

Group Co-ordinator – Role Description

A Group Co-ordinator is best considered as a supportive friend to both Group Leaders and Members, offering advice and direction but, with the exception of keeping Beacon up to date, never mandating how a group is run. Given that successful groups are the life blood of u3a, Group Co-ordinators can also provide useful feedback to Committee on organisational matters.

Bristol u3a has decided to have four Group-Co-ordinator functions:

- All language groups
- Non-language groups in South Bristol
- Non-language groups in West & Northwest Bristol
- Non-language groups in East & Northeast Bristol

Each of the above functions may be performed by one Group-Co-ordinator or by two or more sharing the role.

Responsibilities

1. Be aware of all groups operating in their jurisdiction
2. Beacon and Data Protection responsibilities:
 - a. *Position Beacon as mandatory for all Groups – regardless of where group meetings are held. As a minimum, group membership list must be kept up to date even if they do not use Beacon for communications.*
 - b. *Help Group Leaders/Convenors understand their Data Protection responsibilities. (Note: using Beacon for emails will ensure full compliance).*
3. Be the first point of contact for Group Leaders/Conveners and for members with groups-related queries e.g. *an idea for a new group or when a Group Leader/Convener hasn't replied to an email*
4. Help identify demand for new groups and encourage members to take up group leadership responsibilities:
 - a. *Treat all suggestions for new groups seriously. (It's likely that the member will not feel confident and will be concerned that their initiative will bring them a high administrative workload. At this stage, it's important to show lots of empathy and support by explaining that all responsibilities can be shared across the whole group).*
 - b. *Refer the member to the Group Leader's handbook on the web for practical information on how to get started.*
 - c. *Help the member with the idea to find other members who share the same interest by advertising on Facebook, the News section of the web, monthly e-Post and quarterly newsletter*
 - d. *Advise on the key things that need to be discussed at the first exploratory meeting of all interested parties e.g.*
 - i. *How will the group pursue their interest? (Don't forget that there are national subject advisers who can help)*
 - ii. *How often will they meet, and where? (You can help by suggesting local venues)*
 - iii. *How will they organise themselves?*
 - *It's a good idea to suggest that they share leadership and organisational responsibilities amongst the group to avoid overwhelming one individual. This should include agreeing who will be responsible for keeping their group details on Beacon up to date (can be more than one person) and who will manage enquiries coming via Pigeon Post.*
 - iv. *NOTE: It is not mandatory for the Group Co-ordinator to attend this meeting.*

- e. *Once all of the above has been finalised, help the group to advertise itself on the Groups page of the web, Facebook, monthly e-Post, quarterly newsletter and Annual Bulletin*
5. Remind established Group Leaders / Conveners about the educational resources available nationally e.g. Subject Advisors, u3a National Website, Sources online (practical articles from TAM magazine) etc.
6. Remind Group Leaders about Bristol u3a's Equality and Diversity policy and suggest practical ways to make their group more inclusive such as what's written below.
 - a. *Consideration of choice of venue*
 - i. *Accessibility – Would a person with limited mobility be able to attend? Is the venue close to a regular bus route? Is car parking available for those travelling by car?*
 - ii. *Acoustics – Would a person with a hearing impairment be able to participate fully in the group?*
 - iii. *Hosting in members' homes – This is a popular choice for many groups but group membership should never be conditional on agreeing to host a meeting at the members' home. While some would consider this "unfair", we must be sensitive that hosting would be uncomfortable for some and highly stressful for others.*
 - b. *Affordability*
 - i. *Remembering to offer low cost/no cost options so that money is not a barrier to participation e.g. when organising Social Group meals, give an option for people to come along after everyone has eaten and join in.*
 - c. *Respect at all times!*
 - i. *Sometimes people say things without thinking of the consequences or imagining that their words may cause offence. Remind Group Leaders that they can get help from the Committee (see below) if a group member is a regular offender.*
7. Support Group Leaders / Conveners by being their first point of contact and providing a "friendly ear" if issues arise and suggesting possible solutions e.g.
 - a. *Getting external help from a national subject expert*
 - b. *Advising on how to manage changes in their groups e.g.*
 - i. *Updating the group's entry on Beacon and the web if there is a change to the group's name or the Group Leader / Convener*
 - ii. *Helping the new Group Leader / Convener to get their own access to Beacon*
 - iii. *Adding or deleting group members' details from Beacon (ONLY if there is no-one with technical expertise in the group)*
 - c. *Helping to find a new venue including:*
 - i. *Looking at list of venues on Beacon to see if any are suitable*
 - ii. *Advising on how to work with the Treasurer to get a new venue set up*
 - iii. *Ensuring that the Group Leader is clear that the group must not incur any costs until they have the go-ahead from the Treasurer*
 - d. *Engaging a committee member*
 - e. *Helping to build a business case for possible financial help from the committee for equipment etc.*
8. Be aware of any groups that are full inside their jurisdiction
 - a. *Liaise with group leaders to manage waiting lists on Beacon*
 - b. *Explore the viability of splitting the group (make two groups) or moving the group to a new venue with higher capacity*
 - c. *Explore the viability of merging waiting lists from similar groups to form a new group*
 - d. *Liaise informally with other Group Co-ordinators on the subject of full groups*

9. Attend an online meeting with other Group Co-ordinators once a quarter. The meeting will be chaired by a Committee Member and is your opportunity to:
 - a. *Share news about groups in your jurisdiction*
 - b. *Discuss full groups*
 - c. *Highlight any issues that would benefit from committee attention*
 - d. *Give your perspective on matters raised by the committee member*

10. Respond to all emails and enquiries quickly – even if it's to say *"I'm sorry but I'm on holiday next week and won't have time to respond until XXX"* or *"I've referred your question to committee so it might take a few days before I can come back with an answer"*.