



Accessibility Policy

Introduction

Dunmow u3a (Du3a) 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. Our policy has been developed in line with guidance from the Third Age Trust.

Accessibility needs for individual members are reviewed by Du3a and reasonable adjustments are made, where possible, to accommodate the needs of members with disabilities and/or health related needs. The policy will act as a reference point for Committee Members, Group Leaders and individual members and will also identify the parameters of the adjustments that can be made. Whilst reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that individuals can participate there may be certain needs that the u3a will not be able to accommodate due to the level of care that an individual may need.

Members with a disability are encouraged to make contact with the Welfare Co-ordinator, who will try to ensure that everything reasonable is done to make life easier for them whilst they are participating in u3a activities. Members requiring assistance should also speak to the Group coordinator. Group Leaders who are aware of any disability issues should refer the matter to the Welfare Co-ordinator.

Because there is a wide range of disabilities (some obvious, some hidden) members should be expected to talk to the Welfare Co-ordinator or their Group Leader to express their individual needs.

Du3a will encourage and may require members to bring carers with them to u3a activities, as needed, with no additional cost for the carer. The carer will fall under u3a liability insurance unless they are a professional carer, in which case the individual will be covered by their employer's insurance cover. u3a members are not expected, nor insured, to provide assistance or care to another member.

Du3a has a duty of care to all members and this may mean that sometimes 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.

Accessibility for Members with a Physical Disability

Whilst there is no obligation for Du3a to make all groups accessible to all members; we will make every effort to make any group as accessible as reasonably possible both for our existing members and potential members.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that members with physical disabilities can attend the interest groups of their choice and will support them and make their attendance as easy and stress-free as possible.

Du3a 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. Group Leaders 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 as to whether the group is suitable for them.

Members with a disability should note that, for u3a outings, we will include them wherever possible. However, it is important that a disabled member who wishes to travel makes their own arrangements for care sufficient for their needs. The organiser or any u3a member is not responsible for anyone who cannot manage without help.

Welfare Co-ordinator

The Welfare Co-ordinator has responsibility for liaising with Group Leaders on an ongoing basis to ensure that groups are accessible and that group leaders are aware of what the expectations are and what adjustments may need to be made e.g. relocating a group held within someone's home to a wheelchair accessible venue.

Members with a disability are encouraged to make contact with the Welfare Co-ordinator, who will try to ensure everything reasonable is done to make life easier for them whilst they are participating in u3a activities. The Welfare Co-ordinator will contact new members who indicate that they have a disability or health related issue that may need additional support and/or adjustment and discuss with them what needs they have and how these could be met.

Group Leaders will liaise with the Welfare Co-ordinator where there are concerns about an individual's ability to participate.

Venue for General Meetings

General meetings will, as far as possible, be held at a well-lit, wheelchair accessible venue, spacious enough to cope with wheelchairs and mobility scooters, with wheelchair accessible toilet and hearing aid loop system, and with a sound system in use.

We will, as far as possible, ensure our venues are served by public transport and have adequate car parking facilities on site including disabled parking bays.

We will ensure appropriate location of seating for disabled members, e.g. at the front for those who have vision or hearing loss and at the end of a row for those with mobility problems etc.

Venues for Interest/Activity Groups

Many of our meetings are held in village halls, church halls and other public venues which are fully accessible. However, a number of groups are held in private houses, where accessibility may be a problem. We advise that before joining a group you make contact with the Welfare Co-ordinator or the Group Co-ordinator to discuss your needs and assess if the venue is suitable.

If a disabled member cannot attend a group of their choice, they might be assisted and encouraged to set up a group at a location suited to their needs.

Du3a will maintain a database of venues and the facilities offered by each venue to accommodate different needs.

Supporting Members with Vision Loss

Du3a members with vision loss will be supported as far as reasonably possible so that they can continue to participate in u3a activities. The Group Co-ordinator, if necessary, with the help of the Welfare Co-ordinator, should be able to explain whether a particular group is suitable for people with different levels of vision loss.

We will:

- provide seating close to the front to allow members to be close to visual displays.
- try to reduce glare from windows and lights
- if available on prior request, provide copies of presentations for use on a member's own laptop, which is often adapted for their specific needs.
- ensure that committee members are informed ahead of any event of any requests for specific arrangements in sufficient time for them to be made.

Printed information to support members with vision loss may be requested. It is recommended that such documents follow the criteria below:

- Have a good contrast between text and background, eg black on white or dark blue on cream. Coloured lettering other than for large text titles should be avoided.
- Ideally have a minimum type size of 14 point (or 18 point if produced specifically for visually impaired people), with a wide line spacing.
- Use a regular (upright) sans serif font (e.g. Arial or Verdana). Avoid italics and decorative fonts.
- Avoid paper with a glossy finish.

Adaptive technology e.g. speech synthesis and magnification cannot be supplied by Du3a.

Assistive technology

Members will be encouraged to use their own assistive technology aids to enable their interest group participation. Du3a does not provide any member with assistive technology.

Supporting Members with Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can vary from mild to severe and may also prevent members from taking part in events and groups because they want to avoid feeling cut off from people in social situations.

We will:

- Provide hearing loops (fixed or portable) in the general meeting hall and in as many other venues as possible.
- Ensure that Group Leaders are made aware of the best ways to communicate with a person who has hearing loss.

Group Leaders should:

- Where possible, use a venue with a loop system or take a portable system and use microphones where available.
- Check that any hearing support systems are working correctly before a talk.
- Let speakers know that some members of the audience are hard of hearing so they can adapt their speed and position.
- Try to minimize extraneous noise.
- Encourage those who are hard of hearing to sit nearest the speaker or group leader.

- Make sure that members take turns in speaking and encourage use of hand signals to attract attention.
- Have a pen and paper ready to write something down if necessary.
- Make written notes available on request, either during the session or soon afterwards.

Best practice for communicating with someone with a hearing loss:

- Ensure you are speaking clearly and distinctly but without shouting or exaggerating mouth movements.
- Speak at normal speed or just slightly slower, pausing between sentences and making sure you have been understood before moving on.
- Use plain language and don't waffle.
- Avoid using sentences that are unnecessarily long and complex. If the member has not understood what has been said, try and find a different way of saying it.
- Say the member's name before beginning a conversation. This gives the listener opportunity to focus attention so the first few words are not lost.

Lip Reading

- Be aware of how you position yourself in a room in relation to a member who is lip reading.
- Face the person as much as possible when talking. Keep your hands away from your face.
- Make sure you have the person's attention before speaking.
- Be aware of light levels: avoid situations where light is shining in members' eyes or where lighting is too low to see someone's face clearly.
- Horseshoe or boardroom-style layouts can increase visibility.
- Speakers should ideally be in front of a plain background and not too high.
- Use lapel microphones or ask speakers to ensure hand-held microphones do not obscure their face.

Du3a will seek additional advice and support on accessibility from u3aplus, the Regional Trustee, National Office, the national website and external specialist organisations as required.



Welfare Co-ordinator

Date approved: 5 August 2020