

### **Guidelines for dealing with group members with disabilities (physical or mental) and/or living in sheltered care homes etc.**

- Bookham & district U3A wishes to be inclusive and to meet our legal responsibilities
- Our hired meeting rooms must offer access for members with disabilities

However groups meet in a variety of places and mostly in individual's private accommodation, usually with the members taking turns wherever practical to host meetings. Mostly this is private houses or flats but may be other accommodation such as care homes or sheltered accommodation where recreational areas are provided to all the residents.

Where a Group Administrator has a member who wishes to host in care or sheltered accommodation the following should be considered:

- It is unlikely that the area where the meeting is to be held will be private and therefore the meetings may be disturbed by non-members
- The operators of the care home/sheltered accommodation may not wish to regularly (or occasionally) host a meeting (they may consider it unacceptable for other residents)
- Use of laptops, projectors etc may not be acceptable
- They may wish to charge for some things including refreshments
- The advice on insurance from the U3A head office is "All U3A members would be covered by the insurance that we have in place, however as the meetings would be in the care home they would need to have the correct insurance in place. The people who are in the care home would not be covered by our insurance cover."
- Some of the benefits of hosting in individual's homes are:
  - Locations vary and therefore travelling is shared between members, whereas using one location particularly if it is not centrally located may reduce attendance and undermine the group's viability
  - No one is constantly asked to host a meeting
  - The host, which will probably be the presenter for a meeting, is likely to feel more comfortable in home surroundings
  - Costs are minimal and shared

Some of the issues that would need to be addressed when using private accommodation for disabled members or those needing care include:

- The nature of the disability
- The suitability of the accommodation for the disability – stairs, lavatory facilities, wheel chair access, place to store walking frames etc.
- The risk of trips and falls

## Disabilities Policy

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- The need of the individual to have a carer present
- Risks to other members of the group and their equipment

It may be easier to address some of these issues with a new group but with an established group some of these items might be more difficult to manage. Whilst we would want every group to consider if they can accommodate the modifications to the group to include a member living in care/sheltered accommodation:

- The existing group members should be comfortable with the modifications required to the meetings if the venue is to be changed
- There is no requirement to make changes to their homes beyond the usual good housekeeping – trailing leads etc, no one has to buy a ramp or other equipment to allow access over steps, this would be an unreasonable modification for a householder for an occasional guest
- The person with the disability is responsible for transport to and from the venue and for the provision of a carer if required
- If the person is significantly impaired either physically or mentally there may be problems whereby they overestimate their abilities and are unable to participate effectively in the group activities. In such cases there may be a power of attorney in place and/or a care home manager/warden may not wish the member to leave the establishment.

Unfortunately as each case needs to be treated on an individual basis, both for the member concerned and the other members of the group there is not a one size fits all answer.

Paramount:

### Safety

There is no obligation for a member to accommodate a member with disabilities if they do not consider their home suitable.

There is no obligation on a host member to make significant extra provision for a member with disabilities.

No member should feel pressurised into hosting a meeting more often than they would normally do just because their home is suitably adapted.

Transport and caring must be provided by the member with disability.

It may be necessary to ask a member to cease being a member of a particular group if they don't recognise that they are unable to be a full member of the group either through physical or mental impairment.

All of these factors can lead to resentments and ill-feeling, and the committee will offer help to any Group Administrator who is encountering difficulties.