

Droitwich Spa & District U3A

Group Leaders' Handbook - Part 4

Other Issues

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Most of the time, things will run smoothly with your group, its members will engage constructively, and everyone will enjoy the experience. Remember our u3a motto is to LEARN, LAUGH and LIVE, and hopefully members join our u3a to do just that! However, very occasionally something goes wrong, or unexpected situations arise, that then need to be addressed. Some of the more common ones are covered below:

1. Poor Attendance by Group Members

If a group member misses two consecutive meetings without explanation, check with them that they are still interested in being part of the group, but please make allowance for members who take extended holidays or who have extended periods of illness. If they no longer wish to be part of the group, then their place in the group can be made available to someone else. This is particularly important if there is a waiting list, and the non-attending member is occupying a place that could be filled from someone from the waiting list. Also, for those groups with a waiting list, group members with a record of persistent non-attendance should be warned and then removed from the group, and the member and the Groups' Co-ordinator advised that this has been done.

2. Problems with Group Members

Disruptive and/or unsocial behaviour, or strong disagreement between members can occasionally occur within a group. You should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on the enjoyment of the other members of the group. In most cases you will be able to resolve the situation informally and amicably by just having a quiet word with the member/members in question. However, in certain situations, asking a member to leave the group for the remainder of the session may well be the best solution. If the situation requires more than this, or this approach fails and the problem persists you should refer the matter to the Groups' Co-ordinator. As a Group Leader you do not have the authority to exclude a member from the group permanently - such a decision can only be made by the Committee, and the Groups' Co-ordinator can raise this issue with the Committee on your behalf.

3. What to do about a Failing Group

If you have a problem with falling numbers, the first thing to do is to try to find out the reason. Perhaps the programme isn't interesting enough; do the members feel that their interests are being disregarded; do they want to become more involved? If nothing changes, please discuss the situation with the Groups' Co-ordinator who will see what they can do to help. Please remember that if your group ceases to exist, the Groups' Co-ordinator and Website Administrator must be informed, and any funds or equipment held by the group passed to the Treasurer.

4. What if your Group is too Successful

If your group is too large, or has a persistent and/or increasing waiting list, please inform the Groups' Co-ordinator. In such a case you might like to consider whether finding a larger venue might be a solution. If it is not practical to run the group with a larger number of members, or if a larger venue is not available, then it is probably time to consider how a new group may be started. In the first instance, talk to the Groups' Co-ordinator to see how a new group might form. Should the new group mirror the operation of the existing group, or should the new group have a change of emphasis of the subject, with a significantly different title to reflect this change? Perhaps one or two of the existing group members might like to be involved in setting up the new group? They don't necessarily have to be the Group Leader, nor do they have to make a permanent transfer to the new group, but their experience may be invaluable in getting a new group off the ground.

5. Relationship with the Executive Committee

The members of the Committee (who are therefore Trustees of our u3a) have a duty to ensure that we operate in accordance with our objectives (as described in our constitution) and with charity law. In addition to requirements imposed by legislation, the Committee receives guidance from the Third Age Trust concerning requirements appropriate to running groups. Most Committee Members have specific roles or duties, and the following are the ones you are most likely to have contact with:

Chairman

Contact them if you have an issue that can't be resolved in any other way.

Vice-Chairman

Contact them if the issue is urgent and the Chairman is not available.

Groups' Co-ordinator

Contact them for advice about your interest group and to make sure your group's details on their list is up-to-date. Also report to them any concerns and any other factors to be raised for discussion at the Committee.

Membership Secretary

Contact them if you have difficulty contacting a member of your group, or you wish to register a Reciprocal Member.

Treasurer

Contact them to (if necessary) supply the end-of-year finances for your group, or if your group is considering any significant expenditure.

Beacon Administrator

Contact them if you wish to become a Beacon user, if you wish to register a Reciprocal Member, or if you have any problems associated with the use of Beacon.

Website Administrator

Contact them to make sure that the information provided about your group on the website is up-to-date.

Newsletter Editor

Contact them to provide articles about your group for the newsletter.

We want to try and keep administration to a minimum, so there is no need for you to regularly provide the Membership Secretary or the Groups' Co-ordinator (or anyone else) with a list of the members signed up for your group. However, from time to time the Committee might wish to review what is happening within the groups, and when this is the case, they will request such a list and specify where it is to be sent. Remember to include any members from neighbouring u3as who are attending under the reciprocal membership arrangement. If you maintain the list of members of your group on Beacon, you will normally be able to respond to such a request by simply stating that your group members can be retrieved from Beacon.

6. Health and Safety and Related Issues

a) Professional Qualifications

Group Leaders of groups involving some form of physical activity do not need to hold professional qualifications in the area, but the Committee needs to assure itself that the Group Leader is sufficiently experienced. If you are the Group Leader, or potential leader of such a group, please discuss the matter with the Groups' Co-ordinator.

b) First Aid

You are not required to have a trained first aider present. Insurance advice is to contact the emergency services in the event of a serious incident.

c) Risk Assessment

There is no formal requirement to carry out Risk Assessments but as a Group Leader, you are asked to consider what is appropriate for your group and its venue. Should you wish to undertake a Risk Assessment, or be required to provide one as part of the conditions for hiring a venue, Risk Assessment documents are available on the website. These comprise documents that you could adapt, for different indoor and outdoor activities, together with some examples of their completion. The Chairman will be able to provide advice on other Risk Assessment documents for different sorts of activity.

d) Members with Disabilities

Legislation requires us to make "reasonable adjustments" so as to not prevent people with disabilities from joining our u3a. In addition, the website contains advice that Group Leaders should consider when dealing with members who have a visual or hearing impairment, or a disability which impairs their movement.

e) Safeguarding

Some people, particularly the elderly and those in poor health, are potentially at risk of abuse and neglect. If you suspect that something like this is happening you should report the matter to a member of the Committee.

7. List of Supporting Documents

The following additional documents may be found on the Droitwich u3a website:

Terms and Conditions of Membership

Constitution (as revised on 20 February 2018)

Data Protection Policy

Privacy Policy

Public Liability Information

Guidance on Insurance Issues

Safeguarding Policy

Car Travel Policy

Electrical Equipment Policy

Support for Members with Hearing Loss

Support for Members with Vision Loss

Support for Disabled Members

8. And Finally

In many cases, if you need help or if you are in any doubt, it may be easier just to contact the Groups' Co-ordinator, Chairman or Treasurer who will mostly be able to answer your questions and if they cannot, they will find someone who can!

Enjoy your Group Leading! Remember, we only exist through our volunteers!