

Accessibility Policy

Bookham and District u3a is a learning co-operative and membership charity which enables members in their third age to share educational, creative and leisure activities. Members of each u3a draw upon their knowledge, skills and experience to teach and learn from each other (peer to peer learning).

Bookham and District u3a is committed to ensuring that the u3a is as inclusive and accessible as possible for those in their third age who meet the criteria for membership.

Aims of the Policy

This policy has been drawn up to ensure that Bookham and District u3a takes steps to review accessibility needs for individual members and makes reasonable adjustments, where possible, to accommodate the needs of members with disabilities and/or health related needs. The policy takes into account the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and the need for Bookham and District u3a to avoid discriminating directly or indirectly against members with disabilities and/or health related needs. The policy will act as a reference point for Committee Members, Group Administrators and individual members in terms of the steps Bookham and District u3a will take. The policy will also identify the parameters of the adjustments that can be made.

Bookham and District u3a is a membership charity and not a service provider, therefore whilst reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that individuals can participate and can attend with carers to support their needs, there will be certain needs that the u3a will not be able to accommodate due to the level of care that an individual may need.

Accessibility for Disabled Members

Bookham and District u3a will do all it can to be as accessible as possible both to existing and prospective members. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people with disabilities can attend the meetings and interest groups of their choice, without necessarily needing a companion/carer with them. Members who cannot manage to participate in their chosen u3a activities without help may bring a companion/carer with them, who for the

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time that they are in attendance, will be covered by the liability insurance provided by The Third Age Trust. The only exception to this is a professionally employed carer who would have to be covered by an individual liability policy.

Group Administrators running groups that require a certain level of fitness and/or mobility will be asked to provide this information to members in advance so that members can decide whether the group is suitable for them.

Bookham and District u3a will try to ensure that there are a range of groups available that will provide access to members so that members do not feel excluded from too many interest/activity groups.

Supporting Members with Hearing Loss

We will make reasonable efforts to support those with hearing loss so that they can continue to enjoy and participate in u3a activities. A regular reminder will be issued to all members that the Old Barn Hall has a hearing loop so that those who need to use it are aware of it.

Supporting Members with Vision Loss

We will support members with vision loss so that they can continue to enjoy and participate in u3a activities. At the monthly members' meetings, the front row of seats will be reserved for members who have impaired hearing or vision.

Access will be reviewed by the Committee on an ongoing basis with a view to considering any additional adjustments that may need to be made.

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

- Bookham & District u3a wishes to be inclusive and to meet our legal responsibilities
- Our hired meeting rooms must offer access for members with disabilities

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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 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, wheelchair access, place to store walking frames etc.
- The risk of trips and falls
- 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.

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

Bookham and District u3a has a duty of care to all members and this may mean that difficult decisions have to be taken in assessing an individual's ability to participate either in the u3a as a whole or within individual activities. These decisions will always be taken through discussion with the individual member and his or her carer, in order to ensure that a fair and considered decision is taken. This may include developing a risk assessment with the individual regarding their ability to participate.

Bookham and District u3a will seek additional advice and support from the Regional Trustee, National Office, the national website and external specialist organisations as required.