



January 2026

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Introduction from Iain Cassidy

Dear Friends,

When January rolls around, people are often thinking about the changes they can make for 2026 – exercising more, spring cleaning, taking the time to be creative. If trying a new hobby is one of your resolutions, u3a is the perfect way to try something new without commitment. What could you discover with your local u3a?

This February, there is a special opportunity to sample the online learning experience with the *Interest Groups Online Fair*. You'll find more details below, along with our final story, which highlights what can be gained when you step outside your comfort zone and try something new.

Another challenge to consider this year is standing to be a Council Representative in your region. We need members to stand in eight of the twelve regions and the role is a powerful way to use your skills to make a difference. As a regional Council Representative, you would meet u3a members from all across your region and amplify the views and ideas of local u3as. Shape the future of u3a – apply on [the elections page](#).

With very best wishes

Iain Cassidy
CEO of the Third Age Trust

Meet our London Marathon runners

We are excited to announce that two runners, Sheryl and Clive, will be taking part in the London Marathon to raise money for the u3a movement. For Sheryl, u3a has an important family connection, as her mother is a member of West Bridgford u3a.



Meanwhile, Charnwood u3a member Clive explains what taking part means to him. He says, "u3a means to me a new chapter in my life, which involves embracing new challenges and opening up to new opportunities. I believe in promoting the values of u3a to anyone who is unfamiliar with the organisation and emphasising the benefits and advantages of making new friends, learning new skills and keeping active in retirement."

friends stories



I joined the u3a in Moraira-Teulada in March 2023 whilst in Spain for five weeks. On returning to the UK, I immediately joined Stubbington u3a. I have really enjoyed being a member of both groups.

I had to retire early for medical reasons and felt quite cut off for the first two years but u3a has enabled me to have a social life, learn new things and enjoy being part of our criminology group. It's surprising how much criminal knowledge we hold between us as a group to make us sound extremely frightening to any possible eavesdropper!

Jane, Stubbington u3a

friends media



Prima position for u3a

A double page article about u3a features in the February edition of *Prima*, out now. The piece shares the stories of four u3a members who have made big and small changes to their lives, thanks to u3a.

The *Sunday Times Home* section ran an article about the happiest and healthiest places to retire – listing u3a as a key factor in contributing to a positive later life.



Pictured: Bromley u3a member Madhu who talked about her u3a experience in the February edition of Prima.



from u3a Council Chair, Sue Russell

As I visit u3as and networks, I am frequently asked about what Council Representatives do so I thought I'd share a bit more about the role.

Council Representatives meet with u3as to share the aims and ideas of the Third Age Trust with those u3as and to learn what issues and concerns they have. This is accomplished through Network meetings, regional Chairs' forums, regional workshops and, when invited, at visits with u3as who have concerns. These ideas are then fed back to the Third Age Trust.

I asked Council Representatives for the Yorkshire and Humber Region, Pat Collard and Brian Clegg, to talk a bit about how they approach their roles. They said, "The Yorkshire and the Humber region has a support team, and we have their full support in assisting us fulfil our responsibilities.

"We also work closely with the staff at the Third Age Trust. It's an interesting and enjoyable 'job' particularly if you believe in the benefits of the movement, seeing and appreciating the different ways u3as operate, and like working with people."

Being a Council Representative can be very rewarding and we are currently looking for members to apply for roles in the East Midlands, East of England, North East, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South East, South West, and West Midlands. The deadline is Tuesday 3 February. If you think you have something to offer, please do consider putting yourself forward for nominations – find out more about applying on [the elections page](#).

from the members...

Lights, camera, action for Evesham u3a

Building local connections is a great way to do something different in your u3a this year. In 2025, the Classic Cinema group at Evesham u3a embraced a fresh approach by collaborating with their local Regal Cinema to host classic film screenings, exclusively for u3a.

The screenings were opened up to u3a members across Cotswold Link and the West Midlands region, enabling members to build new connections through a shared love of cinema.



Pictured: The group after a screening of North by Northwest in the summer.



A new hobby, a new chapter

Foyle u3a member Gabriel never had any interest in ball games – until he tried walking cricket with u3a. He talks about the joy of taking up a new hobby and making friends along the way.



I worked 45 years in construction as a Civil Engineer. I did not have the time or energy to socialise and, consequently, had few friends outside of work. Retirement presented a challenge. My wife was already a u3a member and joining u3a meant that we could do things together.

Prior to getting married and starting a family in my late 20's, I had been active in cross country running. Ball games never interested me as I did not have good hand-eye co-ordination. But, when numbers were required to get walking cricket off the ground at Foyle u3a, it seemed like a new challenge and opportunity.

The game is a fun way of keeping mobile. The group are very relaxed, friendly, interesting, helpful, good company and as we say here "good craic". They're always up for tea and a chat afterwards.

u3a has given me a purpose and routine during retirement. Apart from new people, I meet people who I have not seen since my school days. I enjoy volunteering and helping out with anything that needs doing.

If you're thinking of trying a new hobby, go for it. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. You will be surprised by what you are capable of and the warmth of the people you meet.

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Headline photos: We are running an *Interest Groups Online Fair* with taster sessions of our online community from 11-13 February – book on the events page of the u3a website; Long Eaton & District u3a's Chair Yoga group; the Large Hadron Collider is the subject of one of u3a's online learning events in February.