MEMBERS HANDBOOK

version 11 - 2026

WELCOME TO WIMBORNE U3A !

We hope that you enjoy your membership and find it stimulating and worthwhile.
This handbook contains information that should be of use to you. There is also plenty more of interest in our newsletters and on our website.
If you need any further information, you could speak to your Group's Convenor or contact the Membership Secretary at membership@wimborneu3a.org.uk.

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SECTION 1 – THE u3a ORGANISATION

The U3A Charity

Wimborne u3a is an independent charity which is part of a large organisation of over 1200 other u3as. There is an umbrella organisation, the Third Age Trust, which is the charity that operates under the name 'University of the Third Age'. u3a national provides a whole range of services to the individual u3as. For example, they provide the membership database system 'Beacon', draft templates for documents training and tailored support for specific issues.

As a charity, Wimborne u3a is separately registered with the Charities Commission, has its own constitution, and elected trustees. It relies almost solely on annual membership fees to fund its activities. There are no paid employees, so the operation of the u3a is carried out by a group of volunteers - Executive Committee members, Group Convenors and other members who carry out specialist work.

Full details of our Constitution can be found on our website.

Our Committee

The Committee is the heart of the Charity. It comprises the following roles:

Chairman and Trustee	Ashley Rowlands chair@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Vice Chair and Trustee	Chris Hall development@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Treasurer and Trustee	Jayne Twomey treasurer@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Secretary and Trustee	Chris Letchford secretary@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Membership Secretary and Trustee	Horace Letchford membership@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Convenor Secretary and Trustee	Viv Pink groups@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Venues Secretary and Trustee	Heather Lowe venues@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Outreach and Trustee	Janet Isaacs outreach@wimborneu3a.org.uk
Website and Beacon Manager	Alan Pickering info@wimborneu3a.org.uk

Elections and Annual General Meeting

The maximum total period of service of any trustee shall be 9 years in any combination of roles. No one may hold any specific officer position or be an ordinary (non-officer) trustee for a continuous period in excess of 5 years without an interval of at least 1 year between the periods of service.

The election to fill vacancies takes place at the AGM. All trustees shall be elected annually and re-elected subject to the provisions above.

The AGM is in the autumn. Information about the AGM is sent to all u3a members at least 21 days in advance of the meeting. Apart from electing trustees for the following year, the meeting is an opportunity to raise any issues in a public forum of the membership.

Any trustee may resign at any time.

SECTION 2 - BEACON

We use a secure on-line database called Beacon to store members' details and information about our groups. Beacon is provided by the national Third Age Trust and is used by over 560 other u3as. Via the Members Portal in Beacon members are able to manage their personal details, see which groups they are in and apply to join groups. Beacon also manages our on-line membership applications and renewals. To gain access to the Members Portal please see the instruction sheets in the Members section of our website.

SECTION 3 – OUR GROUPS

How to join a Group

Our website, www.wimborneu3a.org.uk, has details of all our current Groups. It has a list which shows which Groups currently have spaces and which are full. Details of Groups are also available in our Annual Programme Booklet.

If you wish to find out more about a Group you may like to contact the Group's Convenor, either by using the "Contact the Convenor" button on the Group's description page on our website, or by using the details given in the Annual Programme booklet. Once you have decided to join a group you can register your choices via the Members Portal on Beacon. This will automatically inform the group's convenor that you have asked to join the group and put you on a waiting list. If there is space in the group the Membership Secretary will then add you to the group. Those members unable to access the Members Portal should let the Membership Secretary know their choices who will then update their record accordingly.

Each Group has a maximum capacity. This number is determined by the venue and the nature of the activity, and is agreed with the Convenor. Once a Group has reached its maximum number, a waiting list automatically comes into being. You will be notified if you are added to a waiting list and also if a subsequent space arises.

Self-Help Groups

Some of the Groups we offer are Self-Help Groups and they are very successful. These are Groups in which considerable interest has been expressed, yet we have been unable to find a Convenor for them. Assistance in setting up a Self-Help Group is available.

A Self-Help Group operates in much the same way as a Group with a Convenor. One member of the Group agrees to act as Coordinator, whose job it is to maintain the register and communicate with our Membership Secretary regarding the composition of the Group and any changes which occur. Normally that Coordinator will also be the contact person for the Group and their name and contact details will appear against the title of the Group in our Programme.

Alternatively, the contact person could be the Groups Secretary if the Co-ordinator does not wish his/her details to appear in the Programme and all other Members of the Group feel likewise.

Our Year

The Wimborne u3a Year is from 1st September to 31st August of the following calendar year, with up to 30 sessions. These are normally distributed over 3 terms, usually October to June. Not all Groups run for 30 sessions; some meet fortnightly, some meet monthly and some do not meet in the Summer Term.

Personal Information

As already noted, we use the Beacon database to store members' information. Members can check and amend their personal information via the Members Portal. Members who are unable to access the Members Portal can ask the Membership Secretary for a copy of the details we store, and for them to be changed if they are incorrect. Further information is available in our Privacy Policy which can be found on our web site.

Venues

Wimborne u3a uses a number of different venues in and around Wimborne for its activities. Some groups meet in Convenors' homes, but the majority are in hired rooms and halls. The rental fees for hired accommodation are paid from the main membership donation. Venue hire accounts for the majority of the u3a expenditure.

Current Rules

- Please inform your Convenor if you are unable to attend a session.
- A Group member absent for 3 consecutive sessions without good reason will be deemed to have withdrawn from the Group
- Renewal of membership must take place before you can request a place in a Group for the year ahead.
- Published Group times indicate the availability of a room to a group in hired accommodation. Please ensure that you do not enter early and that you leave promptly to avoid disruption to other users.

Medical Form

Your group convenor will ask you to complete a medical form which you return in a sealed envelope with your name on. The envelope will only be opened in case of emergency. Completing the form is entirely voluntary, you can complete as much or as little as you like, but the minimum we ask for is an emergency contact and your NHS number. In the last couple of years there have been a few incidences where envelopes have had to be opened to get emergency contact details, and on some the information included proved very helpful to the paramedics who attended the incident.

Ideas for New Groups

If there is a Group in which you would be interested yet we do not have it currently listed, notify our Groups Secretary: groups@wimborneu3a.org.uk of your request. If sufficient interest is expressed in a particular topic we will attempt to find a Convenor for it.

How to Start up a New Group

In the first instance, please contact our Groups Secretary: groups@wimborneu3a.org.uk who will ask you for information about your intended Group. At the next Committee Meeting a decision will be made about funding for room hire and, if funds are available, you will subsequently be invited to start your Group. Should you wish to hold your Group in your own home, our Groups Secretary will invite you to start as soon as you wish.

SECTION 4 – PUBLICATIONS

Our Annual Programme Booklet

This is a printed booklet, available on request from the Membership Secretary or by email: info@wimborneu3a.org.uk. It shows all that our u3a has to offer, with Group contact phone numbers/email addresses.

A Membership Form is available for those prospective new members, and those members wishing to renew their membership, and unable to do so on-line.

Policy Documents and Procedures

Wimborne u3a is required by its constitution to have certain policies in place to guide its conduct:

- Constitution
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Finance Policy
- Accessibility policy
- Privacy Policy

In addition, we have procedures for complaints, disciplinary matters and grievance.

These documents can be accessed on our website.

Newsletter

This is normally published twice a year to coincide with the Autumn and Spring Terms. It is sent by email to all Members who have provided email addresses and by post or hand delivered to those without email.

It contains:

- Chair's message
- Diary dates for the term
- Any changes to the list of Groups as in the Programme
- Details of Talks and Social Events for the relevant term
- Committee members' names with email addresses
- Additional information as appropriate

Our Website

The address of the Wimborne u3a website is: www.wimborne.u3asite.uk

Our website has most of the information you require at any time. There is also a general email address for any queries you may still have, and these will be forwarded on to the most appropriate person who can deal with your query.

Facebook

We have a Facebook account U3A Wimborne where information about events and group activities are posted, why not follow us?

"Third Age Matters"

This is a magazine published by the Third Age Trust, the national organisation for all u3as in the UK. It is published in January, April, June, September and November each year. All Wimborne u3a members may request to receive the magazine as part of the annual renewal process.

An on-line 'screenreader' version of the magazine is available free-of-charge via the Third Age Matters section on the national u3a website: www.u3a.org.uk/news/publications

Promotion

We use a range of publicity and marketing to promote Wimborne u3a:

- Publicity leaflets in shops, health centres, community centres, churches, libraries, etc
- Articles and adverts in local print publications
- Facebook
- Events – information evenings, talks etc

We are always looking to spread the word about the u3a and what it offers, and every member can help with this.

SECTION 5 – SOCIAL EVENTS

Talks

These are held monthly during the Autumn and Spring Terms.

Venue: The Wesley Hall, Wimborne Methodist Church, King Street

Time: 10:30; Tea and Coffee is available from 10:00

Duration: Usually 1 hour with up to 30 minutes for questions

Full details are published in our newsletters, on our website and also usually sent by email to members shortly before each talk. There is no need to book to attend the talks; simply come along. There is a small admission charge (currently £2.00) for Wimborne u3a members. Our talks are also open to non-members for whom there is a larger admission charge (currently £4.00).

Please note that there is no parking at the Church.

Other Social Events

There are various other social events organised by our u3a. The regular social events are listed in the newsletter and on the website, where you will find the details of each event, the diary dates and instructions on how to take part.

These events may include talks, lunches, coffee mornings, skittles and quizzes. There may also be 'special' events organised by u3a members, such as excursions, weekend breaks and theatre visits.

SECTION 6 – OTHER EVENTS

Information Mornings

These events are held in order to recruit new members, showcase new Groups and to promote Groups that have insufficient members to remain viable. Some Committee Members and relevant Group Convenors attend to answer questions and give out Programmes and Membership Forms if required.

These usually take place prior to the start of the Autumn Term.

SECTION 7 – THE THIRD AGE TRUST

Headquarters

The Third Age Trust is the HQ of the u3a in the UK. The address is:
The Third Age Trust, 156 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8EN
Phone: 020 8466 6139 Website: www.u3a.org.uk

Various Regional and National Meetings and Conferences are arranged by the Third Age Trust during each year. There are also Summer Schools. Plenty of useful information and resources are also available online.

Regions

The whole of the UK is divided into u3a Regions. Each Region is then divided into Networks. Wimborne u3a belongs to the East Dorset Network of the South-West Region. The other u3as in the East Dorset Network are: Bournemouth, Christchurch, Ferndown, Poole, Purbeck, Upton and Lytchett, and Verwood. Our website contains links to the websites for each of these u3as.

