Kenilworth u3a

Website: https://u3asites.org.uk/kenilworth/home

Registered Charity Number: 1184403

HANDBOOK FOR GROUP LEADERS

Thank you for agreeing to lead an Interest Group. We are sure that you will find it rewarding. We have prepared this Handbook in order to provide you with advice and support, and we will review the effectiveness of its contents annually with Group Leaders.

Introduction

When referring to this Handbook, please bear in mind that each u3a is operationally independent. The Handbook is based on common good practice, but you may need to check specific details with your Groups’ Coordinators.

The title ‘Group Leader’ is used throughout this Handbook, as it is the one most commonly used by members, but we appreciate that your role may be closer to that of a ‘Coordinator’, ‘Facilitator’ or ‘Convener’.

It is often said that Interest Groups are the lifeblood of the u3a. While each Group will develop its own structure, it is important that your Group follows the guiding principles of the U3A movement and its ethos of shared, participatory, self-help learning.

The overall objective should be to establish a friendly, supportive context for learning in which Group members can cooperate in increasing their knowledge.

Layout of the Handbook

The Handbook is in two sections. General background is taken from the national Third Age Trust guidance and is given on pages 2 to 4. More specific guidance is then set out from page 5 onwards, using a mixture of national information and local experience.

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1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

The u3a ethos is based on three principles:

1.1 The Third Age Principle:

Membership of a u3a is open to all in their third age.

Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.

Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a u3a can do so.

1.2 Self-help learning principle:

Members form Interest Groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire.

Learning is **by the members, for the members.**

No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.

There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers. They are all u3a members.

1.3 The Mutual Aid principle:

Each u3a is a mutual aid organization, operationally independent but a member of the Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the u3a movement.

No payments are made to members for services to any u3a.

Each u3a is self-funded with membership subscriptions kept as low as possible.

Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the u3a.

1.4 Participatory Learning and Learning Styles

The value of the u3a style of learning is that everyone can contribute and by doing so will gain a feeling of self-worth and integration. We all learn in different ways.

Consider the following options:

A visiting speaker: A one-off visiting paid speaker, non-paid tutor or someone from another Interest Group or u3a.

Group member presentations: A short presentation by a member of the group or a member leading the meeting on a specific topic.

Discussion groups: Some activities will lead to discussion e.g. 'What the papers say', 'Which way does water go down the plug hole – and why?'

Project based: A project chosen by the members. Each person (or pair) is allocated an area of research which they bring to the group. This can be a good way to learn new technology.

Practical work: This might lean towards specific subjects such as science, craft, photography, creative writing, storytelling.

Drama: Create a short sketch. Provide some entertainment for your monthly meeting.

Themes: Have an event or presentation linked to a specific topic.

Liaise with another community group: e.g. local history presentation, art exhibition, debate.

Liaise with other organisations: Museums, Universities, Libraries. Useful for Shared Learning Projects.

Shared Learning Projects: These are opportunities to work on short term projects with other u3as or outside organizations. They usually involve research and have a definite outcome.

Study days and workshops: Plan one for your own members or as part of a local network. e.g. Family History Day, Language day, Storytelling workshop, debate, quiz, music.

Online learning: MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses), YouTube 'How to' videos, Future Learn.

1.5 Help and Support

Educational resources: The National Office offers access to a range of educational resources. These can be booked via the national website if you create an account. For DVD loans, the only cost is return postage.

Sources and Sources Online: Sources can be found in the 'Third Age Matters' magazine and The Third Age Trust online platform where the work of Interest Groups is showcased. Sources online can be accessed via the national website or via www.sources.u3a.org.uk.

Subject Advisers: Third Age Trust volunteers with specialist knowledge in a wide range of topics. Contact details are available on the national website and in Third Age Matters.

U3A publications: Check the national website for the latest publications.

Research Database: contains up to date information regarding research projects. The database is available under the resources tab of the website.

Other learning opportunities

Enquiry-led Learning/ the Research Network: Shared Learning Projects and Research links with universities and within u3as; contacts available from the national website.
National and Regional Summer Schools.
Events facilitated by the National Office.
National, Regional and Network Workshops and study days.

Sharing Information

It can also be good to share information about your Group:
On your Group's page on the Ku3a website.
In the Ku3a Bulletin.
As a display/presentation at the monthly meeting.
Via Sources or Sources Online.
On social media such as Twitter or Facebook.

1.6 Getting started

Tips on the steps involved in starting a new group can be found in Appendix 1.

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2. SPECIFICS

2.1 Policies and Procedures

The Ku3a policies and procedures can be found through this link, https://kenilworth.u3asite.uk/ku3a-policies-and-procedures/ , located at the top right on the About page on the website.

The committee aims to review these documents on a three-yearly basis. Each policy shadows the corresponding national template:

- Data Protection
- Privacy
- Legitimate Interest - Emergency Contact
- Legitimate Interest - Membership
- (The u3a movement's) Guiding Principles
- Members Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Complaints
- Discipline
- Finance
- New Trustee Induction
- Trustees Responsibilities
- Trustee Code of Conduct
- Incident Report Form

The full set was last updated in March 2025, with the Incident Report form added shortly afterwards.

2.2 Insurance

Insurance is provided through the Third Age Trust for Ku3a members participating in Group activities. Note that the insurance applies down to the individual member level, not just at committee level.

Note that for the insurance to apply, a Group has to be recognized by the Ku3a committee as one of its approved Interest Groups.

The full details of the cover can be read at the following link on the national TAT site, although you may have to have registered an account and be logged in first:

https://www.u3a.org.uk/edocman-downloads/insurance-overview-2-2 .

Note that, although the insurance covers actions down to an individual member level, while participating in a u3a activity, it is not the same as a direct insurance policy for the individual. It is Ku3a which is insured, for the actions of its committee and for activities undertaken in the name of Kenilworth u3a.

Note too that lifts to an interest group session need to be covered by the driver's car insurance, not by the u3a insurance.

2.3 Copyright

The national TAT provides three annually renewed licences to local u3a associations. The u3a CLA Education Licence allows the copying of some materials for educational use within Groups, within certain limits, while the PPL PRS (music licence) and MPLC (film licence) allow u3as to screen music and films respectively.

For full details see the Third Age Trust website: u3a - Support for u3as then follow the link 'Legal'.

Here are the key extracts:

> *Copyright:* Copies must not exceed one chapter of a book, one article from a publication, one short story or poem from an anthology, or one case report from a published report of judicial proceedings, or 5% of the total, whichever is greater. For digital material, copying must be limited to extracts that are equivalent to these limits. Members are entitled to share copies with one another in person or online for educational and teaching purposes but must not circulate copies more widely. Paper copies intended for a meeting of an interest group must not exceed the number of members attending.
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> *Music.* The PPL PRS Licence (also called 'TheMusicLicence') allows a venue to legally play music through the radio, TV, other digital devices and during live performances. PPL, through PPL PRS Ltd, can license a venue operator or an individual music user, depending on the type of venue and how music is used. The Third Age Trust has a PPL licence for music use for u3as across all venues. This ensures that all recorded music used by u3as is licensed by PPL and eliminates the need to investigate whether the licences held by the venues (if any) are suitable to cover music used by u3as.
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> *Film.* The MPLC Umbrella Licence allows audio-visual content (including DVDs, downloads and streamed materials) to be screened in a public location, for example a community hall or in a member's home as part of an interest group, provided admission is not charged. The Third Age Trust has an MPLC Umbrella Licence which covers all u3as and allows u3a group members to show all MPLC films for educational and entertainment purposes.

Ku3a has to pay an annual fee, currently £60, to the TAT for the copyright licence; the other two are provided free, being regarded as part of the capitation charge.

2.4 Problem solving

Sometimes issues can arise within a Group that disrupt the smooth running and spoil the enjoyment for everyone. Don't leave a problem too long before trying to resolve it. The Members' Code of Conduct could be a useful reference (on the website's Information page) or talk to your Groups' Coordinators if you are unsure how to resolve the problem or just want someone to explore options with.

2.5 Issues between members

Where there is potential for friction, or a member's behaviour is regularly disturbing the group, it is advisable to begin by bringing it into the open, either with the members concerned or with the whole group. If you cannot reach a resolution informally, or if you have to ask a member to leave a session, speak to your Groups Coordinator or a member of your committee. If a situation does not resolve and becomes acrimonious your committee may need to implement their disciplinary policy.

2.6 Accidents and Incidents

Report all accidents and incidents to your Committee as soon as possible. It is as well to have an accurate record in case of future problems relating to the incident. A standard Incident Report Form can now be obtained from the Ku3a website, at https://kenilworth.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Ku3a-Incident-Report-Form-Apr25.pdf . This should be completed and handed to the ku3a Secretary.

Remember that the Third Age Trust provides insurance for members participating in Groups' activities.

2.7 Collection of Emergency Contact Information

It is recommended and best practice for Group Leaders to have emergency contact information for all members of their group.

The underlying justification for Ku3a collecting such information from group members is set out in this one-page procedure on our website:

https://kenilworth.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Ku3a-Legitimate-Interest-Assessment-Emergency-Contact-March-25.pdf

A guiding principle is that the information provided will only be used to contact the emergency contact where an incident or accident occurs that requires someone to take responsibility for the member in question.

What to do

1. For anyone attending your group, collect a name, telephone number and the details of their relationship to the member.
2. In retaining the information, please respect data privacy as far as practicable, within the constraints of the information being readily available at any group session.
3. The information should be accessible at a session to yourself and at least one other person (in case it is you who are the subject of the incident).
4. Ask the member to inform the person identified as their emergency contact that they have provided the details to the u3a.

The information will not be held centrally by Ku3a, it will only be held within your group.

2.8 Finances

Many groups run with no finance requirements, but if the group hires a room or collects for an outing, it is necessary to follow the following practice with respect to managing the group finances:

- You must collect the subs as cash, not as payments into your bank account. You can choose whether this is room charge/total number of members, or a charge per attendance.
- For most groups, you should aim to keep no more than 4 months' expenditure in the cash balance.
- If you feel you need to keep a cash float in excess of that, you should discuss with the Groups Coordinator.
- For information, an interest group cash float is covered by u3a insurance up to £1000, though it should be well below that if abiding by the above 4-month limit.
- If you have paid an invoice from your bank account, you can then, and only then, reimburse yourself, either in cash from the float or by transfer of that amount of cash in a single transaction into your bank account.
- Invoicing practices can vary between venues: currently the Kenilworth Centre invoices at about the time of the room booking, and the Methodist Centre at the end of the month. The Methodist Centre has now moved over to monthly invoicing (previously quarterly).
- You must not set up a bank account for the group.
- Towards the end of the year the Treasurer will ask you to complete a simple end-of-year return.
- You will need to provide copies of the invoices or receipt notes to the Treasurer with the end-of-year return.
- You will need to keep a ledger of the payments in and out, but only have to declare the totals to the Treasurer in the end-of-year statement.

It doesn't have to be you personally who does this admin, though it is best if you, as Group Leader, are accountable for submitting the end-of-year return.

This procedure means that the group's finances are fully independent of the Ku3a bank account, but it provides a top-level visibility of the full financial activity that occurs under the banner of KU3A. It may sound formal but it's pretty light-touch and has run for several years without difficulty.

A point to note is that, although you are its custodian, the cash balance for the Interest Group belongs to Ku3a. Therefore, if a group should close, the cash balance must be passed to the Ku3a Treasurer for a committee decision on what to do with it.

For completeness, the Treasurer's official guidance is in Appendix 2.

2.9 Privacy and Data Protection

It is recognized that the Data Protection and Privacy policies are long documents, but a few simple precautions will head off most difficulties.

You should get the consent of the individual members to participate if you want to use and circulate photos of the group.

You should use the blind copy (Bcc:) approach to email circulation even within the group, until you have their permission to share their email addresses across the group. Consent becomes more important when putting information on the web page. Moreover, the Ku3a website should not have any visible email addresses on it.

2.10 Risk Assessment

Most Interest Groups are requested to complete a Risk Assessment. Starting from the national u3a templates, Ku3a has developed different versions of the RA form, dependent on where the group meets and what type of activity it conducts. The categories are:

- Home-based (meet in members' homes)
- Venue-based (meet at a hired room)
- Walk-based (for walking groups or similar outdoor activity)
- Outdoor Sporting.

You should ask the Groups Coordinator for advice on whether your group should conduct an assessment and, if so, to provide the relevant proforma for completion. Once completed the form should be returned to the Ku3a Secretary, and you should keep your own copy.

The RA should be reviewed if there are significant changes to the venue, the activity or the personnel of the group.

2.11 Keeping others informed

Interaction with the Committee. The committee appreciate being kept informed of any change in the group's name or time or place of meeting, and will help publicise this via the bulletin to the full Ku3a membership.

It is useful to keep the committee informed if the group is full, or if it is struggling to remain viable.

You can contact whichever committee member seems most appropriate on any issue, or if unsure contact the Groups' Coordinators first.

Interaction with the Bulletin. Do consider submitting the occasional entry to the monthly Ku3a bulletin, to advertise your group generally or to record some notable activity you have undertaken.

2.12 Taking on new members

You should expect that any new member of your group has contacted you first: if they just turn up unannounced you can make the decision as to whether you are able to accept them at that session.

When taking on a member new to your group please check their membership is up to date. A rule of thumb is that they can attend one meeting before being required to join Ku3a, or prove they are a member of another u3a association.

Please check in January each year that your existing members have remembered to renew their subscriptions! As follow-up you may also be asked by the Membership Secretary in February to check whether anyone on the list of non-renewers is still attending your group.

A primary reason for requesting these checks is to ensure that the u3a insurance is valid.

We encourage you to be as open to taking new members into the group as is practical.

We do want to ensure new Ku3a members feel welcomed; we don't want their first contact with Ku3a to be being told the group they wish to join is full without any prospect of being accommodated in any way. If you have to turn someone away, please suggest they contact the Groups' Coordinators to see if any alternative can be offered.

It is recognized that a group may be full, most commonly this occurs when it would become impractical to meet at home. If this occurs please consider setting up a waiting list. Please also inform the Groups' Coordinators of the position and discuss the merits of trying to set up a new group.

2.13 Members from other u3a's

Our groups are open to anyone who is a paid-up member of a u3a. However, should a group be full, or nearly full, first preference should be given to Kenilworth members.

A member from another u3a has the option of joining Ku3a as an Associate Member. This has a reduced annual fee as their home association will have paid their capitation fee to the national u3a Trust. The advantage of joining us as an Associate is that it confers the same rights of access and preference to groups that are afforded to our full members.

If you take on a member from another u3a, please check their membership on first joining and then annually, as you would for a Ku3a full or associate member.

2.14 Affiliation to Ku3a only

For a group to be able to label itself as a Kenilworth u3a Interest Group, there are a few conditions that must be satisfied:

- The Group Leader must be a member of Kenilworth u3a.

- The group and its sessions must be open only to u3a members.
- The group must have the approval of the Ku3a committee to label itself as a Ku3a group.
- The group should not be affiliated to any other u3a association:
    - As stated earlier, individual members from other u3as are welcome, subject to spaces being available, but the group leadership and the affiliation to a home u3a association, must not be shared with any other u3a.
- Non-members, including friends or partners of Ku3a members, cannot attend a session as this will invalidate the u3a insurance. There are two exceptions:
    - A carer can accompany a u3a member, without any requirement for them to join u3a themselves.
    - Although it is better for them to have joined u3a first, a prospective member is allowed one trial session before committing to join the u3a.

2.15 Approaches to a group being full

It is not uncommon for a group to reach its maximum capacity. In this case, you should inform the Groups' Coordinator to discuss.

Here is a list of the standard options available if your group is full:

- Move to a larger venue, if the dynamics of the group session can still be maintained.
- Run two grades of waiting list, with those on the first list being on Standby i.e. invited to attend a session if a regular attender will be absent.
- Identify regular non-attenders and move them to the waiting list in preference for the keen new starter.
- Liaise with an equivalent group in a neighbouring u3a to see if they have spaces.
- Help to facilitate the launch of a spin-off group.

A waiting list is rarely large enough to form a group of itself, so the individual members of the existing group can help in the last approach by being prepared to join the spin-off group, either permanently or temporarily, to make its numbers viable to get started. As its numbers increase you could then have the choice of staying in the new group or returning to the original.

2.16 Annual meetings

There are a small number of meetings which the committee may ask you to attend each year.

There will be one or two Group Leaders sessions each year. This is the best place to meet the committee, and is the best chance to meet the other Group Leaders, in one place. Attendance is recommended, though not mandatory.

The October GLs meeting is centred around collation of the entries from the individual GLs for printing of the following year's Handbook.

There are also one or two New Members meetings each year. It is useful to have a small number of Group Leaders joining the committee to host the latest crop of new members; you might also sign up some to your group in the process.

2.17 The Tea Rota

The Tea Rota for the Open Meetings is managed by the Groups Coordinator.

Your group will appear on the Tea Rota, for provision of the catering at a Ku3a Open Meeting, which is held on the third Thursday of the month. It only requires 3-4 of the group to attend for about 1½ hours, and given the number of groups, comes up about once every four years.

You can inspect the rota listing on the Open Meetings section of the Ku3a website.

2.18 Updating your web page

You are encouraged to keep your group's web page up to date. You can either define the required update to the Groups' Coordinator or direct to the Web Master, or you can ask the Web Master to give you editor access to your own group page.

The group page will give a reader of the page the ability to send you an email. You need to provide your email address for the web page to be set up, but the link which generates an email to you is set up such that your actual email address is not visible to the reader.

It is your choice whether to provide a contact telephone number; about 20% of the group pages do so. To remain compliant with Privacy and GDPR policies, there will be an annual check in July from the committee to refresh your permission for that number to appear on the web page.

2.19 Responding to external emails received via the web site

You might receive requests from non-members for information about your group via the website email forwarding system.

You should be aware of the following three aspects of this system:

- Such emails arrive with a u3a label but this is just an automatic forwarding system with no filtering or checking: it could be from any email address anywhere in the world.
- At this stage the sender cannot see your personal email address.
- If you reply, your email address does become visible.

If you want to check whether a person is a Ku3a member before replying, you can contact the Membership Secretary who has the up-to-date full list of names, telephone numbers and email addresses.

If the sender is a non-member there is then an element of judgement required when deciding how to, or whether to, reply. You might ask for more background from the sender before divulging information about the group. If worried about the sender seeing your email address, an option would be to ask Helen Higginson to send your reply as she has an anonymous u3a-role email address.

APPENDIX 1 – FORMING A NEW GROUP

The first steps to forming a new Group

1) Discuss the formation of your Group with the Groups' Coordinators.

2) Consider what interest there might be in the subject, perhaps by some informal soundings.

3) Consider what the aims of the Group are – what are you hoping to learn/achieve/share by offering the Group?

4) Identify what you want to achieve from your first meeting.

5) Generate interest by promoting your Group using as many different methods as possible. This could include developing publicity in the form of a flyer, poster, promotion via existing Groups, via the Ku3a bulletin, via the Noticeboard facility on the web site Welcome page, talking to members in Groups that you attend, attending a New Members meeting, taking a table at the monthly Open Meeting. The more methods you use, the more successful you are likely to be.

6) Organize an initial meeting and invite people to attend. You may like to liaise with the Groups' Coordinators about a suitable venue.

7) There may be an existing national subject adviser who can support with ideas for the development of the Group – check on the national website's Subject Advisor area https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/subjects .

   An alternative to subject advisors might be to contact neighbouring U3As to see if they have a similar subject Group and then talk to the Group leader to get some first-hand knowledge. It may be that you could sit in on a Group meeting.

8) You should consider whether there are any risks that might occur as a result of the Group's activities and, if you identify any, please talk to the Groups' Coordinators who will advise you on risk assessment procedures.

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The first meeting

Recommended steps to take at the first meeting:

- Discuss the purpose of the Group as you all see it and the skills within the Group.
- Agree the tasks that need to be done to run the Group and who is willing to undertake these, e.g. be the contact person, keep a record of monies, if appropriate.
- Agree, if relevant, the level that the Group will be aimed at – beginners, improvers, advanced.
- Agree how the Group will work – discussion, presentations by individual Group members, practical activities, etc
- Identify any accessibility needs that Group members may have (you can refer to the national u3a website for advice and guidance Accessibility Policy for U3As in England, Scotland and Wales Sample) , then decide where and when the Group will meet.
- Agree on how often, and when within the month, to meet.

  This will aim to maximise the number who can attend, but there may be constraints from a venue being available.

  You are asked to avoid the 3rd Thursday afternoon of the month, to avoid clashing with the Ku3a Open Meetings, and the first Monday morning to avoid the Committee Meetings. The web Groups page has a useful link to the Timetable for the Month for you to check for clashes with other Ku3a groups.
- Agree the costs for running the Group and what members will pay.
- Discuss how Group members will communicate with each other bearing in mind data protection concerns, using ‘bcc’ to send blind copies to Group members unless they consent otherwise.
- Be respectful of the guiding principles of the u3a.

Launch of the new group

Give feedback on what was agreed at the first meeting to your Groups’ Coordinators.

Note that for the u3a insurance to apply, the group must have the approval of the Ku3a committee to label itself as a Ku3a group.

Note also that the GL must be a member of Ku3a, and, although members of other local u3as are welcome (subject to space being available), the group must be affiliated to only Ku3a.

You can then agree the launch of a page on the Ku3a website for the Group, and any publicity of the group's launch through the Ku3a bulletin.

If the group has any financial transactions, make sure you are aware of the bookkeeping and cash balance requirements as detailed in this GLs Handbook for the management of interest group finances.

Request a Risk Assessment form from the Group Coordinator, who will ensure you have the appropriate version for your group's activity, and return to the Secretary once completed.

APPENDIX 2 – HANDLING INTEREST GROUP MONEY IN Ku3a

If you have any queries relating to these procedures, please contact the Ku3a Treasurer.

- If money is handled in relation to the running of your group, e.g. for room hire, entrance fees or any other expenses, you need to keep records and complete an annual return. This is necessary to comply with Charity Commission and Third Age Trust guidance.

- You must obtain and retain receipts for any payments made to be included with your annual return.

- Group money can be transacted through a personal bank or building society account only in the one Circumstance defined in the Finance section of the GLs Handbook. No Group must have its own bank account.

- You can do this in the way that suits you and your Group, but the important things to have records of are:

  ✓ WHO has paid
  ✓ HOW MUCH they have paid
  ✓ WHAT they have paid for
  ✓ WHEN they paid it
  ✓ WHAT the outgoings are (how much and what for)
  ✓ TOTAL amount of money held by the Group

- A notebook with a page per meeting is ideal. Show the date of the meeting on each page, who was in attendance, how much they paid and what they paid for. Conclude each page with:

  ✓ Balance brought forward from the previous meeting
  ✓ How much was collected
  ✓ How much was paid out
  ✓ Balance carried forward to the next meeting

- If you are collecting large sums of money, you may wish to consider issuing a receipt.

- The person booking the room, paying for the room and collecting money from members does not need to be the same person, or the Group Leader.

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If you need to cover the cost of room hire you can charge each member in attendance their proportion of the hire cost; you can charge the same amount each time, or you can make an annual charge based on the number of people in the group and the annual hire cost. If you use the last option you will need to decide within your Group what to do when people join or leave the Group part way through a year.

- If your Group has surplus funds some options are to reduce the charge you make at each meeting; use the money to buy some appropriate equipment for the group; make no charge at one meeting.

- As a guide, it is probably ideal to have the cost of the following room hire as cash in hand.

- If you make a donation for refreshments to a host whose home you meet in, you do not need to keep records of that.