

How do u3a Groups get started? Could you help to set up and run a new group?

Groups are frequently started by just a few u3a members getting together for an informal chat about an interest they all share.

We have many skilled and talented people in the u3a and some are willing to set up a group to share their skills and experience, but **you don't have to have previous experience, or be a 'born leader' to help set up and run a group.** The term 'Group Leader' is just a name the u3a gives to anyone who volunteers to help run a group – from sharing skills, to collecting subs or booking rooms. Here are two examples:

The Uke Troupe (Ukulele Group 1). This group was started by a few individuals who had **no previous experience of playing the ukulele before.** Jean independently decided she wanted to learn to play a musical instrument and had purchased a ukulele with no idea of how to play it. She then heard that a committee member (Maureen) was trying to get a ukulele group started within the u3a, so Jean joined them to learn together, taking it in turns to host sessions



in each other's homes. They had fun! They decided to share the administrative roles between them. Jean volunteered to be the contact person and organise each meeting. Maureen and John, would collect subs and book rooms and workshops, Lyndsay (a talented guitar player) helped choose suitable music and Jean M volunteered to keep a library of the songs that they were learning to play – and so the Ukulele Group was launched. It grew quite quickly and soon other people joined, some were absolute beginners and some who had previous musical experience and they added richness to the group. The group flourished to the point where they thought they could perform 'in public' to raise money for charity. They named themselves '**The Uke Troupe**' and have since played 85 concerts to support St Mary's Hospice. There is a natural limit to the number of people who can play together and keep in time 😊, so a **second Ukulele group 'The String Chickens'** started. Sometimes members of the two groups play together.



The Drawing Group was initially led by a member called Pat who had previous art teaching experience, so she agreed to be a Group Leader - ably assisted by Paul who volunteered to collect subscriptions and communicate with the group members etc. It started as a small group of a 12 or so members who met once a month in the small room at the Coronation Hall. Unfortunately, Pat had to move away from the area but another u3a member, Bryan (who happens to be a professional artist and ex art teacher) agreed to become group leader with Paul. The group enjoyed what they were doing so much that they decided to meet twice a month. Since then, the group have moved to larger premises so there is space for new people to join. Bryan encourages members to work together on group projects, like the 'On the Shelf' collection that he put together using work by individuals in the group. Paul kept us all in contact during lockdowns.

Do you have a skill you could share, or do you have something completely new you would like to learn, in company of others with the same interest? If so, please share your ideas with the [Furness u3a Chair](#)