

**Annual General Meeting 2016**  
**Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre CIC**  
**Chairman's Report**

It is a pleasure and an honour to be addressing you as chair of Joseph Cowen LLC-CIC today.

This report gives me the opportunity to do three things; to thank on your behalf everyone who has given generously of their time, skills and energies to Joseph Cowen and Explore during the past year, to take stock of where we are in our third year, and to say something about our future direction.

Firstly, I thank my predecessor as Chair, Bea Groves. We are immensely grateful to Bea for her leadership over the past year, and we look forward to her continued involvement as a tutor and supporter. Bea has been and continues to be a stalwart and inspirational ambassador for lifelong learning.

Many thanks also to my fellow Directors. Thanks to Sheila Armstrong and Mike Leddra, who retired from the Board during the year, and welcome to newly elected Directors Jack Pennie and Christine Burridge. Ken Young, Joy Rutter and Louise Freeman, together with academic leads Bronwen Calvert and Colm O'Brien continue as Directors, and we are very grateful to them all for their enormous commitment and work. We are delighted that Geoff Taylor has now joined us as Company Secretary, supported initially by Tom Bates and now by Jan Widmer.

On a day-to-day basis Explore depends on a team of people who do essential things. They greet tutors, do 'front of house' functions, put out attendance sheets, help with audiovisual support, tidy up afterwards and generally take responsibility for the smooth running of sessions. As well as members of the Programme Team who look after 'their' tutors, we rely on John Bundock, Myra Bavidge and Harry Rose for much of this, and owe them many thanks.

The Programme Team, under the joint direction of Colm and Bronwen, is of course central to the success of Explore. Colm will be saying much more about them, but I would also like to thank them all on your behalf. I never cease to be impressed by their resourcefulness in finding excellent tutors and speakers, coming up with ideas for courses and 'one-off' talks, and maintaining the rigorously high academic standard which makes Explore so special.

The Explore office has been transformed since we appointed Rachel Simmons as our Manager in January 2015. As well as the day-to-day business of the office, she liaises with tutors, books rooms, organises AV support, collates financial information, communicates with members, supports special events, helps develop and implement policies and systems, and all in 15 hours a week. Though Rachel's time is limited, it seems that the workload is not, and we continue to depend on members' help with some of the administrative functions. Thanks and good wishes to Tom Bates who has collated the attendance records since Explore started, a task which he will be relinquishing at the end of next season. We are also grateful to Linda Allen for very welcome help with the weekly programme and other work. There is more to be done, however, and during this season we will be looking for additional help with specific projects.

Just outside the office is the Explore bookstall, which has to our surprise become an established and popular feature, providing added interest for members and visitors and a very welcome source of

income. When Anne and John Bundock first set it up as a trial, they little thought that it would be such a success; we are most grateful to them both for their ongoing commitment to managing it.

And lastly, our thanks to Ampersand, to Jonpaul and Peter for all they do to make Floor 4 at CUH such a congenial and comfortable place in which to learn and socialise.

To everyone, many thanks, - your contributions are very much appreciated.

So, where do we stand, mid-way through our third academic year?

A summary of our teaching provision and attendance shows that we are maintaining the quantity of our educational provision, and scrutiny of the programme gives testament to its unique scope and quality.

	Sessions	Attendance
2014-15 Season 1	205	3433
2014-15 Season 2	193	3122
2014-15 Season 3	195	2898
<b>2014-15 Totals</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>9453</b>
2015-16 Season 1	206	3474
2015-16 Season 2	193	3122

But a note of caution.

We currently have 206 subscribing members, which is 6 fewer than this time last year. Ken will be explaining the financial implications of this, but suffice it to say here that, for Explore to remain viable, we need to raise our profile, increase and consolidate our membership, - not only recruiting new members but also retaining our existing ones, and this must be our priority in the coming year.

Existing members are the key to this, - the majority of our new members join because they have heard about Explore from friends. But of the 44 new members who joined in 2014-15, 20 did not rejoin this year. So far this year we have had only 22 new members. We need more information about our members and potential members, - where they live, what else they do, and what they want.

In our first year we were all immensely relieved that Explore had been saved, last year membership numbers increased and we had grounds for cautious optimism. Now we need to build on that, and this seems the right time to do so. We have had our first elections, and the new board has resolved to look at how we work and how we might work better. We have discussed some preliminary ideas and over the next months we hope to develop a plan for the future. The input, involvement and ideas of members will be integral to this process. Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre is your organisation, - we are working on your behalf, and need your support.

*Dorothy Stainsby  
Chair, Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre CIC  
April 2016.*

