

Thank you for agreeing to organise a Lymington u3a interest Group. Interest Groups are the essential core of u3a activities relying on volunteers to organise and run them. Without you there would be no Lymington u3a. This handbook is intended to provide advice and to set out what you must and must not do.

Your Key Contacts

Tim and Sue Norris, our Interest Groups coordinators will provide help and advice.

John Ward maintains and keeps up to date the website where information about Interest Groups is published.

You may contact them from our website [Contact Page](#)

Introduction to interest Groups

it is important that your Interest Group follows the u3a ethos of shared, participative and self-help learning. The result will not only be an increase in knowledge, but a supportive and friendly atmosphere which enables everyone to participate.

- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There are no 'learners and teachers'; everyone is a member of Lymington u3a. This is an important principle. U3a Interest Groups are not 'Adult Education'. The levels of skill and knowledge that Interest Group members have will vary greatly but the key word is 'Interest', and a willingness to take part, not just to 'sit at the back of the class!'
- No payments are made to individual members for services rendered.

Make sure your Interest Group information on our website is up to date

- Provide a short piece of text about the Interest Group that tells prospective members what you do and if appropriate at what skill level. (Don't just say "We are a friendly....." Unfriendly Interest Groups are not a part of u3a culture!)
- Provide information on when and where the Interest Group meets.
- Provide information on costs (if any). Not necessarily specific, but, for example, if there are hired venue costs to be shared.
- Remember to tell the Interest Groups coordinators and/or website manager of any changes if they happen.

Members of your Interest Group

Members of the Group **must be members of Lymington u3a**

Membership is annual from 1st March and in April each year the Membership Secretary will issue a list of members who have not renewed their memberships and are no longer eligible to be Interest Group Members.

Attendance of your Interest Group

In order to comply with u3a insurance you must keep a record of attendance at your Interest Group and provide a copy of this when requested by the Interest Groups Coordinators.

Forming a new Interest Group

You may be taking over from an existing Interest Group Leader or starting a new Group. If you are starting a new Interest Group, these are the recommended steps to undertake:

- Agree the development of your Interest Group with the Groups Coordinators.

- Decide what will be the practical maximum number of Group members.
- Liaise with the Groups Coordinators/Treasurer regarding the financing of the Interest Group and how this needs to be reported. Most of our Interest Groups meet in members houses with no costs, beyond refreshments, being incurred. Others meet in hired premises, the cost of which is shared between the Group members.
- Some Groups charge for refreshments, other do not – decide how your Group will function.
- Consider what the aims of the Interest Group are – what are you hoping to learn/achieve/share by offering this Interest Group?
- Generate interest by promoting your group using as many different methods as possible. This could include promotion via existing groups, via your u3a newsletter / website, sharing at a monthly meeting and talking to members in groups that you attend. The more methods you use, the more successful you are likely to be.
- You should consider whether there are any risks that might occur as a result of the group's activities.
- Identify what you want to achieve from your first meeting.

The Group set up meeting

The Interest Groups coordinators will organise an initial meeting and invite those who have expressed an interest.

At this meeting:

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the Group as you see it.
- Ask about the skills and experience within the Group.
- Agree the tasks that need doing to run the group and who is willing to support these – for example, who is willing to host, help with developing the programme or keeping the register.
- Agree, if relevant, the level that the group will be aimed at – beginners, improvers, advanced.
- Agree how the group will work – discussion, instruction, presentation etc.
- Agree when and where the group will run.
- Identify any accessibility needs that group members may have.
- 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 guidance (e.g. using the BCC function on emails to avoid sharing addresses between all members) and always seek permission and agreement.

It is a good idea to agree some basic ground rules at the outset, such as:

- Let someone know if you are unable to come
- Agree to disagree amicably and be respectful to other group members

First Group meeting

After your first proper Interest Group meeting it is a good idea to feedback what was agreed to your Group coordinators to finalise arrangements, and also provide a list of Group members.

Keep the Group Coordinators up to date

Please keep the Group coordinators informed about spaces in your Group. They may have a waiting list and can pass on names and contact details to you. If a new person joins your Group, again let the Group Coordinators know so that our records can be kept up to date and comply with insurance requirements.

U3a Insurance, Policies and Procedures

Our Interest Groups Coordinators will advise you of the u3a insurance arrangements as well as policies and procedures that you need to be aware of. These are listed on our website and include:

- Finance
- Data protection (Lymington u3a uses the Beacon database to store member information)
- Safeguarding
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Accessibility
- Complaints
- Incident reporting
- Venues Risk Assessments

Copyright

Lymington u3a has a CLA licence allows some materials within limits for educational use within Interest Groups. The Third Age Trust also provides a PPL (Phonographic Performance) PRS licence to cover the playing of music and an MPLC licence to cover the showing of films. These are included in the fee that Lymington u3a pays to the Trust. There are limitations to each of these licences and if you are going to be using copyright material in any form, for example, printed, audio or pictures, please check with our Interest Groups Coordinators

Start-up equipment costs

Up to £50 may be provided to new Interest Groups to buy essential equipment.

Problems?

Rarely, but sometimes issues can arise within an Interest Group that disrupt the smooth running and can spoil the enjoyment for everyone. Don't leave a problem too long before trying to resolve it. Talk to your Interest Groups Coordinators if you are unsure how to resolve the problem or just want someone to explore options with.

Accidents and incidents

If an emergency incident happens during an Interest Group meeting, you should call the emergency services as soon as possible. Report all accidents and incidents to the Interest Groups Coordinators as soon as possible. It is important to have an accurate record in case of future problems relating to the incident. For example, if damage is caused to property by a member of the group, take full details, as it may be the subject of an insurance claim. The Third Age Trust provides insurance for Interest Group activities. Personal accident insurance cover is not provided but the insurance does cover all u3a members. For some Interest Groups or for particular activities it may be necessary to ask members to hold or provide emergency contact details. The Lymington u3a Committee have approved a Legitimate Interest Assessment form to cover this. (a copy of this is on the Lymington u3a website).

Finally, apologies if this document seems a bit over long and wordy, but as trustees responsible for the charity it is important to lay out all the information for you. We are sure that as well as filling a key u3a role you will find that being a Group leader is not an onerous task, but is a fulfilling role from which you will get a lot of enjoyment.