

# Connect

## West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.

January 2022

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live

### A message from your Regional Trustee



Once again we are starting a new year with an air of uncertainty still hanging over us. Whilst the Omicron variant seems to be less debilitating than Delta, the fact that it is more transmittable will do nothing to restore the social confidence of members who remain wary after almost two years of various legal and social restrictions.

However, the movement includes members with a broad range of attitudes, and many who are fully vaccinated are already once again taking the opportunity to get out and about and organising meetings and face to face activities. In England we've not had many of the same legal restrictions as Wales and Scotland, and the responsibility is therefore often on individuals to decide how they want to behave. Those members who do want to see a return to "normality" as soon as possible will have an enormous role to play as u3as try to restore activities and encourage others to emerge from the last two years. However, equally I hope that these members recognise that for some people, social confidence is often difficult to regain, and the pace of recovery will clearly be a matter of personal choice for many members.

Elsewhere, the u3a Board has been taking the opportunity to re-evaluate the structure of the movement and the way that it operates. This includes almost every aspect of the way support and advice is provided to u3as, as well as the coordination and encouragement of learning, and showcasing/communicating the achievements of u3as. With over a 1,000 u3as in the UK, and over 400,000 u3a members, the movement grew significantly prior to the pandemic and the support arrangements for members needs to catch up with the rapid social and technological changes that have also taken place. So look out for gradual improvements throughout this year.

Allan Walmsley. WM Regional Trustee,

[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 - A Taster**

u3a turns 40 years old in 2022 and is '*fit for the future!*' We will be celebrating this milestone with a packed programme of events running all year. u3as and members will have the opportunity to get involved in the celebrations and help raise the profile of our wonderful and vibrant organisation. A full programme will be available soon but please find a taster below of what's coming up.

#### **Anniversary Quilt Competition**

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary quilt competition was launched for members to create blocks for a quilt on the topic of Positive Ageing. The Anniversary Quilt competition has been judged and 40 squares on the topic of Positive Ageing have been selected for the quilt which we hope will be revealed on as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend. We plan an alert in the second half of May to advise members of dates and times and anticipate that the quilt can then be displayed in a number of locations in the UK.

#### **Picnic in the Park | June 2022**

Over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend, u3as are encouraged to hold picnics to celebrate not just the Queen's Jubilee and the Green Canopy but also our 40th Anniversary. We hope to make a splash with the reveal of the Anniversary Quilt at this time.

#### **U3a Science Network webinar | July 2022**

The u3a Science Network will host an anniversary meeting, Futures, Foresight and Horizon scanning, in July which we hope will be open to the public as well as to u3a members. There are plans to attract an eminent scientist to open the July science network meeting. Two additional meetings for u3a members will be held during 2022, in April and October.

#### **Conference on Research and Shared Learning | July/August 2022**

Conference featuring a wide range of topics and sessions about u3a Research and Shared Learning. A planning meeting in January will decide on the projects to be included and we are seeking a significant scientist to open the meeting.

#### **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' lived experience. For more information on u3a day : —

[!\[\]\(235bfe13ebf007ce2eea9e689707fac7\_img.jpg\)](#)

## Do you have a group with unusual or interesting activities which you could share with other u3a's ?

If so please send details and photos to Allan Walmsley your Regional Trustee and where it is possible he will include them in the next Regional Newsletter. [allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)

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### 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Quilt Competition



Olton & District u3a Craft and Chat Group are celebrating the fact that they have two worthy winners in the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Quilt Competition. This is quite an achievement considering their monthly meetings were held by Zoom during 2020 and they were unable to meet face to face until last September. Due to shortage of time to enter the competition they decided then that entering individually was the best way forward, rather than a group entry.

Congratulations go to Jan Burchell and Pat Goodwin. Jan has produced some outstanding quilting over the years, producing many quilts for her family. Her

square has been cleverly appliqued. Pat has many crafting skills and has also produced many items over the years including items for charity. Her main skills include embroidery, crochet, knitting and sewing. Pat's square, made up of positive thinking heads, has been embroidered and appliqued.

They are extremely proud to think that through Jan and Pat they have played a part in the commemorative quilt which will form part of the archive for the u3a movement and can't wait to see the finished quilt.

Annette Lee – Group Facilitator – Olton & District u3a



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## West Mercia Police — Fraud and Scam alert!!

West Mercia Police have just launched a new Fraud and Scam Bulletin. In the January edition they are focusing on two types of Fraud about which they have had multiple reports from the public in recent weeks.

NEW WhatsApp FRAUD AND Romance fraud – What is it?

To find out more click here >

[CLICK HERE](#)



# REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Nobody wants a Regional Conference – Right? So, this year, all u3a members in the West Midlands are invited to join an online day of shows, presentations and engagement celebrating people living ***Interesting and Motivating Lives*** and encouraging us all to live ***Inspiring Lives***. The aim of the day is to celebrate the aspirations and achievements of people in later life and to inspire others to achieve their potential.

There will be a variety of speakers from both the u3a and celebrity worlds, on a range of subjects explaining and promoting positive living in older age, plus a look into the history of well-known people achieving great success in their later years. There will also be entertainment and exercise, all designed to show that life needn't end with retirement – it can also be a launchpad for more interest and excitement!

It will all take place on **22nd March 2022** and run from 10.00am to about 2.30pm. It will take place on Zoom, via an open invitation - there will be no need to register. A link will be issued in early March and members can pop in and out whenever they like throughout the Day.

We do hope that you will join us as we expect a full and interesting day.

Please make a note in your diary and circulate this information widely to your u3a members. We will provide further details of the Day's events as we progress.

**Remember - No need to register, members can just attend on the day. A Zoom link will be widely published in early March and all members need to do is click on the link before 10am on the day.**

Looking forward to seeing you on the Day.

West Midlands u3a Event Team

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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](#)

## u3a online workshops

The Third Age Trust has developed a number of workshops for u3a committee members, potential committee members Group Leaders and Group Coordinators. These online workshops have been designed to provide support, information and knowledge to the u3a movement.

The workshops currently on offer for January are as follows: -

**Finance Matters –** Monday 31st Jan 10am to 12.15pm

This session is aimed at Treasurers and any other Committee Members that need a greater understanding of u3a financial matters

**Interest Groups Matter –** Friday 28th Jan 10am to 12.12pm

This workshop is for Committee members, Group leaders/Convenor and Group Coordinators and anyone thinking of taking up these roles. The session will review the guiding principles, discuss the role and responsibilities of Group Coordinators and Group Leaders/Convenors and to discuss challenges in running effective groups

To book a place Visit the online workshop page by clicking the box then click on "Register Here"

[CLICK HERE](#)

## Exploring World Faiths — Zoom Events

At our latest webinar Liz Dancey, from Harborne and Edgbaston u3a, presented resources she has created for the 6 major world faiths, supported by the Arts Society. These include videos, guides and worksheets, which are freely available to Exploring World Faiths groups through the link which will be uploaded to the Subject Advisors' page on the national website. Queries to Dr Peter Rookes, National Subject Advisor, Exploring World Faiths, pjrookes@gmail.com.

Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2022, 10.0am Presentation on the Spiritualist Faith By Julia Almond, Spiritualists National Union -- Open to all. — See Exploring World Faiths Subject Advisors Page on the National u3a website.

To visit the National u3a website and open the Faiths page : -

[CLICK HERE](#)

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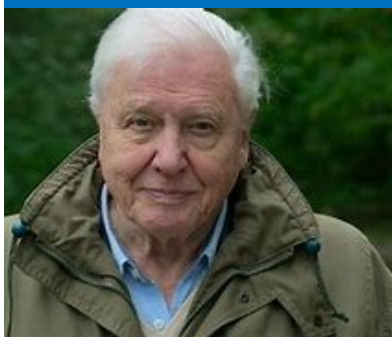
### Enquiries to U3a Office

Ever wondered why some of your enquiries to the office go unanswered? During a recent review of resource requirements in the u3a office, the Advice and Volunteering section clocked an average of over **1000** telephone calls per month and between **800-900** emails per month to the generic u3a.office email address. This workload is currently shared between 4 full time equivalent staff, some of whom work part time together with a small group of volunteers.

The review will hopefully lead to an improvement in resources and better access to advice and FAQs via the website, with better clarification when general communications like the newsletters are issued. Whilst the u3a movement is a member organisation and contact with members will always be part of the service, members are asked to think twice before contacting the office. Perhaps their query can be answered in a different way.

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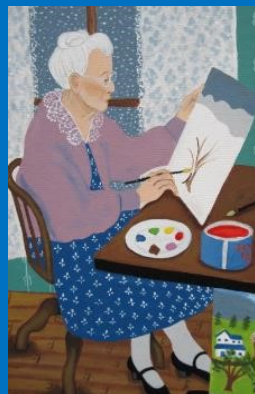
## Regional Conference — a new approach



Zoom in on **22 March 10am-2:30pm** to find out about

### “Inspiring Lives”

Need some inspiration? You'll find it here. Examples, advice & stories from u3a and beyond of great achievements after 60.  
Details soon: **SAVE THE DATE**



# COVID 19

The latest Covid advice is on the national website under Support for u3as – to access the web site and see this advice click here

[CLICK HERE](#)

Nothing is perfect and as always most of it is open to interpretation but there are now no legal restrictions on eg numbers assembling, although the public are advised to exercise caution. However, businesses/organisations have a responsibility to create their own conditions to ensure the safety of their employees/members, and people will also determine individually how they wish to behave.

So it's up to u3as to restart face to face activities where their members are comfortable to take part, and with conditions that your committee feel appropriate to ensure the health and safety of members.

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## Do you listen to u3a radio?

Listen to u3a radio now on podcasting platforms

Click the link for more information >

[CLICK HERE](#)

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## Check Your Spam Folder

Are you or any members of your u3a missing out on u3a emails? It may be that they are going into junk or spam; you can avoid this happening by reporting them as not spam or by adding our u3a email address into your contacts. Please also regularly check your spam folder.

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## Need help finding speakers for your speaker meetings?

Your u3a can access new and interesting talks from speakers from across the u3a movement with the Speaker Swap initiative, which has recently expanded to include Art History talks. Read more on the scheme and the talks that will be available on [our learning news section](#).

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## Do you use u3a Subject Advisers ?

LEARNING MORE ABOUT: NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS WITH PHILOSOPHY SUBJECT ADVISER, SHRI

**RESOLUTION: KEEP YOUR MIND CHALLENGED**

**RESOLUTION: STAY CONNECTED**

How lucky we are to have the u3a where we can do all these things and more. Whether or not we do make resolutions there seems to be good reasons to do at least some of these things. Read more on [our Sources blog](#), and see more from Shri on the [Philosophy Subject Advice page](#).

Discover more about u3a Subject Advisers on the [u3a Subject Advice page](#).

# u3a Growing the Future

To mark the u3a movement's 40th Anniversary in 2022, the Trust is creating a u3a anniversary woodland situated in the Brecon Beacons.

u3a member's contribution to the u3a woodland will help benefit the environment, wildlife and climate for future generations.

The movement's target was for 5,000 trees to be planted between October 2021 and March 2022 and the good news is that over 6000 are now on their way to being planted. We are now setting a new target of 10,000.

u3a members are able to buy individual trees or a copse of 100 trees and u3as are also encouraged to plant trees within their own communities.

Buy u3a woodland trees on the u3a brand centre.

To access the Brand Centre

[CLICK HERE](#)



to

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## Trust u3a

Since its inception in early 2020, Trust u3a has proved to be an invaluable forum for providing learning opportunities to members. Whilst the original intention had been to create Tu3a for a limited 12 month period, the continuation of Covid restrictions and the undoubted popularity of group-based online activities has justified its continuation. Membership has been steadily increasing and now stands at over 1,000 members, all enjoying access to over 80 online interest groups. However, this success and popularity has created a number of challenges.

As Tu3a was originally set up on a temporary basis and largely administered by volunteers with support from u3a office staff, this makes it difficult to justify an independent u3a status. In addition, the increasing appetite for the concept of online interest groups suggests that Tu3a activities should be properly supported as a key part of the Trust's learning activities. Online interest groups are becoming increasingly more popular throughout the UK, and demand is increasing throughout the entire u3a membership.

Consequently, the Board has decided that effective from April 2022, Tu3a will become a part of the Trust's overall learning provision and Tu3a administration will be fully supported by u3a office staff. This does not mean that any of the current online groups will change, and we expect all current Tu3a group-based activities to continue unchanged with volunteers leading online interest groups.

The effect of this change is that Tu3a will become a key part of the Trust's Online Learning Platform and the change will enable Tu3a activities to be managed alongside the National Learning Programme, the Shared Learning Programme and the activities of Subject Advisers.

Arrangements for membership after April 2022 are currently being developed and all members will be contacted as soon as possible.

Best wishes for 2022

Allan Walmsley

Tu3a Chair — Email: [allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)

## LATEST COVID GUIDELINES

The latest guidance is set out on the national u3a website

**Click the link below** to see how it applies to your u3a:

[CLICK HERE](#)

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## National Newsletter

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

[CLICK HERE](#)

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## GUIDANCE Constitutions and Covid

To access the 26th March 2021 link to a u3a mailing on constitutions and Covid guidance, click the blue button below

[CLICK HERE](#)



# Celebrating Networks

u3a networks are such an important part of the movement and we know that you want to connect widely with each other. If you're part of a u3a network, you can soon have access to a brand new newsletter filled with the latest news from u3a networks across the movement. Sign up for the newsletter by using this link: -



## Network Link Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 via Zoom

You are invited to a virtual Network Link Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 using Zoom. It will start at 10.00am and last for 2.5 hours.

There will be presentations from Liz Thackray, Stuart Murray and Allan Walmsley. Included will be a short Q and A after each presentation then discussion time in breakout rooms. There will be a short comfort break in the middle. We hope that you will join us for what should be an informative morning.

Please sign up for this meeting by contacting Avis, by the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022, at [u3anetworklinkmeeting@gmail.com](mailto:u3anetworklinkmeeting@gmail.com). **Please include the names of attendees, their email addresses and which network they are from.** At the moment we are not limiting the number of attendees from each network.

The link to the meeting will be sent out to each attendee just before the meeting.

## Network Link meeting 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 Programme:

10.00 Welcome, apologies and housekeeping

Presentations: –

10.10 Development of a future Strategy Allan Walmsley

10.40 Ask not what the Trust can do for you, ask what you can do for the Trust Liz Thackray

11.10 Lessons from networking – case studies from Wales and Chester Stuart Murray

11.40 Comfort Break

11.45 Breakout rooms

12.15 Plenary

12.30 Farewell

Your support will be welcomed.

The Network Link Team



## 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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## NEW ON 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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## NEW ON 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

## 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



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



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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



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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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