Area Co-ordinator – Role Description

An Area 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, Area Co-ordinators can also provide useful feedback to the Executive Committee on organisational matters.

Bristol u3a has decided to have three Area Co-ordinator functions for **all** types of interest groups, as follows:

- all groups in South Bristol
- all groups in West & Northwest Bristol
- all groups in East & Northeast Bristol

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

In addition, there is a Languages Specialist Adviser who provides expert advice on language related issues.

Responsibilities

1. Be aware of the full list of groups operating in their area *(you only need the list, no detail)*

2. 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*

3. Beacon, Data Protection and Inclusivity 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).*

    c. Help Group Leaders understand their obligations towards Bristol u3a's Equality and Diversity policy and suggest practical ways to make their group more inclusive. This is covered in *Guidance on running a group*.

4. Finance responsibilities
    a. Be the first point of contact for all venue hire requests from Group Leaders/Conveners
    b. Direct GLs towards the guidance for starting & running groups on the Group Leaders' page on the web where they'll find an explanation of the process. Tell them that they'll also be able to download funding request forms in the same section. Ask them to send their completed forms back to you.
    c. Approve all funding requests for new funding / change of funding, up to the maximum subsidy (£480 FY 26/27)
    d. Liaise with the Membership & Groups team for any funding request where the Group Leader believes that they have an exceptional case for funding beyond the current maximum subsidy e.g. when a GL has eliminated a waiting list by moving to a much larger establishment
    e. Allocate a unique BUG number (Bristol u3a Group number) for new groups, and record it in the Notes section of the group's Beacon record. Format: "BUGann" where "a" is the area

code (NW is 5, South is 6 and E&NE is 7), and nn is the next sequential number for new groups in your area.

f. Send the approved form – complete with BUG number – to the Treasurer.

5. 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. *Help advertise the idea around Bristol u3a (see Guidance for starting a new group for ideas on how to do this)*
    c. *Advise on the key things that need to be discussed at the first exploratory meeting of all interested parties. This is described in detail in Guidance on starting a new group*
    d. *Refer the member to key documents on the Bristol u3a website and help them to feel comfortable with the content (or at least to feel comfortable that they know where to get answers)*
        i. *Guidance on starting a new group*
        ii. *Guidance on running a group*
        iii. *The section containing all Bristol u3a policies where answers to many of the frequently asked questions can be found on subjects such as Insurance, Inclusion and Data Protection*

6. 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.*

7. Be aware of any groups inside their jurisdiction that are full
    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 Area Co-ordinators on the subject of full groups*

8. 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.

9. Attend Membership and Groups team meetings with other Area Co-ordinators, the Chair and selected other postholders. The meetings are typically once a quarter and are usually in person (not online). The meeting will be chaired by a Committee Member or Postholder 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 discussion with other ACs or anything that requires committee attention*
    d. *Give your perspective on matters raised by other attendees*

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".*