

U3A in Northern Ireland

U3A Groups in Northern Ireland

There are currently 25 U3As in Northern Ireland, located across the province and ranging in size from around 50 to over 1200 members. The oldest is U3A Foyle, founded in 1990, while the newest is Ards Peninsula, set up in 2018. Each U3A is an independent charity but all are members of both the national organisation, The Third Age Trust, and the regional organisation, The Northern Ireland Region of U3As.

Some U3As also have informal links with other local U3As. For example, Belfast, Holywood, North Down & Ards and Comber U3As have recently come together for training and social events.



The Regional Organisation

The Northern Ireland Regional Executive Committee (NIREC) leads the regional activities. NIREC organises Spring AGM & Autumn Regional Meetings, usually with speakers from the Third Age Trust. All NI U3As are invited to attend and costs for 2 representatives from each are paid for by the Third Age Trust. Additional members may attend if places are available, paid for by the U3A

A number of Inter U3A events are also facilitated:

- Bi-annual Summer School
- Songfest for U3A choirs
- Bridge Congress
- Quiz
- Workshops and Training

NIREC liaises on behalf of U3A with outside bodies such as the Commissioner for Older People in NI, Age NI, etc. It also publicises U3A to help recruit new members.

The regional website is <https://u3ani.info/>



2019 Summer School



The Regional Trustee

Local U3As elect the Regional Trustee for a term of 3 years, with the possibility of extension for a further 1 or 2 years. The Trustee is a director on the Board (National Executive Committee) of the Third Age Trust. The Trustee represents the views of the region to the NEC and communicates Board decisions and guidance back to the region.

The Trustee supports U3As in the region, providing help and assistance as required. Together with local Trust Volunteers, the Trustee is responsible for starting new U3As and ensuring that the new U3A committee operates to the principles of U3A.

The Trustee also represents U3A to outside bodies.

Rose Marie Bradley from U3A Foyle completed a 4 year term as Regional Trustee in Aug 2019 when Valerie Cobain from Holywood U3A was elected as the new Trustee at the national AGM and Conference.

The trustee is assisted by a number of trained volunteers. These are currently Deirdre Kenny and Mavis Turner from Belfast U3A, together with Stuart Pollard from Causeway U3A. Both Mavis and Stuart are past Regional Trustees.



Regional Trustee
Valerie Cobain

Will More U3As be started?

Where potential for a new U3A exists, the regional organisation will provide trained and experienced members to help local volunteers start a new U3A. A public launch meeting will be organised to confirm the demand and form a start-up committee. They will then work with this committee to ensure the new group is fully constituted and follows the principles of U3A. The new U3A becomes a temporary member of The Third Age Trust, which will provide a start-up grant to meet initial expenses. After a 3 month probationary period, the U3A will become a full member of the Trust if approved by the Regional Trustee.

Shared Learning Projects

Many U3As choose to set a group to research a topic of interest. Often this will be done in co-operation with external groups in the form of a Shared Learning Project or SLP.

Projects which have been conducted in the region include:

- Holywood Lives
- Bagenal's Castle
- Public Art in Northern Ireland
- Wartime memories - German POWs and Gibraltarian refugees

A particularly successful SLP was set up by Causeway U3A and U3A Foyle to research and set up a Earl Bishop Hervey tourist trail.

Trail Highlights



Learning Partners



Project Funding:

