

# Connect

## West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.

Aug/Sep 2022

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live

### A message from your Regional Trustee



### Mid-Holiday and Mid-Process

As we move through the holiday period, for some it's a time to forget all about u3a matters and relax, whilst for others it's a quiet time to think and plan ahead. Like many members, I've just returned from my first real overseas holiday for almost three years, and I'm enjoying the scorching UK weather of the last few weeks. But for me, it's a time to prepare for the future. You may already be aware that I will be confirmed as Vice Chair of the UK u3a movement at the Annual General meeting on 6 October, and the national officers are already planning for the future.

This continues to be a difficult time for the u3a movement. After more than two years of lockdowns and restrictions we had hoped that by now u3as would be back to their former, face to face glory – and in many cases, members have quickly picked up the pace - but for some members, the resurgent Omicron virus continues to threaten, and they remain short on self-confidence. Despite local recruitment campaigns, UK membership levels still remain more than 10% down on 2019 levels, and there is work to do at all levels to raise the u3a profile, and attract new recruits prepared to take on responsibility and push the movement forward.

We are already in the run up to the October AGM, and I would urge all u3as to register and exercise a vote. There will be numerous motions and amendments and it's important that your u3a contributes to the future of the movement. After the AGM, the annual strategic and budgeting processes will start for 2023, and I hope that we can all work together to restore and develop the movement for the future. Of course, there are still 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and u3a week events to look forward to in September, and traditionally the autumn period provides good recruitment opportunities. So, enjoy the remaining holiday period and the remainder of the summer, and I hope to meet many of you in person as I visit local events.

Allan Walmsley.

WM Regional Trustee,

Email contact:- [allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)

### QR Code to Access u3a WM Region Web Site



QR codes are similar to click links, and are just another way of linking to information. This QR code is a link to the WM Region u3a website but the link can be to any document, website or source.

To open a QR code:

Search and download a QR code scanner app from your app store.

Open the app and hold your device so that the QR code appears in the Camera viewfinder.

The QR code will open immediately.

Thanks to Ross on Wye u3a for the idea.

**For direct access  
to the W Midland  
Region Web Site  
click on the link  
below : -**

**CLICK HERE**

## [What's on in 2022? -](#)

### [40th Anniversary Events Programme](#)

#### **One Foot in the Future - September /October 2022**

The aim of this project is to engage older people from across the UK in telling real or imagined stories about older people taking positive steps to make a better future for themselves and others.

Themes are all about Reimagining the Future in Older Age, raising awareness of the u3a movement as well as the fun you can have as you get older.

#### **Celebrating u3a Week | September 2022**

**u3a Day** is an annual event to showcase the activity, learning and fun which takes place across the movement every day. It is a celebration of positive ageing highlighting our members' life experiences. For more information on u3a day : —

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### [Office Backlog Being Cleared](#)

In recent weeks there has been a purge on clearing the backlog of queries built up at the u3a Office. The appointment of extra part-time staff has enabled the ticketing system to be reduced and as at mid August 2022, there are only 90 tickets now outstanding and these should be cleared before the end of the month. The nature of things is that data is never 100% up to date as there are new tickets every day, but I thought that WM u3as might like to know that the mailing box, which has been the source of some criticism, is now almost cleared.

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### [Elmhurst Ballet School](#)

Zoe Baker from Elmhurst Ballet School in Edgbaston, Birmingham has been in touch. They previously delivered tours to u3a groups prior to the pandemic. They predominantly worked with Solihull u3a, however, they were wondering if any of the other u3a's would be interested in a tour of the Ballet School too? If you are interested in Ballet it is well worth a visit to Elmhurst.

Group visits are priced at £15 per person, and include refreshments on arrival, a welcome and intro from colleagues, a tour of the school and the opportunity to watch a ballet class. Visits last around 1.5-2 hours in total. They would love to hear from any other u3a groups who may be interested.

They are always looking for performance opportunities for their students, as well as the opportunity to raise awareness of the school.

If you want more information or are interested in getting your u3a involved with Elmhurst Ballet School then please reply directly to Zoe Baxter she will be pleased to send you any additional information that might be useful. Zoe is looking forward to hearing from you.

Contact details are --- Zoe Baxter <[zuebaxter@elmhurstdance.co.uk](mailto:zuebaxter@elmhurstdance.co.uk)>.

**To visit their web site click the box**



# GRANTS AVAILABLE TO u3a's in 2022/23

The following grants are now available to u3as as follows:

**Workshop and exhibition grants (up to £500 maximum):** to assist with the organisation of workshops/exhibitions/seminars on topics relevant to the running and future development of u3as. Activities must involve networks or groups of u3as and/or the cost of taking a stand/exhibition space at a local or county show.

**Start Up grants (up to £300 maximum):** available to all new u3as during the set-up process and can be paid as soon as the new u3a has a bank account.

**Relaunch grants (£100 fixed amount):** This is drawn from the Barbara Lewis fund and is a grant to cover costs during a relaunch for u3as that have insufficient reserves to cover the costs. The intention is that the grants will apply to those u3as whose membership numbers have fallen away significantly.

**Special events grants (up to £150 maximum):** to support events aimed at raising awareness of and recruiting new members to the u3a movement. This includes events such as open days, u3a Day/Week activities and events to support the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the u3a movement. This is to supplement the u3a's own spending.

u3as seeking any of these grants should send an email in the first instance with the relevant application form to the Regional Trustee via email. All grant applications must be made to and approved by the Regional Trustee prior to the activity taking place.

Following the event, the u3a must email the Regional Trustee, outlining what the money has been spent on and the identified outcomes.

Payment of the grant will not be made more than 12 weeks in advance of the event.

Application forms and more information are on the national website – see link below - under Support For u3as/Financial Matters — To reach the website click the box

[CLICK HERE](#)

When you reach the website you will need to sign in (or register if you are a new user) then click on “Support for u3a's, then Financial matters and you will see the link to grants information section at the bottom of the page.

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## U3a Director Elections

This is a reminder that information on the AGM 2022 Director Elections, is now available on the main u3a Web Site

To visit the site for more information

[CLICK HERE](#)

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## Castle Bromwich U3A Events

### Open Day

Open day is on 4th September at Arden Hall in Castle Bromwich to celebrate, not only the u3a 40th anniversary, but also it is 16 years since the Castle Bromwich group was formed.

The event will be ‘manned’ by members from some of their interest groups in order that they can showcase their wares. Visitors and current members can obtain information about the u3a and the interest groups that are available to them in Castle Bromwich.

They also welcome members from the cluster groups as a networking opportunity.

### Grand Quiz Evening

A quiz evening is being held on Thursday, 8th September, also at Arden Hall in Castle Bromwich.

Tickets are £10 per person which includes supper. The bar will be open and there is ample car parking at the rear of the hall. Teams are up to 6 people and doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start.

They are encouraging u3a members to attend but tickets are available to non-members.

If anyone would like tickets they should ring/text **Dave Abbott on 07754 205541.**

## Can You Help Me Out?

The u3a movement relies almost totally on volunteers willing to use part of their time to help develop ideas and support activities. Whilst most activities are locally based, there are also networks and regional teams that rely heavily on u3a members bringing their ideas and experience together to create a range of opportunities and activities beyond local u3as.

In the West Midlands, I operate as a regional trustee with the support of a small team of u3a members. We meet virtually around 6-8 times per year and I find it really helpful to hear feedback from u3as and networks around the region as well as discussing the latest developments from around the movement. These support volunteers can then explain the various initiatives and opportunities to their u3as and networks.

I am now keen to add new members to the team. There are no specific requirements other than a little enthusiasm and energy; and the role is certainly not onerous. I am looking for u3a members who can keep me up to date with a local flavour from u3as and networks, and to help me with the organisation and delivery of regional events such as study days, regional conferences, or recruitment fairs.

Depending on location, skills and personal interest, you may be interested in providing support with websites and social media support, with regional communications, help to identify gaps in u3a presence, or identify local organisations, events, initiatives or personalities that we can link into.

I'll ensure that you are aware of the need for confidentiality, equality and data protection, and I'll help you to keep up to date with new u3a material relating to policy, practice, legislative and constitutional changes.

If you think you can help me and support u3as in the West Midlands Region, I would love to hear from you. Email me on: [allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)

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### RETAIN & RECRUIT U3A MEMBERS

A Working Party of members from 65 u3as has produced 35 tools to help with the retention and recruitment campaign.

There are papers, presentations & videos, showing how a bit of thought & lateral thinking can help u3as to stem & reverse reductions in membership and adjust an ageing profile.

The Toolkit is on the main u3a website to access it click the blue box

[CLICK HERE](#)

## West Midland Police – Fraud Bulletin

The latest edition of the Fraud Bulletin is now available on the West Midland u3a web site

To access the bulletin click here

[CLICK HERE](#)

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## Interested in Crown Green Bowls?

Click the box to read the Crown Green Bowls Newsletter on the WM Region Web Site

[CLICK HERE](#)

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## Do you use u3a Subject Advisers ?

Discover more about u3a Subject Advisers on the u3a subject advice page

[CLICK HERE](#)



## Exploring World Faiths – National Zoom Events, Sept-Dec 2022

Details of the next 4 webinars are as follows -

### **Mon 5<sup>th</sup> Sept – 10.0 am**

**Holy Wars or Holy Peace** – To coincide with the International Day of Peace on 21<sup>st</sup> September, we will explore the contribution of Faiths to conflict and to peace.

The contribution of Islam and Judaism to Peace in Israel/Palestine - Claire Bowman, Interchurch and Interfaith Coordinator, Central England Quakers

The promotion of World Peace by the Universal Peace Federation and the Women's Federation for World Peace – Patricia and David Earle

Interfaith Solidarity in Birmingham following the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Building in New York – Representatives of Birmingham Faith Leaders

**Mon 24<sup>th</sup> Oct – 10.0 am—Divali – Festival of Light** – Contributors from the Jain, Hindu and Sikh faiths

**Mon 14<sup>th</sup> Nov – 10.0 am—All Souls – Day of the Dead** – Contributions from Christian and Muslim faiths

**Mon 12<sup>th</sup> Dec – 10.0 am** Reflections, Ideas and Experiences of Setting Up and Running Local Exploring World Faiths Groups

Please register to attend on the Exploring World Faiths subject page on the u3a website. Queries to Dr Peter Rookes at [pjrookes@gmail.com](mailto:pjrookes@gmail.com)

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## **Is your u3a celebrating the u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ?**

On Thursday 9th June 2022, around 100 Rugby u3a members came together for a combined celebration of the u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the Jubilee, under a canopy of bunting suitable for the occasion.



They had displays of various Crafts, Art, Model Engineering, World History and History of Art, to name but a few of their Interest Groups, which showed the wealth of skills and talent in their midst. The Poetry Group gave them some readings, finishing with a special Jubilee poem written for the occasion. and the Circle Dancers performed to enthusiastic applause.

This was followed by a buffet tea party where they were entertained by Eric Newton and his clarinet which greatly added to the enjoyment

of the afternoon.

If your u3a is holding any event/s to celebrate our 40th Anniversary then national office would like to hear from you — contact details are [\*\*weare40@u3a.org.uk\*\*](mailto:weare40@u3a.org.uk)

## INCREASING LOCAL OR NATIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

You will have heard that there is a motion going to the AGM in October to increase u3a's annual membership fee in line with pension changes on an annual basis commencing April next year. This motion is important for the future of the u3a movement, and I ask you to consider it carefully.

Just like local u3as, the membership subscription is the Trust's main source of income - it receives no external funding from government. In recent years, the Trust has begun to explore other sources of income such as the relationship with Specsavers, and there have been significant spending cuts and delayed project spend as membership numbers have fallen due to Covid. In addition, few national meetings are now held face to face with Zoom/Teams becoming the norm.

However the last increase in April 2022 was the first increase for 12 years and the demands for advice and support to u3as has rocketed in recent years.

The Trust has a wide commitment to maintaining and supporting the infrastructure of the movement. In addition to maintaining a small office, money is spent on regions, network link, Board and committee structure – all of which are run almost exclusively by ordinary u3a members.

There are also expenses, grants, advertising, insurance for u3as, external consultancy including legal advice, all of which helps the trust provide a wide range of advice, support, services, volunteer opportunities and benefits for u3as.

As u3a activity returns, the Trust needs to invest in refreshing the momentum of the movement, and broadening the appeal to u3a members and prospective members. Specialist staff are needed to provide the membership with a quality service in a diverse and complex range of areas - legal and Charities Commission requirements are always increasing and there are significant legal differences between the UK's four nations.

Even though many services are staffed by volunteers, there is an urgent need to invest in Beacon, the u3a website provision, online learning platforms, streamlined office procedures (including automating accounting processes) and effective communication services.

Whilst the accounts for last year may appear to show a healthy surplus, much of this surplus is earmarked for these projects, some of which had already been delayed from previous years. The surplus also includes reserves needed to comply with charity law and company law - the current restricted reserves are the minimum required to meet our legal obligations.

Finally, u3a committees may like to look at other national voluntary organisations operating in their locality. The u3a has traditionally been one of the lowest cost voluntary membership movements and even with the proposed increase it will remain so.

However, if the motion to increase membership subscriptions is not passed, the Trust's income will fall significantly, which could lead to cuts in services and delays to projects – therefore there is a second motion to commence the inflationary increase from April 2024. This motion will only become live if the first motion is defeated.

There is also expected to be a range of votes on amendments submitted by u3as – so it's very important that your u3a registers to vote at the AGM and helps to determine the future direction of the movement.

Allan Walmsley, WM Region Trustee

# **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM NETWORK**

The South Birmingham Network was set up in 2021, comprising Kings Norton & District, Moseley/Kings Heath, and Harborne/Edgbaston. The immediate purpose was to help one another emerge from Covid restrictions.

We are an informal grouping, with neither constitution nor website. These may come later but, for now, we are happy to continue as we are.

We hold regular chairs meetings, two of which have included our Secretaries, and our Interest Group Coordinators – to introduce them to one another and get them collaborating.

The latest initiative with the Interest Group Co-ordinators, has resulted in an opening up of Interest Group attendance across the network – so, our members will now have over 100 Interest Groups to choose from which is great and, hopefully, makes membership of our three groups more attractive to potential (and existing) members.

Kings Norton was the first of the groups to restart our Interest Groups and our speaker meetings. We have been able to use this experience to advise the other two groups in the network.

We also share the contact details of speakers we have found particularly good, and share our thoughts on matters which come out of the Trust and from the West Midlands Region.

The great thing about having a network is that the constituent groups are not alone. They can draw on each other's expertise over any issues that might arise. This has been particularly useful as we have entered the post-Covid phase.

The groups retain their own autonomy but have local support. I would seriously recommend it to any groups who are out there on their own but have other solo groups in their area.

Linda J Curry

Coordinator for the South Birmingham Network,  
and  
Chair of Kings Norton & District u3a

## **National News- letter**

To access the archived copies of the National Newsletter click the box below.

**CLICK HERE**

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## **GUIDANCE Constitutions and Covid**

To access the link to u3a mailings on constitutions and Covid guidance, click the blue button below

**CLICK HERE**

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# Training and Regional Support Update

## Online Workshops

The next online workshops are taking place in September and are open for any u3a members to book are as follows:

- **9 September:** Running your u3a – information for Trustees to help them understand their role and responsibilities
- **20 September:** Recruiting and Valuing Volunteers – how to recruit, retain and support volunteers across a u3a
- **21 September:** Interest Groups Matter – for Committee Members, Group Leaders, Group Coordinators or anyone thinking of taking on one of these roles
- **29 September:** Keeping It Legal – information about the key areas all u3as need to be aware of and understand, including data protection, equity and inclusion and safeguarding

The workshops are a great way to learn and to meet other members from across the u3a movement. For further details, timings, and links to book please click the box to visit the u3a workshop page on the national web site.



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## INSPIRING RECRUITMENT

### New recruitment and retention toolkit

This toolkit is intended for use by your committee and any sub-committee or team that you set up. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide you and your u3a with tools to assist you in your efforts to recruit members and retain your current ones.

The Toolkit has a number of different types of tool: PowerPoints, videos, How to guides and a checklist.

To find out more : -

See the National Office mailing about the Recruitment and Retention Toolkit.

By clicking the box here -





## GET THE NATIONAL U3A NEWSLETTER!

Sign up [here](#)

It's a great way of finding out what's going on in u3as across the country: **you can copy all the best ideas!**

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## MODEL

### CONSTITUTION

The **new** Model Constitution has arrived and is available on the main u3a website under **Support For u3as/ Document Downloads**. Look for Document

U3A-KMS-DOC-035.

Alternatively, log in to the main website and click [HERE](#)

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## More News

For more news and information on a variety of u3a matters try the u3a Sources blog

To access Sources

Click the box

[CLICK HERE](#)

# Social Media News

Have you ever explored our social media presence if not then now is the time to take a look via the below links to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube : —

Click the buttons below to see our social media profiles

Facebook



Twitter



Instagram



YouTube



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## THE BRAND CENTRE

The first tranche of merchandise is available on the brand centre. This includes mugs, bags and badges. You can use these to promote your u3a and on u3a day. More merchandise over the next few months.

Click [HERE](#) to go to Brand Centre Registration Page on the National Web Site

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## THE IMAGE LIBRARY

The national image library has been updated. This is full of u3a member photos, from walking to ukulele playing. Use these on your u3a websites and publicity materials. The Trust will be updating this image library once they start doing photoshoots again.

Access the image library via the Main U3A Web Site

# Calling all u3a Bridge Groups

**Register for our u3a 40th Anniversary Charity Bridge Festival**

There is “something for everyone” for the five days of Monday 19th to Friday 23rd September 2022

**To register click here** —

CLICK HERE

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## Let's Talk Tech

A dedicated website full of helpful guidance and user experiences for u3a Hybrid (or Alternative) meetings has just been launched.

As experience builds the website will grow with more tips and techniques

To access the Website click the box below

CLICK HERE

You can also join the Facebook group, where you can find details of weekly Zoom drop in sessions for more help and support. To join click the box

CLICK HERE

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## ARE YOU A u3a CHAIR IN THE WEST MIDLANDS ? IF SO :-

**Every Friday, I hold a “Fireside Chat”,** a very informal Zoom session where Chairs exchange their news and views about u3a.

If you're a Chair and haven't come along yet, please email me and I'll send you an invitation. — Allan

**If you want to contribute to one of our newsletters or if you'd like to know more about any of the items featured**

**OR if you just want to say hello, email**

**[allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)**



## Newsletter Express

To read the latest copy of the National Newsletter Express click the box below

CLICK HERE

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## ADVANCE NOTICE

U3a day celebrations are now extended throughout a week. Be prepared for the week of u3a celebration.

The dates for the next five years are -

17—25 September 2022

16—24 September 2023

21—29 September 2024

20—28 September 2025

19—27 September 2026

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