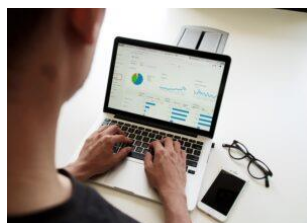# Beacon Newsletter: August 2020

First Beacon 2 Delivery Imminent

It's an exciting time for the Beacon community. In just a few days our development partner, APT, will deliver an early version of Beacon 2 to the team, allowing them to work with the new software for the first time. This Delivery 0, as it is called, will have limited functionality but will be the first of many deliveries over the next few months, each adding further features until Beacon 2 is complete.

As each delivery is received the Beacon 2 team will examine it and set to work towards their goal of getting Beacon 2 into U3As. There's a lot to do.

The Testing sub-team, which is led by Gary Nye (Chester U3A), will review the Delivery 0 software and subsequent deliveries by performing a series of formal tests to ensure that the software meets specifications and that existing functionality has been maintained, allowing U3As to migrate smoothly to the new system.

The Documentation team, led by John Alexander (Four Border Abbeys U3A), will write a new Beacon User Guide complemented by documentation helping U3As to move from Beacon to Beacon 2. There will be more than just text documents. John's team will work with the People team to produce video guides to make the move as easy as possible.

The People team's most pressing need will be to prepare training materials for Beacon 2, according to their sub-lead Marion Collighan (Cheltenham U3A). The team will produce a catalogue that will allow U3A committee members to access the training they need to perform their role. Marion also sees her team's job as ensuring that differences between the old and new systems are fully explained to U3As.

The Rollout Team, under Neil Stevenson (Upholland and District U3A), will manage the process for the 450 U3As using the current Beacon system to migrate to Beacon 2. Rollout team members will be allocated to individual U3As to work with them and support them on their journey to the new Beacon system.

The Communications team, under Ken Wheatley (Bishop's Stortford U3A), will develop an online Beacon Roadshow, working with the People team to inform U3As about the benefits of Beacon 2 and how the migration process works.

The Ongoing Support Team (Roy Biggs, Holmfirth U3A) will familiarise themselves with each release and work with the People and Documentation teams to place new content on the Beacon Help Centre. They will also get to understand Beacon 2 so that they can answer tickets about the new system when they are placed on the help desk.

Finally but importantly, Graeme Tigg (Hammersmith and Fulham U3A) runs the Project Office which will ensure that the project remains on track by monitoring the progress of each team and by identifying and resolving bottlenecks.

This may be just an initial delivery but it marks the start of what will become an almost industrial process. Each delivery, which will be at fornightly intervals, must be considered by each of the sub-teams to ensure that it complies with requirements; is documented; has training materials, and fits the rollout plans. Only then can it be released to U3As. This will take time and will not be complete until some time in the first half of next year. Even so, it's cause for quiet celebration.

If you'd like to join the team then contact recruitment@beacon.u3a.org.uk.

Beacon 2 Reporting

The existing Beacon system allows U3As to run some reports , and it allows data to be exported, so that external reporting tools can be used. Beacon 2 will be much better as it will allow U3As to define and run their own reports against all of their data. Such flexibility offers opportunities but should not come at the price of ease of use. Therefore Beacon 2 will include some predefined reports that can be run out of the box.

What reports would you like to see as standard in Beacon 2?

Join the discussion on the Beacon User Forum.