



# London Region of U3As

## REPORTS

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTS:

#### CHAIR (from Val Girling):

I have started my round of visiting u3as around London. The purpose of these visits is to solicit views on how best the London Region and the Trust can support you. It is to collect success stories and problems and facilitate sharing them around the region.

The u3a is a COLLABORATIVE organisation and I would encourage those u3as who are successful to be prepared to share this with those who are going through a tough time.

We are being urged to raise our profile and attract more members so that more people can share in what we have – a great organisation that allows members to enjoy life to the full.

Our Speaker at the Delegates meeting will help with this agenda, as using social media is one of the ways we will succeed in interesting younger people in our organisation. Most u3as realise that it is only by recruiting from the younger age bracket that our u3as will survive.

Let's embrace the challenge, together.

#### TREASURER (John Bent):

In summary, there have been no significant items since the last accounts and the bank balance remains healthy, around £9,500. All payments are up to date.

#### COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR (Vivek Nanda): Verbal report

#### MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (Rikki Wallman)

Ongoing update of u3a contacts.

#### EVENTS TEAM (Rikki Wallman)

Since the last report there have been in

May -5 walks and gallery visits. 43 new people 70 existing ones already on the database

June- 10 sessions. 59 new and 128 existing

July- 7 sessions 30 new 110 existing

Total in May, June and July 22 sessions, 440 applicants 132 new on the database 30% existing 70%

There is a small surplus which is used to pay for the tools we use like Mailchimp(our communications platform), zoom, Wufoo (our registration platform)

September and October SAVE THE DATES already sent out to our Mailchimp audiences directly and to all chairs and delegates. Launch date for September is 31<sup>st</sup> July and for October is 21<sup>st</sup> Aug. This Has

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given each u3a over a month to ensure the information is cascaded to their membership whenever in the month their newsletter goes out.

The feedback response has been on the decline so it's been decided for the September and October events there will not be a feedback form, but simple "please email me with any feedback you wish to share, or suggestions you have to make" or something like that. If members have left their name on the feedback forms, I have followed up but very rarely get a response back.

A further change is asking those registered how they found out about the events, this has been previously "tick all relevant boxes" I am now asking please tick just one. This will show if the direct mailing works. For May and June 28% was a previous participant and 44% from direct mailing 17% from their own u3a 3% online talk participant. And 8% from another u3a member

There are still u3as that do not have any members attending any session we have organised in 2025. A couple of people I've spoken to say their newsletter editors are reluctant, or do not understand, about LR events, so don't advertise them.

Brandenberg Christmas Concert confirmed for 3<sup>rd</sup> December The Wallace Collection study Day is firmed up for 10<sup>th</sup> March 26 for Women's History Month and there are still plans for a Wellness Day in October. This is being led by Peter Chung as last year with input from Vivek and Cariss Smith

The events team are always looking for extra help especially if prepared to learn some new skills with Mailchimp and Wufoo. I promised it's not hard or complicated but sometimes just takes a little more time than is available. Looking for someone to share the admin

In the process of trying to upgrade a Mailchimp account to combine the 3 free accounts

Mike Marriott is willing to continue to be liaison with the guides for 2026 for the walks and gallery visits. A programme similar to 2025, e.g Womens History Month –March. May- Mid July, September and Black History Month in October.

Catherine Ware has some ideas for further study days but I am afraid that there is no-one to organise them. She also said she will start to put out feelers for on-line talks but hopes that 2 will be led by Vivek and Liz Day as the cultural Debate was. All to be confirmed

#### **WEB MANAGER** (Derek Harwood):

Ongoing update of the LRU3A website as required. The 'Latest Notices' feature being used to highlight up and coming Events.

Events page updated with details for all autumn Walks and Talks.

#### **PEER SUPPORT GROUP (PSG) COORDINATOR** (Liz Day):

**GROUP COORDINATORS PSG** (vacant): Any volunteer to re-start this PSG?

#### **WEBMASTERS PSG** (Derek Harwood):

This PSG continues with regular meetings, the last one being held in May with reps from 6 London u3as attending. The main agenda items for that meeting included:

- Questions submitted (on 'SiteWorks' and 'Cloud Storage')
- LRU3A IT Skills Training Programme
- And open discussion points (on 'Beacon & SiteWorks Consistency' and 'Use of Beacon')

LRU3A have arranged a further IT Skills training programme (our 4th) in conjunction with AbilityNet to be held in July. The content of this one is a repeat of the May programme – as this was oversubscribed. Details published on the LRU3A website.

### **TREASURERS PSG (Derek Harwood):**

This PSG continues with regular meetings, the last one being held in May with reps from 7 London u3as attending. The main agenda items for that meeting included:

- Gift Aid update
- Setting Reserves
- Anything else / open discussion / AOB

The national office is still in ongoing discussion with HMRC regarding the rejection by them of over 12 u3as gift aid submissions. A face-to-face meeting has now been held and some progress made.

Other specific issues were also raised and shared at this PSG including: 'Gifts of Appreciation', 'Format of Annual Accounts/ Annual Reports', 'Beacon Training Workshops for Treasurers'.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS PSG (vacant):**

In abeyance as no Coordinator. **Any volunteer to re-start this PSG?**

### **NATIONAL GENERAL NEWS** (Derek Harwood and John Bent):

The new governance structure is now in place (from 1<sup>st</sup> April) with new Trust Board trustees and a new 'Council. London u3as has two elected as their Council Representatives - Jenny Wilson (Croydon) and Chris Bulford (Islington). See their report below.

The national programme of Events and Workshops has been published on the national website. Activities continue to support the membership initiative of growing the overall membership to 500,000 by the end of 2028. London Region has a number u3a's where membership is static or falling.

### **NETWORK LINK** (Derek Harwood):

This forum offers a common discussion and support platform for all u3a networks, such as LRU3A. The last NL Zoom meeting was held in June with over two hundred attending. There were two main topics presented

- Alan Freeland: "Using AI to make leading within the u3a easier and less time consuming".
- Sheila Crawley: "Using Social Media"

Both subjects triggered healthy discussions and sharing of experiences.

As Sue Russell has now been elected as the Chair of the new Council there is a new Network Link Chair been elected: Karen Green.

### **COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES** (Jenny Wilson and Chris Bulford):

The Council Reps for the 12 nations & regions of the UK-wide u3a have had a number of meetings since inauguration at the beginning of April, to clarify purpose, roles and responsibilities. We are very active on WhatsApp to share concerns and offer support. A staff member Mimmi Brostromer has been appointed to facilitate Council business.

Each of the 12 areas has a small budget and a zoom licence to support contact within the region.

So far I have been in contact with a number of u3as to help, support and encourage as required.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July there will be A Strategy Day (F2F, 10-5pm) in London for members of the Board, the Council and the office staff which will run by a professional convenor. So once a consensus has been reached and strategic decisions made, we will share these ideas with you, as they will indicate the future direction of the movement.

In the meantime Jenny is one of 5 Council Reps working on developing and improving the 3 Strategy Implementation Groups so that we can see positive ideas being put into place. We have been meeting once a week so it's quite a commitment.

Our LR Chair, Val Girling, has visited some of our u3as and our team of two is really benefitting from her involvement and enthusiasm.

Looking back over the first three months of the Council it is becoming increasingly obvious that it will take at least to the end of its first year to make a realistic assessment of how the Council is faring. It is not just the Council that is new. The Chief Executive has only been in post since last autumn as has the Chair of TAT Trustees. The paid staff will need to work through how to relate to Council Representatives and there is, of course, a large agenda of issues to consider.