

ADVICE SHEET 12

WAITING LISTS

We are privileged to be part of the U3A movement, the growth of which speaks volumes for our relevance and appeal to third agers throughout the UK. All U3As will want to honour 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.*
- *To encourage the establishment of U3As in every part of the country where conditions are suitable and to support and collaborate with them.*

When they apply for membership of The Third Age Trust, U3As agree to reflect the founders' wishes and:-

- *Encourage and assist in every way the formation of new U3As in neighbouring areas so that U3A membership is available to all who want it.*

Waiting lists are a sign of our success but they go against these aims and are therefore to be avoided.

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 spend time locating a larger venue.
- Growth has been particularly rapid since the start 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.

However, 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 cosy.
- No room in the general meeting venue and nowhere else to move.
- No space in interest groups.

The reasons may be different but the end result is the same – an undesirable situation!

- 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.

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 /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 leaders to appear; encourage a group of interested members to set up their own group using the Resource Centre.
- See whether some interest/activity groups could divide.
- Speak to other U3As in your network/region.
- Speak to your Regional Trustee and the National Office.

Remember, The Third Age Trust is ready to help and support you so if the situation persists, let's get together and discuss starting the process of setting up another U3A nearby to satisfy the local demand.