

Chair's Annual Report 2024/25

Background and Summary

Membership of the LRU3A network, number of London u3as, remained at 43 u3as. Dagenham closed but a new one in Newham has started up successfully. The biggest threat to sustainability for all our u3as is the recruiting of committee members. Unfortunately we still only see about half of these u3as being active in the network (eg attending Delegates meetings, etc). The u3as that had seen a fall in membership over the pandemic period have reported now continuing growth in their numbers. This helps to achieve the national Resolution raised and approved by members, to achieve a national membership of 500,000 by the end of 2028. Membership figures overall for London Region over the last few years are:

- March 2019 25,823
- March 2020 25,888
- March 2021 20,973
- March 2022 21,032
- March 2023.....21,875
- March 2024.....22,550
- March 2025.....23,349

So some London u3as are seeing membership growth while others are static or falling.

Nationally, while numbers dropped over the pandemic period, membership continues grow and is up to 420,234 (at April 2025).

Last October Jenny Wilson and Derek Harwood had to step down from being joint Vice Chairs as they had completed their three year stint. Val Girling stepped in as Chair and we were fortunate in that Jenny Wilson took on the mantle of being Regional Trustee. This post morphed in to being one of the two Council Representatives on the national Council. Chris Bulford of Islington u3a is the other Council Representative.

LRU3A's main initiatives and activities this year have been: Delegates meetings, Peer Support Groups (including a Chairs Network meeting), supporting u3a Week (by a repeat of the region's 'Table Tennis Turnout'), Online Talks Programme, a year-round programme of walks and gallery visits, IT Skills training programme and general communications of other events happening across the region or nationally.

Like many individual u3as, the LRU3a Executive Committee has struggled to recruit members to fill gaps and find successors. Apart from Committee positions we have not had a PR Advisor or a Groups Coordinator (and hence this Peer Support Group has been suspended). This has led to a limitation of the initiatives we have been able to support or promote. We are now facing the same problem with the Events Team, who are in urgent need of help and support which may result in reduced events being offered in 2026. However we hope that you have felt that our regional network activities have been of use and have supported you in your activities. Also the position of Vice Chair is vacant.

The following are some of this year's main activities and achievements.

Objectives of the LRU3A

Our objectives remain to support London u3a committees and educational/social activities for all our members. As a regional network, our support extends to all London u3as, and together with our Council Representatives as ex-officio members of the Executive Committee, we uphold and benefit from the work of the Third Age Trust and provide a voice for London u3as at regional and national levels.

Delegate Meetings

The Executive Committee have always been keen to respond to and facilitate the interests and wishes of all u3as in our network – we are not a ‘top-down’ organisation. The Delegate meetings provide a quarterly opportunity for representatives to get together, discuss issues, exchange ideas and provide mutual support (a problem discussed is a problem halved).

Delegate meetings this year have included sessions on:

- Reports, News & guest speakers on: ‘Does your u3a apply Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles?’ (Susan Parker), ‘Learning Opportunities provided by the Trust’ (Susannah Hodge), ‘Resolution 500k’ (Liz Drury) and ‘Grow your Membership through Facebook’ (Sheila Crawley).
- Reports from Trustees & Peer Support Groups, News from the Trust, and News from London u3as

Attendance at these meetings has been broadly static with about 50% of London u3as participating in these events. Specific data is:

Metric	January 2024	April 2024	July 2024	July 2025
Participants online at peak	26	25	28 (some who hadn't registered)	38 (some who hadn't registered)
People registered	35 (so 8 no shows)	35 (so 8 no shows)	32 (so 7 no shows)	37
u3as represented on the day	19 out of 43 (49%)	14 out of 43 (32%)	20 out of 43 (49%)	26 out of 43 (60%)
u3as not represented on the day	24 (43-19)			17
Apologies received from members	9	7	5	6
u3as covered by apologies: 9	9	7	4	3
u3as active	28 (19+9)	21 (14+7)	24 (20+4)	26
u3as inactive (no response)	15	22	19	14
Overall	Attendance slightly down since last meeting.	Attendance down since last meeting.	Attendance up since last meeting.	Attendance up since last meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT for Accounts year to 31st August 2025 (John Bent):

Results for the year show a surplus of £2,831, against the prior year's deficit of -£904.

2023/24 was the first year we had not run the Annual Summer School, and the Walks and Visits programme was just starting. In 2024/25 we had a full programme of events with guided walks, visits to museums and galleries, music events (Brandenburg concert, Gilbert & Sullivan day) and Wellness and AI days. Between them these contributed a net surplus of £3,896 in the year. Many thanks to all in the LR Events Team.

The Region received several one-off Grants in 2024/25 which boosted our income and surplus – a £750 donation from Dagenham u3a, £500 from Allied Irish Bank and £720 from the London Regional Trustee – totalling £1,970.

Gross Overheads for the year showed an increase (£3,076 vs prior year of £2,099) this was mainly due to invoices relating to 2023/24 only being received in 2024/25.

The Network's Reserves at 31st August 2025 stand at £12,679 (compared with last year's reserves of £9,848). With £15,037 in our Bank and Paypal accounts.

While 2024/25 has been a successful year of operations, it's important that we maintain our income generating activities, or find alternative sources. The £1,970 of grants income, all of which contributed directly to our surplus, is unlikely to be repeated in the coming year.

We thank all our volunteers for their time and contributions and look forward to having new members come forward to join our team.

A Copy of the Annual Accounts is available on the London Region of u3as website: [Annual Accounts](#)

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS (PSGs) (Liz Day)

A common issue has been the lack of peer volunteers prepared to help with coordinating meetings, planning agendas, and facilitating activities.

Chairs' Network Day – February 2025

Another of these successful events was held this year. The event allowed discussion on the u3a Movements goals and strategies to increase membership and enhance engagement. Discussions involved challenges such as the need to attract younger members and the importance of promoting u3a's benefits to prospective and current members alike.

The introduction was by Liz Day who has led the event for 4 years and now passing over the event to new team leaders Jenny Wilson and Val Girling.

We had a speech by the CEO, Iain Cassidy on 'Looking Forward'. He promoted the organisation locally, regionally and nationally. Iain's background is working in the voluntary charity sector for 20 years. He was asked questions about the national marketing campaigns and particularly the quality of the national u3a flyer. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the existing national leaflets and flyers saying they were outdated, not reflective of members, nor of the organisation's. They would not be effective in attracting new members. Many thought they were uninspiring. Iain agreed to review them with the Communications Department.

Lively discussions of these ideas followed and Chairs really appreciated the opportunity to focus on themselves, support each other and take away lots of good ideas.

Group Coordinators:

This PSG is dormant awaiting a new organiser. **Any volunteer to re-start this PSG?**

Web Managers PSG: This PSG has been meeting online regularly every 3 months. The dominant topic at all of this year's meetings has been SiteWorks. Nine out of 22 London u3as have now migrated from Sitebuilder to being live on SiteWorks. The rest have all started the process (excluding 3 where status is unknown).

A variety of other topics covered have been raised at each meeting.

Treasurers PSG: This PSG has had a successful year, meeting every 3 months online Topics raised have again been varied and for example have covered: status of Gift Aid Dispute (Trust vs HMRC), Term of Office for a Treasurer, Updating Treasurer Contact details on the Portal, Charity Commission new rules, Treasurer Role Descriptions, Record Keeping, Beacon Finance module updates.

Public Relations PSG

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

COMMUNICATIONS: (Vivek Nanda/ Rikki Wallman)

The London Region continues to use Mailchimp as the mass mail platform for communications to Chairs. Delegates and direct mailings to advertise forthcoming events. At present there are 4 free accounts. This is time consuming as the text has to be copied into each account and does not format the same way, nor do the links work when copied. Hence Rikki and Vivek are trialling a paid account which could combine 3 of the accounts into one. There are questions that we have identified but I think we might be solving them

Direct message to chairs and delegates are usually sent out monthly or occasionally bi-monthly should the need arise. The events team advertise the forthcoming events by a "Save the Date" message at least one month ahead of the "Booking Now" launch date. This is to ensure that whenever a u3a sends out its newsletter the information will be received by their members ahead of the launch date. When this does not happen members try to book, unsuccessfully, for a session that is fully booked as the information wasn't cascaded promptly.

EVENTS TEAM:

Another successful year of events was provided for all the London u3as:

March 25 Women's History month – there were 8 walks and gallery visits plus a Gilbert & Sullivan Music day

April 25 AI presentation day - no walks and visits due to the Easter break

May 25 there were 6 walks and gallery visits, short month due to 2 Bank holidays

June 25 there was 11 walks and gallery visits

July 25 in total 7 walks and gallery visits, short month due to children breaking up from school

Sept 25 there were 10 sessions of walks and gallery visits. Unfortunately, one had to be cancelled due to the tube strike

Oct 25 Black history Month- 6 sessions, one was cancelled due to lack of support. I think this was due to the fact the guide repeated the walk she did Oct 24 Short month due to half term

First of the season's online talks-

Nov 25 -2nd of the season's online talks

Dec 25 Brandenburg Christmas Concert

3rd of the season's online talks

1 Christmas lights walk-repeated on 3rd Jan, publicity should be out by the time of the AGM

Already in the pipeline for next year is a full day of lectures at Wallace collection in March for Women's history month as well as the walks/gallery visits.

As can be seen from above the events team have organised 50 walks/gallery visits plus Christmas lights walk. There have been unique registrations of over 500 members. Many others being disappointed because the events are fully booked so quickly. 2 study days; Christmas concert, and 3 online talks. A busy year!

The team is small and needs further volunteers. Without extra help there might not be such events in 2026.

LONDON REGION COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES REPORT:

The u3a Council was set up in April 2025. Its overriding purpose is to directly reflect the current views/opinions/concerns of individual u3as at national level i.e. to the Third Age Trust board and the staff and to work with them to achieve a satisfactory outcome. As with any major organisational change, the new working arrangements for putting this purpose into practice are taking up much of the Council's time. The London Region, as with other Regions, has two elected Council Representatives (CRs) on the new Council, Jenny Wilson (Croydon) and Chris Bulford (Islington).

At national level and following work by the Council on what are called Strategic Interest Groups (SIG), it is clear that these working arrangements will not be finalised for some months. Therefore, in the meantime, the Council is setting up a number of Task and Finish Groups (TFG) to take forward specific areas of concern which u3as have already identified. These concerns have together as "Five Hot Topics": Enquiries to the Trust, Recruitment and Retention, Website, Internal Communications, Brand.

Jenny Wilson has already been a key participant in working through how the SIGs should work in relation to the Five Hot Topics and Chris Bulford has been asked to lead a Task and Finish Group on recruitment and retention. Our CRs will be providing regular updates on this work as it progresses.

Another strand of the Council's purpose is how the role of the Regional Trustee, which is now redundant, will be integrated into the work of the Council Representative. This is a complicated issue involving the communication channels currently used for raising queries and concerns from u3as and the appropriate response mechanisms from Trust staff. The objective is to have clarity, simplicity and avoid duplication. Again, the expectation is that will not be agreed for a little while yet.

However, to keep up the pace of this work in the immediate future, it would be most helpful if you could provide feed back to our London CRs on:

- Current issues, both general and particular, which you want to be raised at national level
- Any pressing topics which you would like raised at the next quarterly Council meeting in November

Please use their contact details:

- Jenny Wilson Jenny.wilson@u3a.org.uk
- Chris Bulford. Chris.bulford@u3a.org.uk

SUCCESSION PLANNING:

We feel LRU3A has had another positive year, and we would like to thank all of our colleagues for their contributions to the Executive Committee and Peer Support Groups. Many thanks also to all the u3a Delegate representatives who have attended meetings and workshops and contributed to the lively discussions.

We have struggled to keep some activities going due to the lack of volunteers. We need more volunteers to help with a variety of tasks to support our constitutional obligations, aims and objectives and our events programme.

If you have some spare time, please join us! How we all contribute will determine LRU3As continuing sustainability.

With best wishes for the coming year,

Val Girling, Chair

October 2025