

November 2023

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear friends,

As we move to a busy time of year when u3as are planning lots of events, u3a committees will be working even harder than usual. Many u3as say they are always on the look out for new committee members or even volunteers to help at u3a events. The success of our movement is built on the time and talents of our members. **If you think that you could help your committee please let them know – for many u3as your time is the greatest gift you could offer.**

Earlier this month, we celebrated Trustees Week – and you can hear from one Trustee about her experience at the end of this newsletter.

Thank you also to everyone who responded to the TAM survey – we had an amazing number of responses and we will be using your ideas as we move forward into 2024.

This newsletter also launches our new Learn Something Brilliant Today film, in which Dulwich u3a member Stuart shares how u3a, and rediscovering an old hobby, has been positive for him.

As usual this newsletter is full of inspiring stories, from many u3as members far and wide, and shows the opportunities open to everyone to make new friends and learn new skills.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger

News from the Trust



Meet Stuart

The latest film in our Learn Something Brilliant Today series showcases the experience of Dulwich u3a member Stuart, who has rediscovered his love of Table Tennis thanks to u3a.

This film was recorded at the London Region Table Tennis Tournament. This was just one of the many events held by regions, networks and u3as during u3a week to celebrate the joy and learning of the u3a movement.

u3a News



25 Years of Handbell Ringing at Orpington u3a

Orpington u3a's Handbell Ringing Group was set up in 1998 and has continued to meet regularly ever since then.

In October, the group gathered at All Saints in Sanderstead for a training and social get together, with 12 other groups from across the South East. Coordinator of the group Jo says, "Several other players are members of u3as across the region and made themselves known to us. Playing in collaboration with other groups is always good fun and we always learn something new."

Pictured: Orpington u3a's Handbell group, pictured earlier this year in Guildford Cathedral at a celebratory service for the Coronation. They played together with 100 handbell ringers from across the South East of England.

Halesworth u3a celebrate the history of their town

The town of Halesworth recently celebrated the 800th anniversary of the grant of a market charter by Edward III.

To celebrate, Halesworth u3a's local history group created displays of historical photos, which were showcased across the town, and spoke to residents about their memories.

This has spurred the beginning of an oral history project in conjunction with the local museum. The group also provided four history walking tours across two weekends, which were attended by over 150 people.

These activities significantly raised the profile of Halesworth u3a and helped them to forge new connections with other local organisations.



News from the Board

Liz Thackray, Chair of the Third Age Trust

A number of members have queried a statement I made at the recent AGM about criteria for being a member of a u3a.

At the AGM I made it clear that we do not have – and never have had – any lower age limit; that the u3a is open to all that have the time to fully participate. The decision not to have a lower age limit was taken by an AGM of the Trust in the 1980s and has never been formally discussed since.



Legal advice has been taken on how to interpret the relevant part of our objects clause, which is also the objects clause of u3as that use the model constitution.

The clause says that our objects are:

the advancement of education and, in particular, the education of older people and those who are retired from full time work, by all means including associated activities conducive to learning and personal development.

The lawyers – and the also the Charity Commission – view our primary objective as being “the advancement of education by all means”. Although there is a focus on “older people and those retired from full time work”, this is not a restriction, as is made clear by the words “in particular”.

In plain English, this means that as long as the activities we undertake are educational (in the broadest sense), our objects do not limit who can participate. The only limitation to this would be if our membership were to change so that most members were, for example, under 30. In that case, the objects clause would need to be revisited as the focus would no longer be on “older people and those who are retired from full time work”.

There has been no change in the criteria for joining the u3a – just a clarification of who is eligible. Perhaps the most important element, which does not form part of our legal documentation, is that the u3a is a self-help, mutual aid organisation. **It is important that those joining the u3a need to be aware that their participation involves them contributing to the life of the u3a**, as in the case of the 27 year old I cited, who is treasurer of his local u3a.

Overall we do not expect the age profile of our membership to change in any significant way – but it is an opportunity to keep our door open to all those that want to be part of the u3a movement. To benefit from their skills and experience in the same way as we do from all our current members.

Spotlight On:

Jenny, Milford On Sea u3a

During Trustees' Week 2023, local u3a Trustees shared what a day in their life as a committee member looks like. Here's a snippet from Milford On Sea u3a Trustee, Jenny.



My husband and I are both founder members of our u3a and I've done just about everything on the committee. I'm currently editor of the Milford On Sea u3a newsletter. It's quite simple to collate – usually the Chair writes a paragraph at the beginning and I add news of events.

In our u3a, whatever we do, we spread it out as much as possible. What we say is that when you have a group, everyone in that group is responsible and people can do different roles within it. It has definitely changed the culture.

My Mahjong group is on a Monday morning – I've just been away for six weeks, and it runs very well without me! u3a is about people learning together. For our groups to be successful they need to not rely on just one person. Now our members don't think about running a group as being daunting.

I'm sure there are lots of u3as that run like this. Running a u3a does not need to be onerous. When Milford on Sea u3a started, we thought we'd be really lucky if we got 100 members, now we have 400.

Being a committee member is great fun. We laugh, we make friends. I've made so many friends in u3a. We moved here before we retired and we didn't know a soul. u3a was the thing that gave me all my friends.

Headline photos: Lancaster & Morecambe u3a member Pauline recently visited Southport u3a's Walking Group 4 to share the basics of Nordic walking with them; the London Region u3a week Table Tennis tournament as featured in our latest film; u3a Subject Adviser for Quizzes Ian at a recent quiz for his u3a.