

24 July 2021

Burgess Hill U3A – Advice for Re-starting Interest Groups in Step 4

The Third Age Trust has published detailed advice on its website for re-starting interest groups. A copy of their detailed advice for England U3As is at page 2 below.

To make it more understandable for Group Leaders and Convenors, here is a summary of the key points for re-starting face-to-face activity groups, as I interpret the Third Age Trust's advice:

- Legal restrictions are lifted but we need to be cautious and follow the advice.
- No limits on meeting indoors or outdoors, but meeting outdoors is far safer.
- Continue with safety measures – Hands – Face – Space, and personal responsibility for checking symptoms, self-isolating and getting tested.
- Group leaders need to do risk assessment for all activities and locations before re-starting and send a copy to the Group Coordinator (rosieelkins@hotmail.co.uk). It should take account of the venue location (space and ventilation), the number of members and the nature of activity (does it involve close contact and sharing of equipment/items?). A record of attendees' contact details for each meeting must be kept for Track and Trace.
- Group leaders have to decide on the need for social distancing/wearing face masks according to the venue and the numbers of people involved and to comply with any Covid rules required by the venue.

If you need further clarification about any of the above, please read the detailed advice below. This also covers such topics as vaccinations and Covid-19 testing.

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U3A – Covid 19 Advice for Interest Groups in England

(Downloaded from u3a.org.uk on 21 July 2021)

1. Document Control

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2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose

The Third Age Trust has put together its guidance on coronavirus as related to the movement. We continue to follow the government and NHS advice and will keep you updated with regular mailings when the advice changes.

2.2. Scope

Relevant to all u3as in England

2.3. Related documentation

- [Risk assessments for outdoor activities - U3A-KMS-DOC-073](#)
- [General U3A Activity Risk Assessment Checklist in Covid-19 - U3A-KMS-FRM-014](#)
- [Personal Members' Checklist \(Pre-attendance\) U3A-KMS-FRM-016](#)

3. Covid road map for easing Lockdown in England and FAQs

England has moved to step 4 of their Lockdown Easing Road Map. Essentially this means there will be no limits on how many people can meet indoors or outdoors however businesses can and will impose their own safety measures which they will require customers to follow.

The Government is urging caution and whilst the cases are high and rising, everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious and key protection measures will be kept in place which include:

- Testing when you have symptoms
- Isolating when positive or when contacted by NHS Test and Trace.
- Wearing face coverings in crowded areas

The Government have made additional recommendations in some areas where transmission of the virus is high.

You can check which areas on the Government website:- [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Guidance for grass roots sports and physical activities:- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-grassroots-sports-guidance-for-the-public-and-sport-providers#whats-changed>

ENGLAND Covid-19 Guidance	From 19th July moving into Level 4 of Lockdown Easing Road Map	General Safety Guidance/Rules
How many people outdoors	All legal limits on social contact removed. It is 'expected and recommended' that people wear face masks in crowded public settings such as on public transport (unless exempt)	In general, the word is to be 'cautious' as infection rates rise from the Delta Variant. It is recommended that you continue to take safety measures when in busy public spaces and to limit the number of people you meet with at any time.
Meeting indoors	All legal limits on social contact are removed. Guidance is to meet others outside where possible.	to limit the number of people you meet with at any time.
Travel	All domestic travel restrictions will be lifted. You are recommended to wear face masks in busy locations. Domestic Overnight stays are permitted.	All travel restrictions within the UK or wider common travel area are lifted.
Permitted activities	There are no restrictions on how many people can take part in sport and physical activity or on the activity they can do. All remaining businesses can open. Individual businesses and service providers may introduce or continue to implement their own safety measure to manage risks.	As u3as resume interest groups, sports, physical meetings and other activities it is advisable to remember to follow the key steps for managing transmission levels: - check for covid symptoms - isolate if you have symptoms or suspect transmission - get tested

3.1 What is the procedure I am advised to follow to resume my interest group activities face to face?

Check with any venue, premises or location you intend to use for the measures they will require for safe use and inform your group participants of these. Conduct you own risk assessment check, considering the where the group meet, any local group factors of significance and the nature of the activity you intend to do. Hazard levels will vary as will the complexity of the assessment required. In most sit down/discussion groups the risk levels will be low therefore good ventilation, hand and hygiene, wearing face masks when

moving around, could suffice. Meanwhile groups playing contact sports or sharing equipment may wish to consider additional mitigation measures which for example would be provided by National Governing Bodies for sports activities.

To summarise the u3a procedure for resuming an activity or interest group is as follows:-

1. Inform your committee of your plans and preparations for resuming (this could be through your groups convenor but it is good practice to keep your committee informed at this time)
2. Where appropriate download and follow a relevant Risk Assessment from a National Governing Body for your sporting activity (see links below) or use an appropriate u3a risk assessment template for your activity.
3. Inform your members of what to expect and how to prepare for returning
4. Ask members to self assess for symptoms before attending. For some activities group leaders may decide to ask members to check in using the NHS App to scan their QR code or where required continue to keep a register of participants for 21 days after the activity for Track and Trace purposes.

3.2 What do we do if a member is not having the vaccine for health or personal reasons?

At present, there is no mandate from the Government that people must have the vaccine therefore the Trust will not be issuing any requirements that members must have the vaccine or that they cannot take part in activities without having had their vaccines.

3.3 Where can I get information about safety guidance from National Governing Bodies of sports organisations

The link will take you to a list of some of these bodies in England
<https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/national-governing-bodies>

3.4 When can u3a interest groups resume face to face meetings indoors?

There are no legal restrictions on the numbers who can meet indoors or outdoors although venues and premises where interest groups are run may want to continue to adopt certain safety measures such as mask wearing and social distancing, track and trace. It is important to remember that there is no obligation for Interest Group Leaders to resume groups in their own homes, they may have their own health and family concerns that might prevent them from resuming at this time and it is important not to place any pressure on people to resume activities they do not feel comfortable to undertake. If a group leader is not comfortable to resume activities in their home then an alternative venue should be sort.

4. Advice on participation in u3a activities and Covid-19 tests

4.1 Whilst we anticipate that many u3a interest groups will resume some level of face to face activity, some members of u3as remain concerned about the pandemic and we see some businesses and service providers are now intending to retain or introduce additional safety measures for usage. The Trust has taken advice on what u3as may do.

The starting point for all advice to u3as is that at all times you must follow the advice given by the government. In addition you must ensure that a risk assessment check is undertaken before commencing any u3a group activity and you should share this with your committee. Additionally, all members should be encouraged to self assess for symptoms of Coronavirus before attending a group.

There are some queries regarding additional measures that go beyond the relevant government advice. These are laid out below. Each u3a must make its own decision whether it wishes to require any additional measures or use a facility that requires additional measures over and above the relevant government advice. If a u3a decides to impose additional measures the committee should note the measures in a committee meeting, giving a full explanation for them, and detailing how they relate to the risk assessment that has resulted in imposing them.

4.2 Can a venue impose a requirement that all participants using the venue have a clear Covid test before using the facilities?

Yes the venue can undertake a health and safety risk assessment and introduce measures that they feel will reduce the risk of transmission of Covid and include this as a requirement.

4.3 Can a u3a lawfully run the event without contravening our constitutions or any equality legislation in a venue that imposes such restrictions?"

Yes it is possible to use that venue. The reason is that the policy of requiring participants to provide a clear Covid test within 48 hours of attending the event is unlikely to constitute indirect discrimination or disability discrimination. The owner/operator is entitled to put in place reasonably practicable controls and measures to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus, even if these are more onerous than the requirements specified by HM Government or the Health and Safety Executive, so long as they amount to proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, the aim in this case being to protect against Covid-19.

The policy is a general one, rather than targeted, and most, if not all, delegates should be capable of taking a test. Whilst the policy is clearly a robust control measure, it is unlikely to be seen as disproportionate given the significant risks posed by coronavirus or discriminatory and therefore unlawful. **The position would be different if the owner/operator of the venue only permitted participants who had been vaccinated.** This would not comply with equality of access.

4.4 Would we have to require the participants to provide the venue with their details of a Covid free test directly?

The answer is yes given that u3as are not authorised to process or store personal sensitive data. The trustee / u3a committee member who is arranging the event or use of the space should speak to the venue owner/operator to understand the procedures in place to be able to advise participants what they have to do.

4.5 If a u3a required covid clear testing proof prior to getting on a coach, or attending an interest group in a home or in hall, (in other words the request was from one of our charities rather than the venue or the coach provider) would the u3a

charity be entitled to impose this restriction under the same H&S and equality legislation?

Yes a u3a could do this.

4.6 If they are entitled would they be allowed to show evidence of a clear test to the group leader (eg like showing a passport at customs control) on the basis it would only be shown and not collected or stored on any data base?

Yes a u3a could do this.

4.7 Can a u3a impose a requirement that all participants attending an interest group MUST have either a clear Covid test OR proof of both vaccinations before participating?

The u3a must in any event follow all government guidance on covid such as social distancing.

And they must follow the normal risk assessments when considering the health and safety of an event.

However, if they decide, in addition, to introduce a rule that required each u3a member to show on entry to an activity that they had either proof of vaccination or a clear covid test on the basis they wished to minimise the possibility of transmission infection in this age group mainly 70 plus then this is advised to be acceptable under equality legislation as long **as the rule applies to all members.**

4.8 Can it also apply to outdoor activity?

A u3a must still go through the same process, follow the relevant government guidance and undertake a risk assessment.

If under the outdoor activity risk assessment, they still feel this is important to minimise the risk transmission and have noted that this is a risk in the operation of that interest group, then they may adopt the same approach. This would require a rule that required each u3a member to show on entry to an activity that they had either proof of vaccination or a clear covid test on the basis they wished to minimise the possibility of transmission infection in this age group mainly 70 plus This is advised to be acceptable under equality legislation as long as the rule applies to all members.

4.9 Where can I get hold of Lateral Flow Test kits?

Please note: You can order Lateral Flow Test kits through the Government by following the link below and completing the online form or they can be obtained from your local Boots chemist.

[Get tested for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)