



Belfast University of the Third Age
Trustee Annual Report for the year
1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Reference and Administrative Information

Name of the Charity

The name of the Charity is the Belfast University of the Third Age

Other names by which the Charity is known

Belfast u3a

Registered Charity Number

NIC101362

Address of the principal office of the Charity

Unit 136, Mail Boxes Etc., 38 Montgomery Business Park, Montgomery Road, Belfast, BT6 9HL

Names of Trustees (31 March 2026)

David Blair

Tom Capper

Geoff Crowther

Barbara McDermott

Helen McGlinchey

John McQuillan

John Nicholson

Patsy Torney

Mavis Turner

Structure Governance and Management

The governing document of the Charity is its Constitution as adopted at the Annual General Meeting 30 April 2015. The Trustees are the members of the Executive Committee, elected by the membership at the Annual General Meetings (or occasionally co-opted). The Charity is affiliated to the Third Age Trust (Charity No: 288007), the coordinating body for u3a groups within the UK.

Objectives and Activities, Achievements and Performance

Belfast u3a is devoted to its commitment as set out in Article 2.1.1 of its Constitution i.e.

Advance the education of the public and in particular, the education of the middle aged and older people in Belfast who are not in full time gainful employment .

The activities undertaken during the year as outlined in reports below are evidence of that continuing commitment.

Financial Review

See Accounts and Treasurer s Report for 12 months ending 31st March 2026.

These have been approved by the charity s independent examiner. (See separate reports)

Committee activities

As our membership continues to grow, committee members continue to increase their commitment to keeping up with administrative and digital developments. We are delighted to welcome new committee members each year.

We were disappointed to have been given notice on 6th March 2026 of the resignation of our Chairperson, Jim Livingstone, due to ill health. We thank him for his valuable and lasting contribution during a time when our u3a is expanding.

All of the business of the charity was fully completed throughout the year, including the preparation and submission of all the necessary reports for the 25th AGM (held in May 2026) and for the Charity Commission for NI (CCNI). Accounts and reports and other information relating to the AGM were placed on the Website of the Belfast u3a.

As agreed in the previous year, we have continued to schedule regular meetings of the Executive committee, together with the Operations sub-committee and the Finance sub-committee.

The new official postal address for Belfast U3a, established in March 2025 using the services of MBE Office Services in Belfast has proven to be a success. It had been agreed that the continued use of private residential addresses was not appropriate and could infringe upon the privacy of a Trustee.

At our Christmas Party on 16th December at the Balmoral Hotel, almost 200 members attended and witnessed the first Belfast U3a's Got Talent Show in which various Groups and individual members entertained a great audience. These included our Ukulele Group and Singing for Fun Group, beautiful dancers, storytellers and poetry readers. It was quite a magical and uplifting event during a cold winter, followed by lunch, a table-quiz, and more wonderful musical entertainment from Caroline Brown.

We held a very special 25th Anniversary Celebration on 26th February 2026 in Belfast City Hall, where we welcomed a number of guests including the Lord Mayor who joined up with Ann Hayes, one of our founding members, to ceremonially cut the celebration cake. Entertainment was provided by our Singing for Fun Group with Megan McArthur, their tutor, and a classical guitar duo. Background music with video was also provided for the pleasure of members whilst they enjoyed their afternoon tea and sparkling drinks.

Strategically, the Executive Committee has identified and continues to pursue several key priorities for future development which are focused on (a) enhancing accessibility to Group activities and other events by members with a disability, (b) strengthening our marketing capability to ensure optimum membership for people living in all parts of the city of Belfast, and (c) building greater support and sustainability for the Executive Committee to fulfil its administrative and management functions. Work continues to achieve these objectives over the coming years.

During the year, we were granted an amount of £10,974 from the National Lottery Community Fund to assist with these objectives. We are using this to arrange outreach events, widen the locations in which we offer group activities and promote social activities.

We participated in an initiative from AbilityNet Charity (Sponsored by BT Group) to provide digital inclusion skills training to members. The sessions were fully subscribed.

We held a short Special General Meeting before our regular monthly meeting on 26th March 2026 to propose a resolution to lower the quorum required to approve business at our AGM and update our outdated Constitution. Although we made every effort to attract more numbers than we normally achieve at general meetings, we narrowly missed achieving the full quorum. We are confident, however, that we can obtain the agreement of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland that the proposal can be deemed to have been carried. We thank all those members who made a special effort to attend this meeting.

Membership

We are delighted to report that our membership numbers have continued to increase in the past year. We now have 1,231 members as of March 2026, some 114 more than last year. Belfast U3A continues to thrive and grow significantly. While many of our members have been with us for some time, we welcome new members, many of whom have new skills and interests which they are willing to share with other members.

Two New Member meetings were held on 20th and 24th November 2025 with 50 new members in attendance. An opportunity was provided not only to welcome our additional members but to advise them of the ethos and structure of our organization and indicate where they may seek further help and advice.

The Newsletter (which is bi-monthly) was sent by email or post to all members. With 97% of our members accessible by email, this means that most of our members are digitally included. Printed copies are posted to members not accessible by email. Other methods of communication now include frequent emails to individual members through our Beacon (membership management) system, introduced in January 2020, regular activity news updates on our website and some news entries on the social media outlets run by the Third Age Trust.

The annual membership subscription was reviewed for the coming year and decisions were made by the Executive Committee aimed at ensuring the charity remains adequately funded and has sufficient reserves. As a consequence, we are pleased to be able to reduce our membership charge to £15 for all members during this celebration year, whether they elect to pay by Direct Debit or other means.

Interest Groups and Activities

In keeping with the u3a movement, some 70 Interest Groups remain the lifeblood of Belfast U3A and each year new groups emanate from the membership based on requests and on the knowledge and skills of members themselves. Activities include, but are not confined to, reading/literature, walking, cycling, singing for fun, golf, language learning, bridge, photography, Pilates, art appreciation, creative writing, music, wine tasting, gardening and discussion groups. New Groups developed this year are Singing for Fun, Guitar, Line Dancing, Ballet for Life, Strength and Balance 1 & 2, Out of the Box and Musical Theatre.

We held a special meeting with the Convenors of our interest groups in August 2025 at Belfast Castle, the location of our inaugural Belfast u3a meeting in 2001. The meeting was very well attended and the Executive committee continues to appreciate these special volunteers who give so much of their time, skill and energy to leading activities and discussions on a regular basis. Our u3a would not exist without them.

As social mixing is an essential part of the u3a ethos, we continue to work to counteract social isolation and to encourage learning, mental and physical health amongst our third-agers .

Monthly Meetings of Members

These meetings, with a range of guest speakers, to which all members are invited, were held very successfully at the Balmoral Hotel throughout the year, with more members joining us each month, the typical attendance being up to 150 members. The speakers provided stimulating talks on a wide range of topics which were an excellent mixture of culture, entertainment and education. There are opportunities at these meetings for new members to join, to pay their subscriptions and to see our range of group activities whilst enjoying a cup of tea or coffee.

Concluding remarks

Belfast u3a continues to grow and develop, keeping abreast of new opportunities and technologies, but aware that we must tailor our offering to the age group that we serve. We continue to endeavor to attract a wider membership from other parts of the city where we are less well known as we provide opportunities for all to live a full and active life in the third age.

John Nicholson (Treasurer) on behalf of the Trustees of Belfast u3a

20th April 2026