



Guide for New u3a Group Coordinators in Shoreham and Southwick

This is mainly for new coordinators setting up new groups, but much also applies to those taking over existing ones.

How to set up a new group

First suggest the idea to the [Groups Support](#) to see if it fits with other groups.

Then read this document, come up with your ideas and questions, and contact [Groups Support](#) again, who will advise and help you get the group established.

Help available to you

- Website – google Shoreham u3a or click shorehamandsouthwicku3a.org.uk .
This is the “shop window” of our u3a and describes groups, events, the committee, key documents and more. It is open to all and is used by coordinators, members and non-members.
- Membership system “Beacon” – google u3a admin or <https://u3abeacon.org.uk/password.php>
This is the “back office” which maintains the members in each group, and enables you to email your members without revealing their email addresses to each other. It is used only by coordinators and the committee. [Groups Support](#) will set up your group and get you a userid.

Group or Pop-up?

Do you want to start with a pop-up? This is a single event to gauge interest and way of working, a bit like a pilot of a TV series. It may then lead to a group, a regular activity, usually fortnightly or monthly. If it's a new topic it is usual to start with a single pop-up to gauge interest, then become a regular group if viable.

Decide where and when

Where? At a public venue like the Shoreham Centre or in a private home? Often people start in their own home to gauge interest. When you have an idea of typical number attending each meeting then contact [Groups Support](#) who can help you select and book a suitable local room (we have good contacts and good prices).

When? Most groups meet either once or twice a month, usually on a weekday, and usually either 10am-12noon, or 2-4pm. Suggest a slot which suits you and avoids clashing with similar groups. See the Groups Timetable Summary on the Groups page of the website.

Decide title/nature/content of meetings

What will be the group's name? (Keep it simple). Decide how the group will run and who will be involved. If unsure ask [Groups Support](#) or a Third Age Trust Subject Adviser – they are willing and helpful (see Subject Advisers on our Documents tab).

How we publicise your group

You write descriptive words which we use for the web page; and for the monthly chair's bulletin and twice yearly newsletters, both of which go to all members. Write two or three sentences about what the group will do, who it is suitable for, anything else that prospective members should know. Many groups welcome beginners and provide instruction, will yours?

Whether and how to involve other members in running your group - aim to appoint a deputy.

The ethos of u3a is "by members for members" so consider involving others. This could be them giving talks, or hosting some events, or signing in arrivals and collecting their £2. Or helping with Beacon (ask [Groups Support](#) to give them a userid, then make them a leader on Beacon, you can have multiple leaders).

In time recruit one of your members to be a deputy, to help out and let you go on holidays.

Attendance lists, collecting payment and forwarding to treasurer

You are required to keep a register of who attends each of your meetings in case of insurance claims. This needs to state the group name and date, and list each member's name and signature and whether they have paid:

- Public venue: £2 (towards room hire) is mandatory for all including you, and must be forwarded to the treasurer. You will be provided with payment slips and envelopes. Coordinators should claim expenses like parking and postage.
- Home based: 50p (towards coffee, tea and biscuits) is usual and is kept by the host.
- Outside groups: usually no charge.

What equipment or other resources needed

Shoreham and Southwick u3a does have some equipment which you can use, including laptops, data projectors (visualisers) and DVD/CD players. Use the email link on the 'Equipment for groups' page to request the access password. If you need anything special like materials or a board game, then ask [Groups Support](#). We have a budget.

Learn how to use Beacon to add members and send emails privately to whole group

Read Beacon for Beginners to learn how to use Beacon. It is on the Documents page of our web site.

There are two ways that members apply to join your group:

- by clicking the email link on your group page on the website, which sends an email to just you so you can add them on Beacon
- by applying when they join our u3a when [Groups Support](#) adds them on Beacon and tells both new member and group coordinator whether they are added or wait listed (if group over maximum number). Then you can contact them to welcome them.

Safety Checklists (TAT Risk Assessments)

See Safety Checklists on the Documents page of the website for the checklist appropriate for your group. The main ones are venue based; home based; and outside. These include key questions you need to consider for your group.

Introduction at first meeting: welcome, aims, future plans, refreshments, toilets, fire exit

I hope this introduction has been useful. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact ... you guessed ... [Groups Support](#) !

Colin Johnson 16 February 2024