

East Midlands Workshop Day (The Third Age Trust)

On March 11th 2026, two of our committee members Diane Ives and Jean Brown attended the East Midlands Regional Workshop at the Braunstone Civic Centre. (Near Leicester)

The event brought together more than 80 committee members, group leaders and volunteers for a day of updates, discussion and practical workshops aimed at supporting u3as to grow and thrive.

The day opened with a welcome and introduction from John Lewis, Council Representative for the East Midlands region, who highlighted the importance of regional events in bringing members together, sharing experience and supporting u3as to thrive.

Participants heard an update from Susannah Hodge, Head of Learning and Volunteering at the Third Age Trust, who outlined a wide range of developments and opportunities available to u3as. These included the new Brand Shop, information about grants available from The Third Age Trust, the Friends Newsletter, the expanding range of learning opportunities offered through the Trust, and the forthcoming u3a Festival 2026 to be held in York in July 2026.

Allan Walmsley spoke on the theme “Looking and adapting to the future.” His presentation encouraged u3as to consider how they can continue to evolve, remain relevant to new members and ensure the long-term sustainability of their organisations.

The afternoon workshop sessions were led by Rosie Allen and Jean Hogg. Their first session, “Helping your u3a grow,” explored practical ways for u3as to attract new members and develop their activities.

As part of this workshop, Sheila Crawley, Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust, delivered an insightful presentation on using social media to promote u3as and raise awareness within local communities, while Richard Sherratt shared how Derby u3a had grown following their 40th anniversary celebrations.

Growth is not just about increasing numbers, but an increase in the number of activities with more diverse activities, enthusiasm, change, innovation and participation. Also communicating with other u3a’s and increasing awareness in the local community.