

Group Coordinator Welcome Pack and Guidance

Rev 05 March 2025



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Becoming a Group Coordinator

Welcome! We are happy that you are taking on the role of Group Coordinator within Islington u3a. Our GCs are vitally important, without you our u3a could not exist. We want you to feel supported in this role and to be aware of some of things we have learned about what helps a group to feel enjoyable and productive – for both coordinators and members.

As you will be aware, the u3a movement sees itself as a learning and social community with branches that reach out into their local area and provide an environment that is inclusive, welcoming and receptive to new ideas. Our Group Coordinators (all of whom are volunteers) are central to this ethos and to our success as a local u3a. They are greatly valued by their group members.

Please take a few minutes to scan the following pages to see the topics covered in this welcome pack and keep it handy so you can consult it whenever you need to. If anything is unclear to you, please do contact the [Group Support Lead](#) for further information.

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SETTING UP A GROUP

1. Group Coordinator Role Description

[Link to be inserted.](#)

2. When, where, how to set up a group

Guidance on the three stages of setting up a new groups can be found [here](#).

3. Venues for Group Meetings

Group Coordinators generally choose their own venue for group meetings. We have a [list of venues](#) that may be helpful if you are looking for a suitable place.

4. Timetabling

As a Group Coordinator you decide when to hold your meetings, but please avoid the morning of the fourth Thursday of the month, when the Islington u3a monthly talk and meeting is held for all members.

5. Email

We'll provide you with an iu3a email address which will appear on the group's webpage. Emails sent to this address will automatically forward to your personal email address. If you change your personal email address, it is important that you update this on Beacon, and also inform the Web Manager on website.iu3a@gmail.com so that the auto forward is switched to your new email address.

MANAGING YOUR GROUP

6. Beacon and WhatsApp

[Beacon](#) is the management system which has been developed by the national u3a to manage our activities and help us comply with data protection laws. You will receive [training](#) on how to use Beacon and we have also drawn up some [Basic Beacon Notes](#) for you to refer to.

You can use Beacon to:

- send out group emails
- check whether your members have up-to-date Islington u3a membership
- add and remove group members
- post information of the group's activities and schedule of meetings
- upload details of your future activities on to the calendar.
- keep waiting lists

If you need any assistance using Beacon, please contact one of the following:

- Group Support Lead - groups.iu3a@gmail.com
- Membership Secretary - iu3amembers@outlook.com

[WhatsApp](#) is now used by many groups to communicate on a day-to-day basis. Please ensure that members are aware that their personal mobile numbers will be shared amongst your WhatsApp group. See Appendix D for more information on Privacy.

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7. Payment for Group Activities

Groups are generally self-financing, and group members pay for costs such as materials, theatre tickets or entry fees for visits themselves. Some groups ask for a nominal contribution per person to cover refreshments at meetings in members' homes. Group Coordinators may submit requests to the Executive Committee for funding for special events, venue bookings, permanent equipment etc. Please contact the Groups Support Lead groups.iu3a@gmail.com for more details.

8. Attendance record

It is important to record who attends your meetings/activities for two reasons:

- for insurance purposes (See Appendix A)
- to monitor your group

You can use your own way of recording this e.g. via a Beacon list, or use this [Attendance Record Form](#)

9. As groups grow larger

If you find your group is becoming too full, there are three options

- finding a larger venue
- setting up another group
- developing a waiting list

Which of these you choose will depend on the nature of the group and the views of you and your members. Please discuss with the Groups Support Lead groups.iu3a@gmail.com and/or the New Groups Support Lead as to the preferred way forward.

10. Non-members attending meetings

Our insurance policy allows a non-member to join a group activity once only, in order for them to decide whether this is the right group for them.

11. Dealing with group member issues

Lack of Contact - if you lose contact with a group member, we suggest you send them an email asking if they wish to remain a member of the group. If they do not reply, you may remove them from the group membership list on Beacon. If they have been a regular attender, you may wish to ask other members and the Islington u3a Executive Committee whether they have any other news of them. Follow up appropriately.

Lack of Email - a few members don't have email which is indicated against their names on Beacon. We leave it to you, in conjunction with the Groups Support Lead, to decide how to handle this, for example members without email might sometimes be able to nominate a "buddy" to receive emails on their behalf.

Behaviour - very rarely a group may have a problem with the behaviour of an individual group member. If you have any such concerns, and are not able to resolve it, please contact the Groups Support Lead groups.iu3a@gmail.com in the first instance, and then the Executive Committee if appropriate. Full guidance is given in the '[Disciplinary Procedure](#)'.

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PARTICIPATING WITH AND ENJOYING OUR ISLINGTON u3a

We encourage you to take part in and inform your group members of all the activities that our iu3a organises. These include regular monthly talks and meetings, outings and lots of opportunities to socialise such as coffee mornings, pub lunches and parties.

12. Meetings for Group Coordinators

The Groups Support Lead arranges a meeting of Group Coordinators once or twice a year for everyone to meet up, share views on good practice, exchange news about their groups and for training as necessary.

13. Group page on the website

Each group has its own webpage which provides information about the group ie what it does, when and where it meets and how to contact you. The Web Manager will create your group's webpage and upload this information. Please check that the page is kept up to date. You will have the opportunity to upload information of recent activities and photographs and will be given training on how to do this.

14. Photography

If you share photos via the website or on publicity material, the photos need to be high resolution.

Photos of members – we must have members' permission to use their images, both out of courtesy and to comply with GDPR. Please ensure people are asked to step out of the shot if they don't wish to be included.

Photos and images sourced from the internet - it is important to check they are not subject to copyright laws, so when you send photos to the Web Manager, please tell him where they have come from, so we know if acknowledgments are necessary.

15. Other Forms of Communication

You can also communicate your activities and attract new members via:

WOW 'What's On When' - our twice monthly email newsletter. Please contact the Group Support Lead groups.iu3a@gmail.com if you have any information you wish to include in WOW eg advertising for new members, details about group activities etc.

Social Media – our Facebook and Instagram pages

The Social Media Coordinator welcomes news and photos of your activities to post on our Facebook page and Instagram. Please send to facebook.iu3apublic@gmail.com

Open Days – these showcase the opportunities for learning, socialising, and participating in activities, and encourage potential members to join and explore our diverse offerings.

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APPENDICES

A. Insurance

To protect you from claims for damages we have insurance that is maintained by the national u3a. The policy cover GCs and members for a number of risks including public and products liability, professional indemnity, home contents, equipment (all risks) and legal defence.

NB: Insurance cover relies on attendance records being maintained. It is also a requirement that these records are destroyed at the end of each u3a year (30th Sept).

B. Risk Assessment

You may need to carry out a basic risk assessment according to the nature the group to comply with current health and safety regulations. See below for guidance or contact the Groups Support Lead groups.iu3a@gmail.com (Attach Risk assessment form- LISA!).

C. Accident

It is very unlikely that you will experience an accident in your group, but in case you do, please note that you should fill in an Accident Report Form as soon as possible and submit it to the Executive Committee. [Accident Report Form](#)

D. Privacy

Members give us their contact details so that they can be used solely for iu3a purposes, and we have an obligation to ensure details are kept confidential where members want this. When you email group members via Beacon, email addresses are not revealed, and it is not possible to 'reply all'. If your group would like see each other's responses and share information, please ensure they are aware their personal email address will be shared. See our [Privacy Policy](#).

E. Policies

Our policies can be found on the website:

[Complaints Procedure](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Disciplinary Procedure](#)

[Equal, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

[Members Code of Conduct](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

F. Resources on National u3a Website

There is a substantial amount of useful resource information available on the [national u3a website](#). This information is accessed via the Members' Area Homepage, for which you need a logon. To set it up, click on Create Account at the top right of the Home Page and register. You don't need your iu3a membership number to register.

Subject Advice – see the Members' Area Homepage > Resources > Subject Advice for a list of interest group subjects for which advisors can be contacted for assistance.

G. Useful Contacts

Group Support Lead – Lisa Hayward: groups.iu3a@gmail.com

Membership Secretary – Joy Bailey: iu3amembers@outlook.com

Web Manager – Derek Harwood: website.iu3a@gmail.com