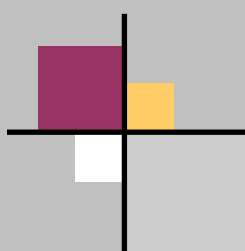
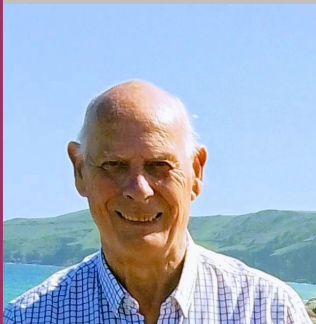


# NORTH WEST REGION

Region Representative Newsletter  
December 2025

**u3a**  
learn, laugh, live



## u3a Council Representatives Role

Over the course of our first year, we have both had opportunities to visit u3as and meet members. We have been invited to network meetings. Occasionally to share a celebration or event. Perhaps to be your guest speaker.

Sometimes, we've just been invited to come and meet your members. This is something we both enjoy and of course it gives you a chance to tell us about your successes or concerns as well as for us to tell you about the work we have been doing with the Council.

Obviously the Council work keeps us busy but we will always welcome invitations to visit if we can. Our role is to support you, the members of the North West Region so please keep in touch with us.

Our contact details are below so please contact us if we can assist.

The North West Region is arranging an exciting range of meetings and events for 2026 so please do visit the region website for details and pass on to your members. We would be grateful if you would circulate this newsletter to your u3a members.

We would thank you for all you do in making the u3a successful and extend our good wishes for both Christmas and the New Year.

*Gill Russell*

*David Blanchflower*

NW Region Council Representatives

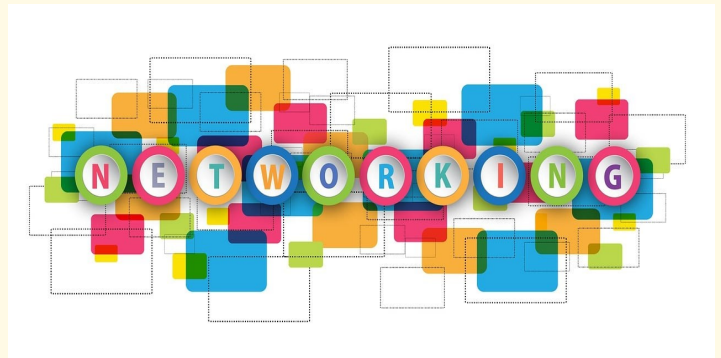
**Contact Details** Email: [David.blanchflower@u3a.org.uk](mailto:David.blanchflower@u3a.org.uk)  
[gillian.russell@u3a.org.uk](mailto:gillian.russell@u3a.org.uk)

**NW REGION WEBSITE :** <https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk>



‘What’s the point?’ It’s just more meetings and I’m already busy’. ‘It’s just a talking shop. It doesn’t achieve anything’. We’re already a lively, successful u3a. We don’t need to share with other u3as’.

These are the common arguments for not joining a network, but not getting involved can risk a u3a becoming insular and isolated.



The u3a movement now has over 1050 groups in the UK. In the North West Region there are more than 40,000 members in 97 groups. We have several active networks and a few who have just begun to meet again after a long period of hibernation. Most networks meet three or four times a year. Some take turns in hosting a meeting at their own venue. Some find a common venue and share the costs, taking it in turns to chair the meeting. There is also a national Network Link which takes place online twice a year for anyone who wishes to attend.

Networks are informal. There is no need to form a committee or adopt a constitution unless they want to open a bank account. However, if they want to use the u3a logo, for example on a network website they will need to sign a ‘Network Affiliation Agreement’ which can be obtained from the u3a office.

What are the benefits of networking? Here are just a few of the most common.

- ◆ Sharing resources such as speakers lists.
- ◆ Organising interest days and workshops with other u3as.
- ◆ Sharing expertise, information, good practice and concerns.
- ◆ Developing peer to peer discussion groups and subject networks.
- ◆ Increase awareness of the u3a in local communities.

If you are not already part of a network, please consider joining one. Your ideas could support other groups, your success might inspire other members and you might find answers to some of your concerns



## **ADVANCE NOTICE — NW REGION WORKSHOP** 24 March 2026

**The full day Workshop will have the twin themes of :**

**Growth Matters – recruiting new members to a u3a**  
**Finance Matters – aimed at Treasurers and Committee members**

**Full details will be on Region Website in January 2026**

Community involvement is integral to the fabric of society, providing support, education and resources to individuals and communities. Engaging with the community not only enhances the effectiveness of charitable work but also fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Each individual u3a is an integral part of their local community. By providing a wide array of activities, both learning and leisure, the u3a enriches the fabric of its local community. They also provide fellowship and support for the u3a members.

Increasingly individual u3as are becoming active in their local communities. The opportunities for community involvement are wide and varied. We have choirs and drama groups visiting local care homes. Other benefits to the community include litter picks and maintaining flower borders in local parks.

Some u3as take on challenging projects like Southport u3a constructing a prize winning garden at the Southport Flower show.

Kirkby u3a has been involved with the Everton Football Club “Everton in the Community” initiative. Bolton u3a has been on local radio telling listeners of the many advantages of u3a membership. Southport u3a musicians played in local shopping arcade.

It is suggested that u3as consider expanding their community involvement.



Kirkby u3a - “Everton FC in Community Project”



Southport u3a Border Planting in Hesketh Park



Southport u3a Musicians



Bolton u3a



## Future North West Region & National Events



**u3a NATIONAL FESTIVAL**  
1st –3rd July 2026  
York University



**NW REGION SUMMER SCHOOL**  
11th— 14th August 2026  
Manchester Metropolitan University



### **Trust Board Meeting: 15 October 2025** **Summary Report to be used when sharing with members.**

This was an ordinary face to face Board meeting following the AGM, rather than a Quarterly Review.

The Board welcomed Sheila as Vice Chair following confirmation at the 2025 AGM. Sheila was also appointed as a Trust Board Director to sit on the TATTL Board, as well as an ex officio non-voting member in attendance at u3a Council meetings. John Bent, who had held the role on an interim basis would stand down.

Maria Gabrielczyk – The Board approved the co-option of Maria Gabrielczyk as a full member for one year.

TATTL Interim Chair and Directors – The Board considered the current membership of TATTL, the wholly owned trading subsidiary. In view of the current discussions reviewing the working method and future mix of activities in TATTL, it was agreed to confirm the Interim Chair and membership only until April 2026.

DSU Project – The CEO updated members on the DSU (Digital Services to u3as) project following a discussion with Beacon/Siteworks members and the project team. As yet the external service for the initial discovery phase is still to be appointed, as is the Chair of the Project Team. Nevertheless, the internal role of Service Manager, to support the project, is expected to be appointed shortly. Whilst the project will consider options for a long term digital service for u3as, the continuation of full support for Beacon and Siteworks was reaffirmed. The discovery phase is expected to be complete around March/April 2026. If the proposal is to go ahead, the Board will be presented with a number of options for a digital service that takes full advantage of current technology. At the same time the Board will be asked to consider costs, funding options and long term pricing strategy.

Strategy Development – Following the Strategy Day in July, draft wording had been developed that reflected the proposed Vision and Mission for the Trust. The draft Mission strap line of Promote, Support and Unite had been matched with the current four strategic cornerstones (Single u3a, Next Gen, Enjoy Learning, and Emerge and Collaborate) resulting in a series of broad aspirations that might provide the long term direction for the Trust. Whilst considerable work is still to be done, the general sense of this proposed strategy had been forwarded to the Council for discussion, and included in a presentation at the recent AGM. Feedback is welcome from all quarters, and the work to add substance will continue, with a clearer picture to emerge by the December meeting. Members stressed the importance of drawing a clear linkage between the future strategic aims of the Trust, and the Trust's forthcoming business plan for 2026/27. It was considered essential that the plan identified KPIs and milestones for the key activities, demonstrating progress towards achieving the strategic objectives.

Co-operative Services – Members were invited to consider the value of training in governance aspects of particular importance in member organisations. Cooperative UK promote such training and further information will be circulated. Please note that official minutes are the true record of discussions and decisions taken at Board meetings.

*This is a brief summary of the main topics discussed and should not be taken as an authoritative statement. If you require any further detail about any item, please contact the CEO.*

# u3a North West Region Listening Forum

The North West u3a Region held an informal online discussion to gather input from u3as about their needs and challenges, with participants discussing recruitment difficulties, committee participation, and financial concerns across different u3a organisations. In total some 20 of the region's u3as participated.

The group explored various solutions including advertising strategies, volunteer recruitment approaches, and financial models, while sharing successful examples of community engagement and local initiatives.

The conversation ended with discussions about organising regional workshops and network meetings. It was agreed that holding the 2026 Region AGM online would be more convenient for many of the region's u3as.

It was agreed to collect suggestions from attendees for venues in the Northwest that can hold 50 people for face-to-face workshops. It was agreed by all that the online event was a complete success and agreed that a further Listening Forum would be held online early in 2026

## Updating Contact Details for your u3a committee

The NW Region contacted all region u3as earlier in the year asking them to confirm the details of the u3a officers to the region. After several months less than 50% of u3as have provided the region with contact detail of their officers.

Would u3as please note that the Third Age Trust does not supply regions with details of u3a officer contact details, The u3a should supply officer contact details directly to the Region Secretary.



Send your officer details to: [secretary@nwru3a.org.uk](mailto:secretary@nwru3a.org.uk)



## Congratulations to Grange & District u3a



On 16 December the u3a held a celebration gathering at the Cumbria Grand Hotel, Grange-over-Sands to celebrate its 25th Anniversary. The full day event was attended by over 100 members who were treated to a full programme of events. Malcolm Kimber gave an excellent talk on the history of the u3a over the past 25 years. The u3a's own music group "The Sands" entertained with a varied programme of music including carols. The members had an excellent buffet lunch. A most entertaining piece of poetry on the life and activities of the u3a was well received. The whole day was excellent and a credit to the u3a's management committee.



## Read u3a matters online

In response to member feedback, the Third Age Trust have published a digital teaser of u3a members magazine u3a Matters on the website .

The digital teaser copy covers about a third of the content of the magazine's printed Winter issue.

[The Winter edition. Read it now.](#)

*If you want a printed version of the magazine please speak to a u3a committee member.*