# I.T. support for WIAS members

At the end of the last WIAS meeting in November, I had a discussion with one member who was keen to continue joining the online meetings we hold over the winter, but was not confident of his I.T. skills and had not installed or used Zoom on his computer. Whilst I was able to give him some advice at the time, it occurred to me that a more general information sheet might be of use.

WIAS has had considerable success in staging Hybrid and Zoom-only presentations but this is of little use if our members are struggling to use their computers. Moreover, we live in a world increasingly reliant on I.T systems often for our most basic needs, and a lack of I.T. competency can lead to significant disadvantage.

## What you need

The base requirement is for a home broadband internet connection and a computer or smartphone connected to it. The computer does not need to be particularly new, nor do you need a particularly fast broadband connection. What is more important is the capability of using and managing what you have. A computer is a tool, and like every other tool, the skill is in learning to use it properly and like a car, to maintain and clean and tidy it (It's very easy for a computer or phone to get overloaded with stuff you don't need).

This is a learning opportunity and by learning how to join an online WIAS meeting, you open the door to a variety of other online services. These can benefit your daily life and also broaden your access to your interests.

## Getting Help

There are a surprising number of free or low cost services available to help you learn to use your computer (or phone). Although useful, there is no need to be dependent on your grandchildren to set things up for you! Family and friends can however be very useful in getting you connected to support services.

## AbilityNet- https://abilitynet.org.uk/about

This charity (based in Leamington Spa) offers flexible and free support to improve your computer skills. This can even extend to a registered volunteer visiting you at home to help you. You can call or email them. There are a large selection of webinars, online worksheets, support packages, helplines, and AbilityNet will also provide support for charities and similar small organisations to help their members.

## GoodThings Foundation https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/

Another charity which offers a service to get people using I.T. and get online via their "Learn My Way" programme. There is a network of organisations delivering free digital training, including Warwickshire College. Again there are online resources you can also use.

## Third Age Trust and Warwick and District u3a
https://warwickdistrict.u3asite.uk/groups/

The Third Age Trust is a national charity supporting retired people by bringing people together locally and online to form learning and activity groups. There are over 1,000 local u3a's in the UK, including local groups in Warwick, Kenilworth, Coventry and Rugby. Many offer their members the opportunity to join or drop in to computer groups aimed at helping people get online, and the national u3a also runs a variety of online Zoom talks, including ones organized with AbilityNet. Members are also encouraged to explore other learning, social and activity groups or indeed, to form one for their own interests if possible.

## Other support

The services mentioned form only a small part of the available services. There are a huge variety of services offering support. Many of these however trend to be online, largely because of the logistics of delivering a personalized face to face service. This means the challenge is to put a toe in the water and take a small step in accessing these services in the first place.

I do hope all this will help to make access to WIAS Zoom meetings a painless exercise!

David Daniel