



Welcome to Hartlepool & District u3a

Hartlepool & District u3a was formed in June 2011 and since then has grown from ten or so members to currently in excess of 100. Like all u3a groups it is a self-help group aimed at providing life-long opportunities for those who are generally over 50 (although there are no age constraints) and who are no longer in full-time employment. We are affiliated to the Third Age Trust, the national body to which all local u3a's belong.

Prospective Members - are invited as a guest to attend one of our monthly meetings before deciding whether or not to join. You are also invited to try one or two of our interest groups as a guest. Just contact a group leader to arrange (see **Group Information** below). We are a friendly and welcoming group so don't be shy about coming along and feel free to bring a friend.

Monthly Meeting – we meet at 2pm on the first Friday of each month at the Holy Family Parish Centre (formerly St Joseph's Community Centre) in Hutton Avenue, postcode TS26 9PW. Meetings usually last between one and a half to two hours. The main part of the meeting is taken up by a guest speaker and over the years we have enjoyed a range of topics. We follow this with tea and biscuits allowing the opportunity to meet and catch up with friends and other members, to find out about the various interest groups / activities and also talk to group leaders and committee members.

Group Information – a list of current groups can be found on the Groups page of our website, on the back page of our bi-monthly Newsletter or on the display stands at monthly meetings. Group leaders are usually at the monthly meetings providing an opportunity for further information and discussion. Additionally, you can email a leader from the Group pages on our website; just click on the *carrier pigeon* at the top right of the page.

Interest Groups - the real strength of the U3A lies in the interest groups. Most are small, all are run by members. They allow people with a common interest to meet together with the aim of learning from each other. Qualifications are not gained, but the groups offer a tremendous opportunity for people to try something new and learn about a whole range of subjects and interests.

New Groups - we encourage and help with the **formation of new groups**. Those who lead groups do not need to be experts in their subject, just to enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with others. If you have a particular interest, and wish to develop a group, we would be keen to know and will work with you to establish one.

The u3a movement has support material covering a wide range of interests and the development of any u3a works by members leading new ventures as well as participating in ones that already exist.

Groups are often started because of the interest of one or two members. They will arrange a short meeting at a suitable venue and through the newsletter and monthly meetings invite others to share a new interest. Group members decide how, when and where they will meet and how large the group should be. Some groups such as walking groups, may not meet formally at all just pursuing their interest together, learning from each other without an "expert". The leader of a group will ensure that meetings happen and keep group members informed.

Communication – we use electronic means of communication to reduce both our costs and environmental impact, but we are mindful that not all members have internet access and email. Any information on our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/hartlepool/home> can also be provided in paper form on request.

Newsletter – currently is produced monthly and lists on the back page our interest groups. The Newsletter is circulated electronically to those members with email, but paper copies are available at the monthly meeting for those without internet access. Recent copies of the newsletter can be downloaded from the Welcome page of the website or provided on request.

Membership – runs from April to March and we strive to hold the membership fee at what we feel is a reasonable level. We offer pro rata rates if you join part way through the year. The fee provides the following:

- support for the National Office who provide insurance cover and various resources
- the quarterly magazine from the Third Age Trust (the national body)
- room hire and speaker expenses for monthly meetings
- cost of producing a bi-monthly newsletter
- audio-visual and other equipment

Please note - committee members and group leaders are unpaid volunteers; however, they can claim out of pocket expenses such as travel to regional meetings, stationery and postage. We maintain a modest and appropriate financial reserve; our aim is always to break even.

Helping with meetings – not just the preserve of Committee members. We are grateful when members turn up early to help with such things as selling raffle tickets, serving refreshments or setting out the hall with seats and at the end of the meeting leaving the hall in good order. You don't have to commit to helping each month but a pool of volunteers eases the burden on the committee.

Further Information -

The Welcome page on our website has a link to Further Information on the following topics that can be downloaded or provided in printed form on request:

- Application Form
- Constitution
- Data Protection and Privacy policies

Additionally, you can click on **u3a** at the top of the webpage to open the **Third Age Trust** website where you will find:

- Information about the u3a movement and the Third Age Trust – the national body to which we are affiliated
- Principles of the u3a Movement
- History, structure, finances, NEC
- Resources Centre information
- Insurance cover carried by the u3a.

You can also ring 07726947100 to speak to one of the Committee members for Hartlepool u3a. Leave a message with your name and telephone number and we will get back to you.