in terms of asking individual members to express an interest at a general meeting or through a newsletter advertisement.

Discussing your ideas further with the Groups Coordinator should help answer some of the queries that might arise.

Contacting prospective members by email or phone can help firm up ideas, as long as they are happy to be contacted in this way.

A first meeting can provide the opportunity to decide as a group what people want to do, and this can then be clarified, and plans made.

**The U3A as a national organisation does offer guidance on what could be covered at that first meeting, this is described below.**

1. Introduce yourself and your general aims and perspective and then go round the group encouraging people to share their ideas. A set of aims and expectations can be established.
2. There may be people in the group that have skills and expertise on the subject and discussing how this knowledge can be shared is worthwhile. Different roles and responsibilities may emerge.
3. Clarifying the practicalities e.g.: whether the meetings will be discussion or presentation based and whether there will be trips out and realistic boundaries re activity are important.
4. It may be worth identifying some rules re attendance and contact, so that people are not waiting around for people to turn up if outside for example.
5. Emergency contacts may be needed if there is physical risk involved, this is relevant to completing the risk assessment forms obtained from the Groups Coordinator.
6. Costs should be examined, and expenses shared between the group for meeting room hire and outings (25p per mile is recommended for car-sharing). Further advice can be sought from the Committee Treasurer.
7. Keep the Groups Coordinator informed of the final arrangements for the group and ask for further help if necessary.
8. When, all of these important decisions are made, ask the Web Manager to create a page for the group. The web manager will provide guidance to the coordinator on using the U3A Beacon Database and data protection rules re communicating with members.
9. Don’t forget to notify the Newsletter of the details of the group so it can be promoted and do ask for time or a stall at the general meeting to publicise your group.
10. Remember your group is not set in stone and will change with different members and as time goes on, just remember to inform the Groups Coordinator , Web-Manager and Newsletter so that activities listed are up to date.

**Good Luck and Enjoy Yourself**