



Introduction from Iain Cassidy

Dear Friends,

Saturday marks the start of *u3a week*, our annual celebration of the learning and fun that takes place within u3as every day. This year, our online *u3a week* events all focus on the theme of positive ageing.

Positive ageing means a lot of things: learning new skills, finding purpose, building new friendships, prioritising health in later life. All through this newsletter you'll see stories showing that later life can be a new chapter filled with joy, community and new experiences. This was clear last week when many of you joined our online event with *Deep Purple*'s frontman Ian Gillan, who is still touring at the age of 80.

The skills within our membership and the wide variety of groups within u3a have always challenged the misconception that later life is a time of slowing down. Many of our members remark that they're busier now than when they were working!

u3a enables people to live positive later lives by connecting them with new friends and opportunities to do things they might not have expected.

I'd love to know from you how your u3a helps you live a positive life.

Best wishes

Iain Cassidy

CEO of the Third Age Trust



Congratulations to our Great North Runners!

u3a members Nigel, Frances, Rik, Duncan and Elizabeth took part in *The Great North Run* after months of training and fundraising in their local communities. The runners were cheered on by u3a volunteers.

The money raised will go towards supporting the Third Age Trust to create more learning opportunities and support the creation of u3as in areas that currently don't have one. Find out more on [our fundraising page](#).

Welcoming our new Vice Chair, Sheila Crawley

Ashford u3a member Sheila Crawley has been elected as the Vice Chair of the u3a movement. Sheila has a strong background in marketing and communications.

In her supporting statement, Sheila said, "I'm passionate about u3a, it has a great social purpose. My hope is that many more people of all backgrounds understand what u3a is and how transformational it can be."

Sheila will take up her new role at this year's AGM on 15 October. Read more on [the u3a website](#).



friends stories

I made the decision that my life was going to be dedicated to positive ageing. There are five main components for positive ageing; education, exercise, social contact, blue light and a healthy diet. So, what did I do to ensure that I had them all in place?

I found opportunities to be actively involved in conducting research, joined a couple of choirs, learned to play steel pans and ukulele, took up Zentangle art and became a member of a variety of groups, including philosophy, history, bridge, and craft. I have been a member of various committees – I'm currently on the committee of my local u3a. I also had four years as the u3a Trustee for the North East region.

Someone asked me recently what the happiest period of my life has been. Without hesitation I replied – 'my retirement'.

Sandi, Newcastle u3a

Read more about Sandi has done to embody positive ageing on [our blog, Sources](#).

For most of us the holiday period is almost over, grandkids are back at school, and most u3as are back in the swing of things. New interest groups are forming and traditional groups are planning their programme for the year.

It's no different in the Trust. The Board met last week, the Council will be meeting soon, and staff in the office are back to responding to around 2,000 telephone and email queries per month, as well as planning the autumn and winter learning programmes. Incidentally, if like me you were one of the 480 present at the Ian Gillan session last week to hear him talk about his life with *Deep Purple* and other bands, you'll realise the value of the national online events programme.

Autumn also brings a focus on the Trust AGM. This year it will be on Wednesday 15 October, so make sure you register to attend online or in person, and make sure someone is registered to vote on behalf of your u3a. This is a great opportunity to hear directly from key people in the Trust and I will also be welcoming Sheila Crawley into her new role.

friends events



u3a week

Starting on Saturday, and running until next Sunday 28 September, *u3a week* is a chance to host events showcasing u3a in the local community. In addition, we're hosting a programme of online events exploring positive ageing. Topics include statistics around ageing, eating well in later life, and a photography project challenging ageist depictions of older adults. See the full online events

programme on the [u3a week page](#)

Pictured: Ravenshead u3a's 2021 u3a day celebration.

Save the date: u3a Festival 26

Following on from the success of last year's u3a Festival, we're already starting to plan the next one. *u3a Festival 26* will be taking place between 1 – 3 July 2026 at the *University of York*.

As with last year, member's skills and interests will be at the forefront of the festival. We're looking for activity leaders, crafters, speakers, musicians, and sports enthusiasts to help build a rich and engaging programme. If you'd like to contribute, please email us at festival@u3a.org.uk.



Discovering a passion for powerlifting in later life



Sudbury u3a member Melanie started lifting weights in her 60s and the passion led to her representing Team GB in Powerlifting. She now leads a group at Sudbury u3a, introducing the sport to others.

About eight years ago, I started an exercise class and soon progressed to lifting weights with a trainer. Lifting weights made me feel good, not just physically but also mentally. For me, it was so much better than just cardio exercises.

I then looked at entering powerlifting competitions. At my age (71) there are not huge numbers of powerlifters. As many competitions are in age categories I did well and soon was able to compete in the Masters Nationals. After this, I was asked if I'd be interested in being part of Team GB.

I began to feel how important lifting weights is for anyone of any age. I approached Sudbury u3a's groups coordinator and suggested a powerlifting group. We went from there. The important part of each session is learning to lift with the correct form. Safety is everything! Each week we concentrate on one of the three main lifts in powerlifting; squats, bench press or deadlifts. These sessions help people get used to a gym, because initially a gym can be an intimidating place but with friends and guidance it is a great, supportive place to be.

For me, what I love about running these groups is seeing the progression of u3a members and the camaraderie and support each member gives to their fellow lifters. I see them watching others and helping them along and encouraging each other!

Whatever your ability, whatever your age, you can start somewhere and you will improve. It really doesn't matter when you start as long as you start.

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Headline photos: A garden created by Borehamwood u3a's Gardening group; Northampton u3a's New Experiences group going sledging; the digital version of *u3a matters*.