

Please join the monthly Regional Zoom, 10am Tuesday 9 Sept

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87553546055> - on the Regional [website](#) under [NEWS](#)

No need to book, open to all members. Your Council Rep needs to know your opinions!

This newsletter' and past ones will be on the Region's website – Google "[u3a west Midlands](#)." It aims to give you useful news to share with members, and resources for your u3a. It's being updated as we speak.

Please send contributions or queries to Jean.Jackson@u3a.org.uk, or call **07310 183428**.

The newsletter is bi-monthly, so the next is in **NOVEMBER**. **The next Zoom** is on Wed 22 Oct, 6:30pm

The zooms aim to get your views so that your Council Rep can represent your views to the Board.

What do you think would benefit u3as, now and in the future? What help should the Trust give?

How do you see the Trust and u3as changing in the future?



**Jean Jackson, from
Lichfield u3a**

Your West Midlands Council Representative is Jean Jackson

As you'll know, each UK region elects 2 Council Representatives, and in April you chose me (the former Regional Trustee) and **Rob Rowberry** of Redditch u3a. Sadly, Rob has had to step down, so until the elections next February, you're back to one Representative. I really can't thank Rob enough for all the energy and ideas he's contributed. He is missed!

Why? I think it's fair to say that - perhaps because the Council is a brand new thing - we've been much busier than anticipated. Your Council **Representative** is responsible for supporting u3as and understanding what the u3a members in my region need. I share those ideas with my

other Council Reps, so that if it seems like a UK-wide issue it goes to the top of the list; we work together to present proposals to the Board about it, and recommend what we think needs to be done. Once we have the Board's approval, action starts. We identified 5 UK-wide issues that we need to fix: overall it's proving to be more longwinded process than we thought, but we are confident that it'll work eventually. None of the problems is new, e.g. groups being full. **READ ON!** And because we have a new CEO, and because u3a's strategy for development is over 4 yrs old, the Council Reps have also been working with the Board on developing the new strategy for u3a. It will be a while coming, but you've contributed already by filling in a long survey saying what you think about u3a: once there are results to share, I'll post them on the Regional website & alert you.

What else can I do for you? One of the top issues in the region, shared by many UK u3as, is the difficulty of finding a Chair and people to join the committee. I've added some ideas here, and there's a Council working party that's investigating in more depth. It's interesting to speculate why this general downturn in volunteering is happening. Great topic for a discussion group! I've heard it attributed to the "every man for himself" attitude promoted by Margaret Thatcher (didn't say I agree, I'm just reporting!) and perhaps more credibly, to the fact that so many older people are "carers", for partners, relatives and of course for grandchildren, so it's hard to find the time to take on more responsibility. However I'd say that join the committee can be fun, not just a chore - again a bit like

looking after grandchildren! So – it’s September, the grandchildren are back at school, and there’s a lot going on – some of which I’ve summarised below.

Are you Chair of your u3a? Give the Chairs’ Forum a try: they meet monthly on Zoom, and have a closed Facebook page. Email Laurence.Wale@u3a.org.uk if you’re interested.

If you’re not a Chair, then you -or any member - can join the Monthly Zoom to let me know what you think, what your ideas and issues about u3a are. I’m very willing to visit your u3a and/or your committee, and the Zoom helps me hear from a lot of people in a short time.

You may wish to re-use some of these items in your newsletter. I send it as a PDF but if you need a Word version, email me. I hope to see you soon! If you lose it, it’s on the Region’s website!

Jean Jackson

What’s happening? *The words in yellow are clickable links.*

VOTING FOR VICE CHAIR OF u3a: Voting closes at **5pm on 11 September 2025.**

Queries? Email elections@u3a.org.uk. Or call the Trust on **020 8466 6139.**

WANT TO KNOW WHAT GROUPS OTHER u3as HAVE?

700 u3as use “Siteworks” for their website. Now, via the “Oversights” website, you can search what groups those u3as offer, something you might find useful – Click to see: [Oversights](#)

THE u3a WEEK, 20-28 SEPT

It’s not too late – and your efforts should be amplified by national publicity. You can still apply for a grant of up to £500 towards the cost of your recruitment activity : fill in a simple form: describe your activity, what results you expect it to produce, how much it may cost, and how much you need as a grant towards the cost. **You may be reluctant to recruit because your groups are full – read on!**

Below you’ll see a photo of an event run by **Redditch u3a** in August: they recruited 18 new members in one afternoon! You don’t have to run an event, e.g. you can advertise – online or in a local publication- be interviewed by a local publication, or join in someone else’s event: famously, Southport u3a set up at the Southport Flower Show. – More information: [u3a - u3a Week.](#)



Redditch attribute their success to being very welcoming and doing a LOT of advertising in advance, in all kinds of places. Current members enjoyed the event, too – and Redditch is looking forward to gaining even more recruits.

CONGRATULATIONS REDDITCH!

THE THIRD AGE TRUST AGM, WED 15 OCT 2025

Details are here: [u3a - AGM 2025](#) It’s being held at Sketchley Grange Hotel, Hinckley, so u3a members in the West Midlands might like to attend in person – you’re welcome! You can’t claim expenses from the Trust or Region, but your local u3a might reimburse you if you ask in advance.

THE u3a FESTIVAL 2026 : booking opens Oct/Nov EMAIL GOING OUT IN SEPT

The Festival is like a u3a Summer School but on a much larger scale. It was run for the first time in 2024. Again, it will be at the University of York, from **Wed 1st July to Friday (or perhaps Sat) 3rd July, 2026**. They reserve the right to extend it to Saturday. You'll be able to offer and/or sign up for many different events: walks, talks, workshops, which will be advertised in Oct/Nov. Costs are not finalised yet. Places are expected to go quickly, so if you're interested, look out for the booking site. **IF you would like to offer to deliver a session**, email Margaret.Fiddes@u3a.org.uk asap: preference will be given to interactive sessions rather than talks.

LOOK OUT FOR a national Zoom aimed at recruiting Regional PR Advisers & Communications teams. I'm in the early stages of organising it and will let you know when booking opens.

Opportunities for you and your members:

Members gain a lot from their local u3as, but if you'd like to take a wider view, then there are a lot of opportunities throughout the u3a organisation, whether you just want to learn differently or whether you want to deliver talks or workshops, or help to achieve specific things.:

INTEREST GROUPS ONLINE (IGO)

is an online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses from the comfort of your home. It's £12/year, from April. After 1 October, it costs £6 to join until 31 March next year. To become a member, complete a form and pay online. Especially if you're stuck in the house for some reason, it's a good way of pursuing your interests: [IGO](#)

THE U3a COMMUNITIES SITE (“putting the university back into u3a”)

This isn't formally associated with u3a, but is run by u3a members. It's FREE – and like the Trust, it offers talks, zooms, resources, etc. Anyone can join. Take a look: <https://u3acommunities.org>

JOIN A NATIONAL GROUP

I'm a member of both the AI and the “Future Lives” teams, and there are many such throughout u3a, likeminded people who get together mainly via Zoom, UK-wide.

Contact a [Subject Advisor](#) for details of a UK-wide network that you might want to join.

GIVE A NATIONAL TALK ONLINE

If you have something you want to share via a National online event, contact the Third Age Trust and they'll get right back to you. Call or email the National Office, info@u3a.org.uk; .020 8466 6139

BECOME A TRUST VOLUNTEER OR SUBJECT ADVISER

There are many opportunities within the TAT without being elected: you could volunteer to support Beacon, run workshops, join the Governance, Finance, TATTL, or “u3a matters” committees, - the list goes on! See [u3a - Volunteering for u3a](#)

JOIN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL TEAM : how about the Communications group?

At present there isn't a formal regional team, but if there was, we could achieve more: perhaps run more Study Days, or a Summer School, or help u3as throughout the region who are struggling with things, e.g. by helping to organise adverts, Open days, etc. Raising u3a's profile through PR is an important part of this so I'm especially keen to hear from anyone with an interest in comms or PR. Each Region should have a **PR adviser** – could that be you? Email Jean.Jackson@u3a.org.uk

JOIN THE u3a COUNCIL TO REPRESENT MEMBERS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

February will soon with us – and that's the time to put yourself for election as a Council Rep for the West Midlands. If you're interested, contact me anytime: I will send reminders about the process after Christmas. You need to be nominated by TWO u3as.

Speakers for your u3a?

Chief among the groups that delight in giving talks is the Artificial Intelligence (AI) team. If members of are interested – and ESPECIALLY if they're not- then we can create a talk or workshop for you. Jean Jackson's part of the national AI team, who give monthly national Zooms and many other sessions, and locally – he's in Droitwich u3a - Gerard van Zweiten can help you! [Other speakers](#) are on the website.



**AI & You -
A Friendly Intro**

Learn What AI Really Is

Stay Safe & Informed

Discover Everyday Uses

Free Presentation - All Welcome!

For more info:
gerardvanzwieten@gmail.com
07597 834533

AI will affect all our lives, and so isn't just a matter for Science and Technology groups. Discussion or Current Affairs groups, Philosophy and even Psychology groups may be interested in the implications of AI, which seems unstoppable.

Want to know more?

Call Gerard (see poster) or Jean (07310 183428) and look at the AI Library which also lists all the AI talks that are coming up: see: [AI for everyone – U3A Communities](#)

Are your Interest Groups Full?

If so, you may be reluctant to take on new members. But don't despair: 2 things seem to help: one is **regular drop-in coffee sessions**, so members can at least meet others "while they wait" and the other is Short Courses!

If you have an influx of new members who can't join their preferred group just yet, then **inviting them to a short course may be an attractive option**. If there are only, say, 6 sessions, then you're more likely to get a volunteer as Group Leader.

You could even ask someone outside your u3a to come and run the sessions: the AI team can help, the charity [AbilityNet](#) (who help older people use technology) can help, or perhaps an existing leader might convene a group for a short time: popular choices are practical art groups, music-listening-and-discussion groups, craft groups, "pop-up" book clubs, and Current Affairs groups, because none of those need a great deal of setup or special equipment.

We've found that at the end of 6 or 8 weeks, the group often decides to carry on, and a member (or ideally members) will step up to lead the group. By then they know it isn't hard, if the responsibility is shared. **Another idea that worked for Monmouth u3a** is holding some groups in the evening: they doubled their membership by introducing evening meetups, which have attracted new members,

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO YOUR MEMBERS.

They can contact me, their Council Rep, anytime to express their views or ask for help/advice, or they can join the Regional Zoom to do so:

next Zoom is TUESDAY 9 SEPT 10am -see EVENTS on the Region's website.

Find the Region's website by googling "u3a West Midlands Region"