

East Midlands u3as Come Together for Inspiring Workshop Day

More than 80 members from u3as across the East Midlands gathered on Wednesday 11 March 2026 for a regional workshop day held at the Braunstone Civic Centre.

The event brought together committee members, group leaders and volunteers for a day of updates, discussion and practical workshops aimed at supporting u3as to grow and thrive.

The day opened with a welcome and introduction from John Lewis, Council Representative for the East Midlands region, who highlighted the importance of regional events in bringing members together, sharing experience and supporting u3as to thrive.

Participants heard an update from Susannah Hodge, Head of Learning and Volunteering at the Third Age Trust, who outlined a wide range of developments and opportunities available to u3as. These included the new Brand Centre, information about grants available from The Third Age Trust, the Friends Newsletter, the expanding range of learning opportunities offered through the Trust, and the forthcoming u3a Festival 2026 to be held in York in July 2026.

Allan Walmsley spoke on the theme “Looking and adapting to the future.” His presentation encouraged u3as to consider how they can continue to evolve, remain relevant to new members and ensure the long-term sustainability of their organisations.

A delicious and plentiful lunch followed, providing a welcome opportunity for members to relax, network and exchange ideas with colleagues from across the region.

The afternoon workshop sessions were led by Rosie Allen and Jean Hogg. Their first session, “Helping your u3a grow,” explored practical ways for u3as to attract new members and develop their activities. As part of this workshop, Sheila Crawley, Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust, delivered an insightful presentation on using social media to promote u3as and raise awareness within local communities, while Richard Sherratt shared how Derby u3a had grown following their 40th anniversary celebrations.

After a short tea break, Rosie and Jean led a second workshop, “Motivating members to volunteer.” This session focused on encouraging members to take on roles within their u3as and highlighted practical ways of building confidence, sharing responsibilities and recognising the value of volunteers.

Throughout the day there were many questions from participants and lively discussions in small groups, giving members the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from one another’s experiences.

Special thanks are due to Andy Bebbington, a member of Ravenshead u3a, for acting as photographer for the day. We are very grateful to him for capturing the event and for kindly providing the photographs that appear in this newsletter.

Many thanks also to everyone who helped organise the day — the speakers and facilitators, the technical support team (John Butler, Andy Bebbington and Terry Moore), and all the members whose questions, ideas and contributions helped make the event such a success.

It was a rewarding day of learning, discussion and shared experience, with members leaving with fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm for their own u3as.



















