

MINUTES	
Meeting Title:	GROUPS COORDINATORS NETWORK (GCNet) MEETING
Date/ Time:	13th Sept 2021, 10.00-12.00
Venue:	Online via Zoom

Present: 24 participants, representing 18 (42%) London u3as and including 3 members of the Steering Group and 4 representatives of London Region of U3As -- see Appendix for details.
Please report any errors or omissions in the names/role titles of those listed for your u3a to
 Catherine Ware: talks.lru3a@gmail.com

1. Welcome and Agenda - Liz Day (Chair)

Liz welcomed all attendees and introduced the Steering Group – Judith Altshul had offered to take Minutes. *More volunteers are urgently required to help keep the peer group going* –could be on a rotational basis. If you'd like to discuss, please contact Liz Day: liz@the-days.org.uk

2. Structure and remit of London Region - Catherine Ware.

[Introduction to London Region of U3As](#) (see Welcome page, LRU3A website)

London Region, which is one of the 12 governance areas of the Third Age Trust, currently has 43 u3as and nearly 26,000 members. London Region of U3As (LRU3A) is a mutual-support network for all u3as in the London Region. Membership of the London Region network is free and voluntary, and u3as are represented at quarterly meetings by Chairs or nominated Delegates. LRU3A provides a national voice for London u3as via the London Region Trustee who attends committee and quarterly meetings.

The LRU3A AGM will be on 22nd October (on Zoom). It will be recorded and uploaded for the benefit of all members. Speakers:

- Ian McCannah, Ex-Chair of Third Age Trust: 'Reflections on the Challenges and Opportunities Facing the u3a Movement' and
- Ann Keating, Trustee for Scotland: 'Online Across Scotland'

Network Link is a national network of about 70 geographical networks of u3as, including LRU3A. Networks develop organically for mutual support and are not part of the Third Age Trust governance structure. Networks vary enormously according to local needs and preferences, and some u3as belong to more than one network.

In addition to geographical networks, there are role-based Peer Group networks (such as the GCNet). Increasingly, interest group/subject networks are also being developed. For further information see the [Networks](#) page of national u3a website, including videos presented at the Netfest event June 2021 e.g. [What do Networks Do](#) and [Successful Networks](#)

The next Network Link meeting will be on 12th October. Theme: What's Ahead?

There's still time to register. Contact Avis on u3anetworklinkmeeting@gmail.com

Northumbria Region u3a <https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page/73754> has several role-based networks, including a Groups Coordinators network. They were invited to attend our meeting but the network Coordinator was away so it appears the message did not get through and no-one came.

Catherine then talked about the efforts being made to keep members in touch with u3a during the Covid pandemic, including the formation of the [Trust u3a](#), a national online u3a set up to promote recruitment during lockdown. This now has 900 members and is asking for new group leaders/convenors to step up. Will this interfere with our local efforts? See [Trust u3a Interest Groups and Courses Bulletin – September 12th 2021](#) Catherine suggested that we invite Christine Winner, Groups Coordinator of the Trust u3a, and also Chair of the Third Age Trust Learning Committee, to come to a future GCNet meeting.

Jo Walters spoke for a few minutes about her role as Research and Shared Learning Coordinator advising on research and active learning in the London Region. Current projects include a shared learning project with the Coram foundation (Foundling Hospital) and one with London Transport researching the old minute books, with special reference to the beginning of the 'Electric Railway' which became the London Underground. There is also a national project which all u3a members can join to upload information and photos of the changing face of our [High Streets](#).

3. Connecting up with Conveners

Catherine gave some links to the latest government guidance on Covid.

- Covid update – background reading: [Government Coronavirus guidance](#) (August 16th)
- [How to stay safe and prevent the spread](#)
- [11 tips to cope with anxiety about coming out of lockdown](#)

The session on Getting u3as Going Again included an account by Diana Pavey of meetings she held in Crouch End with conveners of similar groups to encourage them to keep in touch with their members and to be inclusive, although this may be difficult. Zoom is the preferred meeting format for about 50% of her groups, but not liked by all members. Also members were divided on whether to meet again in person or not. They discussed alternatives to meeting in people's homes, such as hiring larger venues.

There was discussion about risk assessments. Coordinators have mixed views on how strictly these should be carried out. To avoid individual risk assessments, some use public venues, such as pubs and cafes, which have carried out their own risk assessments. Dulwich and District u3a have developed a Risk Assessment for interest groups meeting in members' homes: [RA Members Home](#)

Vivek Nanda then talked about blended or hybrid meetings. He said that it was difficult to recommend suitable equipment, as local groups have a range of skills and needs. He suggested that coordinators try local places of worship and community groups for advice and perhaps to borrow equipment on a trial basis. Sometimes local community venues are already set up for hybrid meetings. He added that making approaches to local organisations is a good opportunity for outreach and recruitment of new 'diverse' members.

Vivek gave details of a website with information about Alternative Meeting Methods <https://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=1144&page=1>

And talked about a programme that has been set up by u3a centrally to deal with questions and suggestions about equipment needed for different types and sizes of meeting and ways of managing hybrid meetings (see details next page)

Zoom invite for the drop-in sessions on Alternative Meeting Methods:

Every week on Wed at 13.00, until Jan 26, 2022, 20 occurrence(s)

Join Zoom Meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81993153499?pwd=OHM5eTICS2YxaUdyRIZMcjFLU2tKQT09>

Meeting ID: 819 9315 3499

Passcode: 754565

One tap mobile

+442034815240,,81993153499#,,,,*754565# United Kingdom

Dial by your location

+44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom

In the ensuing discussion, several coordinators said that they were already using or considering using venues already set up for hybrid meetings, such as churches and other religious or community centres. One had been able to borrow equipment from a larger organisation to try out.

4. Opening Interest groups wider.

Judith Altshul talked about recruiting a member who lives in Palermo to run the Intermediate Italian Group.

Vivek described how he runs his Bite Size groups – taster sessions, short courses based on MOOCs, and Slow Book Groups discussing a book in depth, one chapter at a time. His talk elicited a lot of questions and it was agreed that he would go into this topic in greater depth at a future meeting.

Catherine reminded coordinators that Subject Advisers are helpful in giving groups ideas to explore. Currently 'Climate Change' is a hot topic and it is hoped to organise a regional network group to pool ideas on this and perhaps organise an event open to all members.

5. Recruiting new members

Judith described the Open Day that is being organised in Islington to try to regenerate groups and arouse interest in members as well as to recruit new members.

6. Breakout Rooms

Coordinators then moved into to discuss the topics raised in the presentations.

7. Feedback

Some u3as are planning Open Days.

Suggestions were:

- To hold open days in different parts of a large borough to spread the word.
- To have themed open days, e.g. 'International', 'Creative' to show members and the public different aspects of u3a.
- To have more 'on the street' information events, e.g. stalls.
- Celebrations/affirmations are important.

Other discussion points:

- In a large u3a committee members can each take on responsibility for contacting a few groups to support them and the coordinator.
- A start up payment of £50-100 is given to new groups to launch them.
- Different ways of charging for membership/interest group membership.
- Hearing workshops are held to help new users of hearing aids to get more out of meetings.
- Chat facility used in large meetings with one person monitoring the chat for the speaker.
- In person summer party
- Virtual coffee morning.
- Difficulty of recruiting convenors.
- Older convenors have lost energy. Try to support them/induct younger convenors.
- Restaurants/pubs have already done risk assessment and using them is helping local economy.
- Membership now possible world- wide. How to combine local and distant members in activities. We are both a learning and a social organisation.
- Zoom is both inclusive and exclusive.

8. Further issues for future discussion/attention

The following were raised:

- Too much on the agenda.
- Earlier and longer breakout discussion in future meetings to share ideas.
- More about hybrid meetings.
- More about Bite size meetings.
- Surprise that risk assessment seems not to be considered essential.
- Put link to risk assessment in the minutes.
- Future discussion on Diversity.
- More people are needed on the Steering Committee.

APPENDIX

GCNet Steering Group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messody Adler (Stanmore) Judith Altshul (Islington) Diana Pavey (Crouch End) 	LRU3A Committee support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Day, Learning Development Coordinator (Dulwich) Vivek Nanda, Communications Coordinator (Islington) Catherine Ware, Talks & Summer School (Merton)
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ATTENDANCE

U3A	Name	Last	Role title	Attended 13.09.21
Abbeywood & Thamesmead	Victor	Lambert	<i>Chair & Delegate</i>	Y
Barnet	Johanne	Carstairs	Groups Coordinator	
Barnet	Katharine	Sathe	Groups Liaison Officer	
Barnet	Marjorie	O'Connor	Assistant to Groups Coordinator	Y
Beckenham	Joanne	Page	<i>Chair/Groups Coordinator</i>	
Bexley	Cynthia	Allen	Groups Liaison	
Brent				
Bromley	Carole	Blacher	Group Liaison Officer	
Bromley	Julie	Bouglas	Group Liaison Officer	
Bromley	Peter	Browne	Group Liaison Officer	
Bromley	Angela	Dowling	<i>Secretary</i>	Y
Bromley	Mary	Garside	Group Liaison Officer	
Bromley	Celia	Thompson	Group Liaison Officer	
Crouch End & District	Diana	Pavey	Groups Coordinator	Y
Croydon	Maggie	Chan	Groups Coordinator	Y
Dagenham	Melody	Cohen	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dagenham	Marion	Keegan-Wyatt	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	Angela	Brown	<i>Chair</i>	Y
Dulwich & District	Pam	Cohen	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	Sarah	Howell-Davis	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	Caroline	Knapp	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Dulwich & District	Helen	Robertson	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	Y
Ealing	Derek	Atkinson	<i>Chair</i>	Y
Ealing	Tim	Carter	Groups Coordinator	Y
Enfield	Ann	Hardy	Groups Co-ordinator	
Hackney	Henriette	Roelofs	Group Coordinator	Y
Hammersmith & Fulham	Neville	Rowden	Groups Coordinator	
Hampstead Garden Suburb				
Harrow	Rhoda	Luer	Study Group Coordinator	
Havering	Graham	Fenegan	Groups Coordinator	
Hillingdon	Freda	Longhurst	Interest Groups Coordinator	Y
Hillingdon South	Annette	Kerrison	Groups Coordinator, <i>Sec & Del</i>	
Hounslow	Marion	Vian	Groups Coordinator	
Islington	Judith	Altshul	Groups Coordinator	Y
Kenton & District	Louise	Bennett	Interest Groups Coordinator	

London Region Groups Coordinators Network (GCNet) Meeting 13 Sept 2021: MINUTES

U3A	Name	Last	Role title	Attended 13.09.21
Kenton & District	Peter	Rummer	Interest Groups Coordinator	Y
Kingston	Shirley	Miller	Groups Coordinator	
Merton	John	Sheppard	Groups Coordinator (temp)	
Mill Hill	Yvonne	Hay	Groups Coordinator	Y
Mill Hill	Barbara	Lenton	<i>Chair & Delegate</i>	Y
North London	Henrietta	Cohen	Groups Organiser	
Northwood & District	Anne	Smith	Groups Coordinator/ <i>Delegate</i>	
Norwood	Bev	Wight	<i>Chair & Groups Coordinator</i>	
Norwood	Nick	Trotman	<i>Secretary</i>	Y
Orpington	Janet	Holmes	Groups Coordinator (Shared)	
Orpington	Sue	Howe	Groups Coordinator (Shared)	
Palmers Green & Southgate	Val	Girling	<i>Chair/Groups Coordinator?</i>	Apol
Redbridge & District	Liz	Kite	<i>Chair & Acting Groups Coordinator</i>	Y
Richmond	Norma	Cook	Groups Coordinator/ <i>Delegate</i>	
Sidcup & District	Trevor	Ford	Groups Coordinator/ <i>Delegate</i>	
South East London/London SE	Susan	Mead	<i>Chair</i>	Y
Stanmore	Messody	Adler	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	Y
Stanmore	Sheila	Dobin	Groups Coordinator (Joint)	
Sutton	Max	Edward	Groups Coordinator	
Tower Hamlets				
U3A in London (Belsize Park)	Amalia	Michaels	<i>V. Chair & Groups Coordinator</i>	
Upminster	Eric	Rogers	Group Support	
Waltham Forest	Lesley	Searle	Groups Coordinator	
Wandsworth	Helen	Long	Groups Coordinator	
Wanstead & Woodford	Liz	Wills	Groups Coordinator	
Welling	Pat	Pitney	Groups Coordinator	Y
LRU3A Support				
Dulwich & District	Liz	Day	LRU3A Learning Development	y
Islington	Vivek	Nanda	LRU3A Communications/ Group Leader Islington	y
Merton	Catherine	Ware	LRU3A Talks & Summer School Coord'r	y
Orpington	Jo	Walters	Research & Learning Coordinator	Y

Total attendees: 24 (including 4 LRU3A Committee support).

18 u3as represented

25 u3as not represented

Apologies: 1