

Chair's Annual Report for u3a AGM April 2026

The Yate and Sodbury District u3a grew strongly again this year, with an 8% increase in membership: 2,007 members compared with 1,861 at the beginning of the year. There are now 115 activity groups, which is a 12% increase, supported by 150 volunteer group leaders, up 6% since last year.

The Yate and Sodbury District u3a is now one of the largest in the South West region of the UK. Some ask if it is too big. An important aim of the committee is to tackle head-on all potential problems relating to the size of membership. To this end, the priorities this year for the 14-strong committee have consistently been: firstly, performing their assigned duties as listed on the Exec page of the website; secondly, setting up new groups; and thirdly, publicising the u3a in the local area to those no longer in full-time employment.

We believe that the substantial increase in groups this year goes some way towards reducing the number of groups which are full. The group coordinators have a well-oiled process for setting up new groups, so please let them know if you would like to set up a new activity group or duplicate an existing one.

The u3a emphasises its self-help model, in which all members contribute actively so that there is no difference between teachers and learners in any group. All activity groups are self-funding, and the u3a receives no external funding from the government. The finances of the u3a are in good shape, as reported by the treasurer. An increase in annual membership fee to £10 came into effect on 1 April 2025.

The revamped website, using the SiteWorks structure, has proved an invaluable tool for publicising the activities of groups and encouraging new members to join. In addition to the website, there is the Facebook page, the online Noticeboard (which is sent by email to all members several times a month), and the Quarterly Newsletter, supported by contributions from group leaders and brought together by the volunteer newsletter editor.

We held a successful forum in June for all group leaders and, in addition, held the annual u3a Open Day in October, evidenced by a surge in new members joining. An interesting programme of town hall meetings for all u3a members was provided monthly, each followed by a New Members Forum at which new and prospective members had the opportunity to meet committee members and discuss opportunities offered by u3a activity groups. We look forward to the grand 20-year celebration being skilfully organised by a special team for 6 June 2026.

I welcome those members who have put themselves forward for election to the Executive Committee this year. They have each visited the committee as observers, sampling the workings and enthusiasm of this public-spirited team. I hope that u3a members present today will also consider volunteering their skills during the coming year, perhaps as a group leader or by joining our friendly committee.

I am stepping down at this AGM after three enjoyable years as Chair and wish the new committee all the best when they meet in May.

Patrick Mills BEM
Chair, Yate & Sodbury District u3a
April 2026