



JOINT CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2020

Janet Keogh

This year has taken everyone by surprise and the Covid 19 pandemic is teaching us all a whole lot of new lessons in how to 'Live, Laugh and Learn'. Nevertheless, U3A Leeds's members are a resourceful, resilient lot who have 'Kept Calm and Carried On'. When we ceased operations in March, I believed that we would be back again by mid-year but that has now come and gone and we are still waiting to fully start up again safely.

Some of you may not be aware that U3A Leeds is currently in its 35th year so we had planned to hold a special event in August to mark that impressive achievement. Unfortunately, this has had to be postponed until such time as we can all be together to properly mark our milestone Birthday. Rest assured that this will still take place and it will be a bigger, happier and more poignant celebration when we are all reunited.

They say, 'two heads are better than one' and Derek Levy, who has been Joint Chairperson with me this year, has been an essential part of ensuring that all things U3A keep running smoothly – not least me! As well, Derek has taken on board projects aimed at raising the profile of our organisation one of which was the National U3A Day event which, owing to Covid 19, was cancelled. Aside from the Joint Chairs, we have an excellent committee all working hard behind the scenes to keep U3A Leeds running in spite of the current restrictions. I am pleased to report, therefore, that the two Chairs and the Committee have continued to work in the background, albeit via 'Zoom' & 'WhatsApp'.

By using new technology, we have carried on meeting on 'Zoom' and it has been a great success. It means that we have been able to take part in discussions and make decisions from the comfort of our own living rooms. As we are all vocal, outspoken, and proactive, we have a good-humoured free & frank exchange of views so our meetings are far from dull & boring. Thanks must go to; Sue Buchan, (Secretary) who organises us so efficiently, Maureen Lewin (Treasurer) who takes good care of the finances, Anne Searles (the quietest of us) who takes care of membership so well, Steve McGrail, (Beacon wizard), Angela Hutchinson (Speaker Finder) keeps us grounded, Robert Collins (Law) keeps us legal, Margret Quinton (Travel Organiser) plus Shena Flower & Ann O'Grady who are always in the right place at the right time. All work to ensure that U3A Leeds is well prepared for the day when we can resume

Information Technology has come into its own and the Pandemic has forced us to learn new skills. Email has been a boon as it has allowed us to keep in touch with members online. It has let me send out my 'daft' weekly quizzes to show that U3A Leeds is not dead only sleeping! I can now report that all but 44 of our 560 members are online. It's heartening to know that so many of you are taking up the challenge of IT and are using it to enhance your everyday lives.

There have been a few other changes to groups as at the end of last year we had to say thank you and goodbye to Yolande Sowerby who retired after her long stint as leader of Book Group A. This year it is mainly the Pandemic that has affected our groups. After many years, we have sadly had to say goodbye to the long-running Country Dancing Group that has now closed. Our thanks go to Janet Gourley and Margaret & John Hoggard who made group the success it was. Our best wishes for the future also goes to Barbara Fagelman who is retiring too. She is standing down as tutor for the Looking at Paintings Group that has been running almost as long as U3A Leeds itself. Fortunately, Hans van Lemmen is taking on Barbara's role to secure the future of this group.

Almost 50% of groups are continuing to meet in some form or another proving, once again, our members' resilience and resourcefulness. Our greatest gratitude goes to our Group Leaders for their dedication and commitment. I would urge all members to consider joining them by starting an interest group of their own because Group Leaders are the lifeblood of our organisation as, without them, there would be no activities, no interest groups and no U3A Leeds. There is a wealth of experience and assistance out there to tap into if you want to start a group of your own, just ask the Group Coordinator who will provide you with everything you will need to get going. We all have something to give to make sure that, despite adversity, U3A Leeds survives to fight another day. It's an enjoyable and rewarding way to 'give back' to your organisation and ensure it lasts for another 35 years.

Many members have been shielding whilst others have been helping in the wider community during the Pandemic. I thank everyone for their efforts helping to keep themselves and others safe. To me, this embodies the true spirit of U3A as it shows that age is no barrier and our long-learned skills and abilities are never wasted. Just remember that U3A Leeds is **you** and it is **you** who make U3A Leeds what it is. Taking part with good friends both old and new is all part of Living, Laughing and Learning.



Leeds

LIVE, LAUGH & LEARN

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Derek Levy

On taking up the position of Joint Chair with Janet, initially I was unsure I could help her. I believed that I could just respond to requests to help with a wide range of issues she so adequately dealt with on a day to day basis. I soon learned that Janet was very much on top of her role due to her experience and understanding of the needs of our members. In addition all the other members of the Executive had specific roles they carried out very well e.g. Treasurer. In conclusion I was still uncertain of mine. After a rethink I recognised that I also had experience and skills in certain areas such as organisational development that could be linked to the needs of our own U3A. All organisations are dynamic in nature and new issues arise that are external to the day to day running. Some of these external events and issues have recently become visible and have formed the basis of the role I have adopted and actioned. All my thinking about these matters has been shared with Janet who has constantly supported me.

Inter-Generational Project

Recently we were approached by the Principal of the University Technical College, Leeds, to request if our members (because of their background) could become involved in various ways of working together with their students in understanding and awareness of the history of the local area e.g. joint visits with students and talks to them. I have met with the Principal and future discussions are planned. Members will be kept informed about progress.

U3A Groups Networking

One of the important priorities of Third Age Trust Central Office is to enhance regional networks of U3A Groups in order to provide a more flexible approach to providing opportunities for members. We are already a part of Yorkshire and Humberside Region and it is pleasing to note that new groups have been established. I am already in contact with many regional Chairs and will continue to be involved in these developments.

I should like to note of the support and I have received from Janet in the roles I am developing.