

Project Report Summary

A New Learning Adventure for Third Agers

This project was funded by the Transformation Fund, Department of Business Industry and Skills, September 2009 – March 2010, and was run by the Department of Continuing Education, Lancaster University.

The project was designed to link members of Lancaster and Morecambe University of the Third Age (U3A), with Lancaster University. Building on work done with older people at the Department of Continuing Education, this project had five elements.

1. To provide links for members of Lancaster and Morecambe U3A to attend first year undergraduate lectures where there was space available.
2. To provide a programme of weekly lunchtime lectures from academic departments around the University open to members of Lancaster and Morecambe U3A and other local older people.
3. To provide regular Learning Circles where project participants could discuss and share their learning.
4. To provide supported access to the University Library and the university Virtual Learning Environment (LUVLE) for project participants and to provide links to University activities such as public lectures and seminars.
5. To make links between University departments and U3A group leaders.

The main aim of the project was to provide a demonstrator project for how a local U3A could work with a top research university for mutual benefit. To this end an end of project conference and a 'How-to' Guide were built into the project, in addition to dissemination activities at national conferences (eg national U3A conference (September 2009, Edinburgh), Universities UK conference on Older People and Education (February 2010, London), and a presentation at the national UALL (Universities Association of Lifelong Learning) conference March 2010, Oxford).

A three-point summary of our learning from this project

- That older people have a lot to offer to a university.
- That older people are willing to put time in as volunteers – to take responsibility for their own programme and to be self-sustaining while understanding the importance of reporting to key contacts.
- That there is a willingness within the academic community within a university to listen to and engage with older people, and that there are benefits to be gained by both sides when this happens.

The full report is available on our website (see below) and the 'How-to' guide will be available for download from June 2010. This work is continuing with all elements now taking place within Lancaster University's Centre for Ageing Research.

If you're a university or a U3A group wanting to run a partnership programme like this in your region, the 'How-to' guide read in conjunction with the final report should give you lots of ideas and practical tools to help you get going. A steering group of volunteer older people are coordinating the new programme within the Centre for Ageing Research, which is now called the 'Continuing Learning Group'. For more information email c4ar@lancaster.ac.uk

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