

## **The Origins and Structure of the u3a**

The u3a in the UK was started by the creation of the 'Third Age Trust' in 1982 as a registered charity No.288007, and limited company No 1759471. Contrary to what was happening in France, there was no support from universities. The founders had realized that 'Third Agers' themselves had the skills to organize and teach in their own autonomous learning groups and local u3as were formed. A collaborative approach was adopted with peers learning from each other.

The u3a movement is self-funded on a member subscription basis. To-day u3a is a nationwide network of learning groups aimed at encouraging older people to share their knowledge, skills and interests in a friendly environment. The members of u3a learn for the pleasure of it, no qualifications are required and none are given. There are now many 100's of u3as in the UK with over 400,000 members.

Each local u3a contributes to the national Third Age Trust which provides corporate governance and supports in the form of insurance, on-line learning groups and subject guidance to the local learning groups. Each local u3a is autonomous, and cooperation between the groups is supported by a region/nation-based network of collaboration. In Scotland, this collaboration is known as u3a in Scotland.