

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE - OCTOBER 2020

I am writing this on 23 September, two days after receiving the Third Age Trust's most recent guidance on dealing with Covid-19, and a day after the government's latest announcements about changes in social distancing and other rules. The Trust and North Walsham U3A Committee are doing all they can to keep U3A activities going as much as possible, but it seems inevitable that most face to face meetings will continue to be suspended for some time. This is a real shame, but I am sure you will agree that we need to stay as safe as we can, especially given that older people are affected more badly than others by Covid-19.

Interest Groups Working Together Online

Lots of our interest groups are now meeting virtually online and/or staying in touch by email. It isn't the same as meeting face to face, but it does seem to work well once people get used to it. At the time of writing, groups that are meeting on Zoom or staying in touch by email include:

- Art Appreciation
- Classical Music
- Computing
- Creative Writing
- Current Affairs
- Digital Photography
- Discussion
- Family History
- Folk Music
- Gardening Group 2 (via Facebook)
- History
- Humour
- Jazz Appreciation
- Mac Users
- Philosophy
- Poetry
- Rock 'n' Pop
- Wine Appreciation
- Yoga.

If you would like to join one of these groups, please contact the group leader whose phone number is on this year's programme card, or send a message at www.northwalshamu3a.org/contact-us and we will pass your details on to the Group Leader so they can contact you.

If any of your groups aren't yet using technology to keep working together and you think they might be able to, please do the following:

- Talk to other members of your group about it.
- Try to identify someone in the group who could act as a Zoom 'host' (who can be the Group Leader, but doesn't need to be).
- Ask Peter Phillips and/or Richard Nevill for advice if you want to, or send your query through the contact page on our website at www.northwalshamu3a.org/contact-us.

North Walsham U3A is paying for a number of Zoom subscriptions. To get the best value for the cost of these, the Committee is asking anyone whose Zoom subscription is being paid for to:

- Hold virtual meetings of all groups that they lead where this is possible.
- Be prepared to act as Zoom hosts for other groups they are members of.

Online General Meetings

We are also still offering a virtual monthly General Meeting at 3.00pm on the first Friday of each month. Details of the one on Friday, 2 October will be emailed separately to members who have email addresses.

Virtual Coffee Mornings

Richard Nevill has offered to host virtual coffee mornings on Zoom at 11.00am each Monday. If you are interested, contact Richard at ricnev@gmail.com.

Face to Face Interest Group Meetings

The government's 'rule of six' which limits social contact to a maximum of six people at one time applies to most interest groups meeting face to face, indoors or outdoors. However, if your group has six or fewer attendees, it could meet in person as long as this is done in a Covid secure way.

There is also an exception to the 'rule of six' where a national governing or sporting body has provided approved guidelines that allow a greater number to meet as long as the relevant guidance provided by the sporting body is followed. For example, the Walking Group may be able to restart by following Ramblers Association's guidance, and Chrissie Kimber has emailed group members to tell them more about this.

The Trust's guidance for meeting face to face includes a requirement to have a risk assessment for the activity, and for each member to consider if he/she can take part without undue risk. For the latter, the points to consider are:

- Your own personal health and circumstances. Refer to the NHS Website for further information if you are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from coronavirus.
- The health risk category of anyone else you are living with in your household.
- The risks of the activity you intend to take part in, listed in the risk assessment by your Group Leader.

You must not take part if you or someone else from your household has Covid-19 symptoms. These include a high temperature, a new continuous cough and the loss or a change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you are a Group Leader and would like to restart face to face meetings, please send a message through the contact page on our website at www.northwalshamu3a.org/contact-us. Please don't be put off by the need for a risk assessment, as they are not as difficult to write as you may fear and help will be available with them.

Individual U3A members are, of course, free to meet each other at any time (subject to government rules and guidelines), but such meetings will not be treated as U3A activities unless Third Age Trust guidance is followed.

Online Learning

Details of the latest programme of **Norfolk County Council** Adult Education courses has been published. There is a wide variety to choose from and many are free and/or done online. You can find details at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning

The Oak National Academy is an online classroom made by teachers, for teachers to use during lockdown periods. They have put nearly 10,000 lessons and resources online, covering a wide range of subjects, from Early Years to GCSE level. Their free high-quality video lessons and resources are available to anyone throughout 2020-21. Each lesson is delivered by a teacher, with a pre-recorded video as well as quizzes, worksheets and creative activities. It is all easy to use, there is no login or password, you can access the lessons on any device and you will only need materials you can find at home. To find out more, go to: www.thenational.academy/

Cold, Flu or Covid-19?

And finally, if you are not feeling well but aren't sure if you have a cold, flu or Covid-19, the following short video from the BBC may help:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-54182329

And, of course, you may want to get a Covid test if you think you have the virus.

Stay well,
Steve