

THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Directory of Services

Available from the Third Age Trust

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Introduction

This booklet is intended to list and explain the services offered to support the U3As. The emphasis is on support, encouragement and advice and nowhere is there a suggestion of control or management of U3As by the Trust, since all U3As are operationally independent of the Trust. It exists to help, not to make rules.

However, much of the help available is not well known to the U3As themselves and it is not always appreciated that the members of the Third Age Trust are the U3As, not the individual members of the U3As.

The list of contacts contains the name and details of someone who can respond to your questions. Please make use of these volunteers.

A great deal of the information can be found on the National Website at www.u3a.org.uk

This Directory is intended for use at U3A level but its contents will clearly need updating at frequent intervals. Updates will be issued regularly and you are asked to replace the pages when you receive new versions and to discard the older versions of those pages immediately, so as not to confuse those members who wish to consult the Directory.

Ian Searle
Vice Chairman

The National Office

The National Office (The Third Age Trust) is located at:-

The Old Municipal Buildings,
19 East Street,
Bromley,
Kent BR1 1QE

Telephone number: 020 8466 6139

Email address: national.office@u3a.org.uk

Opening hours – 9.30 to 5.00pm Tuesday to Thursday
9.30 to 1.30pm Monday and Friday

Since the Office is the hub of our operations, it is the place for enquiries to begin on any subject to do with the U3A movement in the UK and even, maybe, elsewhere. Please note that it is the National Office, and emphatically not the Head Office, since it does not manage any subsidiary offices or organisations. For convenience some of the principal services offered by the Office are listed below, but **any** enquiry can be addressed to the staff there and it will be dealt with either in person or by passing on the details of the appropriate person to contact.

The Resource Centre 020 8315 0199

Email address: resource.centre@u3a.org.uk

Opening hours – 9.30 to 4.00pm Tuesday and Thursday

The Resource Centre is housed at the National Office. It has a collection of non-book material available to all U3A groups to borrow free of charge except for the cost of return postage. There are slides, videos, cassettes, dvds and cd-roms available in a wide range of subjects. Individual subject lists are available from the Resource Centre on request and the whole catalogue is available on the website with an online ordering facility.

Please note that in order to use the service you have to telephone and register your details.

Bookings can be made up to 8 months ahead and loans are usually for a period of three weeks.

Advice and information available from the National Office

Almost any information concerning the U3A movement in the UK can be obtained from the National Office, subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act. Information and advice about Data Protection itself are available.

If you need clarification of the legal status of your U3A, particularly in regard to charity law, then phone the National Office in the first instance.

When your U3A was granted membership of the Third Age Trust, a very important part of the service offered was comprehensive public and products liability insurance cover. Not only are your members insured against claims incurred as a result of their U3A activities, from either a member of the public or another U3A member, but more significantly your group leaders are totally protected. This cover has recently been extended to cover activities in Europe. In addition, all committee members (the trustees of your U3A), are covered by a special indemnity insurance. This is a very valuable provision. An optional policy to cover U3A equipment has also been negotiated and is very competitive. If you do not understand the terms of your insurance cover, then the National Office can give advice and information.

Advice on committee procedures, interpretation or amendment of constitutions, the most appropriate methods

of handling money and the complications of seeking Gift Aid are some of the many topics dealt with.

Naturally, any queries about the registration of the U3A itself as a member of the Third Age Trust or about the payment of capitation fees are best addressed to the National Office.

Individuals may also seek personal legal advice by telephone. Your U3A should already have the relevant telephone number and code for such a call, but the Office can supply it again. This is a free 24 hour service.

There are other services and offers which are notified either on the website or in monthly mailings. You can negotiate a discount on a new computer, you can get a wide range of software at greatly reduced prices and there is a small range of merchandise such as diaries and badges and stationery e.g. membership cards.

If you need information about other organisations which have any kind of bearing on the work of the Trust e.g. the Open University, Age Concern, the WEA (Workers' Educational Association), or NIACE (National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) among others, ask the Office first.

Website

The most effective way of learning in detail about the services on offer from the National Office is to make a thorough search through the national website at www.u3a.org.uk

In order to access the members' area you need to set up an account.

The National Website is managed from the National Office. If you have information you want uploaded to the site, contact the National Office in the first instance. If you have comments or criticisms to make, address them to the National Administrator at National Office.

There is also a special management panel which is responsible to the NEC for the content of the Website. It is convened by one of the Trustees and reports to one of the panels of the Standing Committee for Education.

Contact: The National Office

Fundraising/Financial Matters

Ideas for a national or local initiative which would require funding are best discussed first with the National Office. The National Administrator will then either pass on your suggestion to the Finance and General Purposes

Committee or advise on another course of action. In some cases, for instance, you may be advised to apply locally for an 'Awards for All' grant from the National Lottery. These grants are made regionally and can be very valuable, up to a maximum of £10,000. You can get information from the Awards For All website at www.awardsforall.org.uk or you can telephone them on 0845 600 20 40. The Awards are organised slightly differently for each of the four countries of the UK.

Funding for the Third Age Trust comes from two sources, one major and one minor: the major source is the capitation charge which is paid annually by the U3As that form the Trust. (Note that the U3As are the members of the Trust, not the individual members of the U3As.) However, a relatively small amount of money is obtained from other sources – the Resource Centre was mainly stocked by such grants from the National Lottery Fund and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, for example. The introduction of the Friends of the Third Age Trust has also resulted in money being donated.

An alternative source of information and advice on specific financial matters is the Honorary Treasurer who can be contacted either directly or through the National Office.

Other Services

National Subject Co-ordinators

Throughout the UK there are a large number of Group Leaders with expertise and experience in organising groups on a huge range of activities. Over thirty of them have agreed to act as consultants to other Group Leaders running activities of the same kind. Thus, if you need advice or ideas to organise or re-inspire a chess group, or want to set up a singing for pleasure group, there is probably someone who can offer advice on the material to use. Someone is available to advise you on the best or cheapest sets of handbells to buy. Others will recommend how to set up a film study group and so on.

This advice comes in three forms:

1. There is already available a limited series of Start Up Leaflets, which can be obtained from the National Office: a phone call will inform you which ones are available;
2. All National Subject Co-ordinators are available for telephone consultation at any time; many of them have email addresses; both details are listed in every issue of the U3A News;

3. Some Co-ordinators also produce a regular newsletter which is distributed freely to all who register an interest.

A further service offered by some of the Co-ordinators is to organise Study Days in various parts of the country, or even to run Summer School courses.

The full list of National Subject Co-ordinators is reproduced in the list of contacts.

Educational and Development Support

Many services are organised through the Standing Committee for Education, which reports to the NEC [The National Executive Committee is the name given to the Board of Trustees who are responsible for the Third Age Trust]. It is divided into three panels, which together supervise the provision of a range of educational services.

This panel of the Standing Committee for Education aims to offer support to new and established U3As and to maintain the ethos of self help learning. It seeks to do this by supporting the work of the National Education and Development Officer and his team, the Regional Trustee, the Network Contacts and most importantly, the work of interest group leaders. It encourages U3As and local associations of U3As to plan for the support of group leaders and helps them to fulfil these plans

In the case of 'development', the word has changed its emphasis for the Third Age Trust over the years. In the early days of the movement the emphasis was concerned mainly with the development of new U3As. More recently the focus has widened to include the strengthening of already

existing U3As, while still continuing the original task of assisting with the creation of new U3As.

If you have any questions or suggestions to offer concerning the possible establishment of new U3As, then contact the National Office in the first instance and you will be put in touch with an Education and Development Officer.

The National Education and Development Officer is able to give advice on a wide range of issues associated with the ongoing development of U3As and can also help with suggestions concerning Interest Groups within U3As

In addition, booklets for guidance are issued through the National Office. So that you can check you have received them, the following are available:

- Introduction to U3A
- Objects and Principles

- The Third Age Trust
- Guidelines for Forming a U3A
- Publicising U3A in the Media
- On the Brink of Membership
- Committee Procedures
- Size Matters

A Handbook for Group Leaders, designed to be of practical use to all U3A group leaders, has been sent to all U3As and additional copies can be obtained from the National Office or via a download on our website.

The Third Age Trust is always seeking ways to support learning in U3As. If you have any suggestions for the development of existing services for education and development, or the provision of new services, please contact this panel.

Online Courses

Although these courses are designed primarily for those people who are unable to get to local U3As because of distance or incapacity of any kind, they may also be accessed and used by ordinary U3A members. This may be of interest to those members who are unable to find a similar subject available in their local U3A.

There are about 25 such courses available on the website, half of them produced in this country, half in Australia. They are only available online, that is to say, that you must be able to use a computer, even though you may use a library computer. Although the copyright of each course belongs to the Third Age Trust, or to the Australian U3A Online Inc., once you have subscribed to a course, you may download the material, print it out, and use it with a U3A group.

Currently we are recruiting U3A members to help in the use of the Open University OpenLearn courses, which are freely available on the OpenLearn website. Experienced group leaders especially can help by looking closely at one of the courses on offer to judge its appropriateness for U3A use. It will be possible for some of these volunteers to edit this

material to tailor it more closely to U3A needs, thus widening the range of Online Courses.

The complete range of U3A online courses covers such topics as writing in many different aspects, from creative writing, fiction and poetry, to journalism, art history, philosophy, digital imaging, design and much more.

Each course is available in two versions, tutored and untutored. The tutored version is usually run over an eight week period, and all the work is done via email and the website. The untutored version is downloadable and can be printed out to be used either independently or as material to use with a study group. The courses can, therefore, be a useful resource to Group Leaders.

The courses are written and tutored without payment by experienced U3A group leaders. There are nevertheless some costs associated with running them, so a charge is made for each course: £15 for a tutored course, £8 for an untutored course.

The full list of courses available can be found on the National Website and in Sources.

Summer Schools

Traditionally the Third Age Trust has organised two national, residential, summer schools each year. The aim is to provide many members with their first experience of a residential course which lasts for three or four days and is usually based on a university campus. Since these are residential courses, there is a charge for accommodation, although the 'lecturers' are in fact U3A members and are themselves unpaid. The cost is therefore modest at under £300 per course.

With time, the two summer schools have spawned others which have been organised on a local basis and there is now an established Summer School run in Chichester each year, while Northern Ireland has already run a successful school, which it is hoped will be repeated in the future. In Lincolnshire there is another school organised at Harlaxton Manor, but the Harlaxton courses are differently organised in that the tutors are paid. It is likely that further local developments will take place and that the Trust will try to assist in organising them. For the moment, however, the remarks made here refer to the two Summer Schools organised directly by the Third Age Trust.

U3As are notified well in advance by the National Office of proposed Summer Schools and Business Secretaries are provided with copies of the registration forms for their members to return. There are about 12 courses at each venue. They vary greatly in content, from architecture, studied in situ by excursions to historical buildings, to modern literature or languages or the history of medicine etc. The value of these summer schools can hardly be over-rated in terms of inspiration and the kind of bonding that takes place among U3A members studying and living together for several days without distraction.

Information is available on the website, in the monthly mailings whenever appropriate, and in the U3A News.

Learning Research

This group is busy collecting books and articles on Learning in Later Life, particularly those which are relevant to the U3A situation. This material will include the results of research projects carried out by U3A members and other specialists, and such items as lectures delivered to the U3A on the topic of learning. The collection will eventually be kept in the Resource Centre. Each book or article will have a commentary added by one of the group to indicate its relevance and interest. There is also a Researchers' Forum on the national website with lists of contacts.

Shared Learning Projects

Started in 2002 in London, the Shared Learning Projects have proved more and more popular not only among U3A members but also among the other establishments which have been involved.

Typically a Shared Learning Project is based on a local institution, often a museum, and is arranged in close collaboration with the Education Officer of the museum. Such

prestigious venues as the British Museum or Somerset House have featured in such projects in the past. Individual members of several U3As have come together at the venue in question on a regular basis for a limited time, typically 12 weeks, to study the artefacts or comment on the facilities on offer. The result of their researches has been presented in a number of ways, either orally or in written form or both, to the group itself, to the host institution or to the public to the mutual benefit of both U3A and the institution concerned.

Recently there has been an attempt made to spread the concept outside London and to use other ways of collaborating in a common piece of research, not necessarily based on an institution. In the South East, for instance, all the U3As in one Area agreed to set up their own groups during the year to explore many different aspects of 'Entertainment' in the locality, with results ranging from pier-end concerts to local fairs.

Shared Learning Projects are tailor-made for regional co-operation and there have been other very successful projects in Plymouth, Belfast and Cornwall.

U3A News

Since this magazine is available to all U3A members and is posted to the homes of many of them, there is little need to draw attention to it here. All the information about how to contribute or comment is contained in the magazine itself. Do remember it is your magazine and the Editor will welcome contributions.

Sometimes thought-provoking, always entertaining, it is eagerly read.

Sources is archived on the national website, that is to say you can search back copies of the journal and read individual articles.

Sources

In contrast to the U3A News, Sources is specifically an educational journal, published three times a year. Everybody who receives U3A News by direct mail receives a copy of Sources and it is available free of charge to any other member who requests it.

You can also register online to receive a copy of Sources.

Contact: The National Office or the National Website

Sources is themed: that is to say each issue features a particular educational topic or subject, whether it is Creative Writing or History or Science. There is always a leading article by an invited expert to begin with and contributions from all over the UK from Group Leaders and interested parties. It contains a huge amount of useful information and discussion.

Publicity

Publicity is a difficult topic to deal with nationally. That is because each U3A is unique. It makes it very hard to advertise as a homogenous package. When individuals ask the National Office for publicity material, they are usually offered some very generally worded posters, leaflets, bookmarks, and back copies of U3A News.

There are good reasons for this apparent lack of material; individual U3As want to advertise their own, unique services in their own way and to produce high quality advertising of the kind most people would want would be extremely expensive.

However, the NEC is conscious of the need for publicity and for that reason has appointed one of its members as Publicity Officer.

If you have questions to ask or suggestions to make about publicity at any level, contact the Publicity Officer in the first instance.

Within the Standing Committee for Education publicity matters are discussed in the same Panel as U3A News, Sources and the National Website. This Panel is chaired by one of the Vice Chairmen.

Other sources of help

This booklet lists briefly a large number of services available from the Third Age Trust. There are bound to be other questions that arise from time to time that you cannot trace in these pages, although there may well be individual members of the Trust who could help. A telephone call or email to the National Office will lead you to them in most cases.

However, do not forget that the Regional Trustee is part of the Third Age Trust and is there to help you. If you ask her or him for help, you will get it, if only in the form of another name or address for contact.

Contacts

General

National Office

Lin Jonas, Company Secretary/National Administrator

Fran Walton – Web Administrator

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Email: national.office@u3a.org.uk

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National Education and Development Officer

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Tamworth B77 2EQ

Resource Centre

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19 East Street, Bromley, BRI IQE

for National Subject Co-ordinators

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Terry Hardie, Hon Treasurer

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Nottingham NG12 5JJ

Summer Schools

Keith Richards,

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28 Ravensdale Avenue,

London N12 9HT

Shared Learning Projects

Jennifer Anning [in London]

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Email: jennifer.anning@btopenworld.com

and

Jenny Clark [outside London]

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National Subject Co-ordinators

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