

**GUIDANCE FOR GROUP COORDINATORS**

Interest Groups are at the heart of u3a activity and are managed by volunteers who give their time freely. Members can join as many, or as few, groups as they want. Groups are self-financing; i.e. all costs of running the Group are covered by the members of the group. Members are expected to fully participate in the planning and running of the Group. These guidelines are to ensure we continue to have well-run and safe interest groups, and will be particularly useful for new and potential Group Coordinators.

We aim to create an open and welcoming atmosphere for all our activities. The Group Coordinator plays a key part is setting the tone for this to happen.

**Group Coordinators**

Group Coordinators should keep an up-to-date membership list and simple attendance record. Members should be asked to complete and carry ICE (In Case of Emergency) Cards. Membership lists should be reviewed regularly and Members not attending should be contacted to discuss future attendance. We have no reciprocal agreements with other u3a’s.

Groups should remain open for Membership unless there are clear reasons to restrict membership; a decision to restrict membership of a group should be kept under regular review. If group membership is getting towards capacity, the Coordinator should discuss the situation with the Groups’ Secretary *(contact details can be found on our website).* Options to consider could include:

1. Start a waiting list if the wait is likely to be short;
2. In discussion with the Groups’ Secretary, consider starting a second group;
3. If the size of the Group has outgrown the venue seek alternative venues.

Restricting membership should only be considered after these options have been exhausted.

**Handling money**

All money handled by u3a’s should be included in annual accounts and should be managed according to Commission Rules. In particular no u3a Members’ money should be held in a personal bank account and Members’ money managed by groups should be accounted for.

All groups are required to be self-financing, although short term help will be available when groups are being set up or experiencing difficulty with numbers. In addition capital grants may be available.

*Further advice can be obtained from the Treasurer.*

Groups only need money from their members to cover costs and keep a small surplus float. In all cases this float should not exceed £100. Coordinators should only accept cash and **never** accept cheques made out to them personally. If you need any banking services to help run your Group please contact the Treasurer to discuss the best way forward.

All groups that handle money are required to produce annual accounts to the Treasurer to show the income and expenditure up to the year end (31 October).

It is perfectly acceptable for group Members to pay third parties directly by personal cheque or card, e.g. when paying a restaurant directly (as with the Ethnic Eating Groups). It is also acceptable for groups to cover the cost of refreshments if they meet in someone’s house. The guiding principle is if the Coordinator has held no money they are not required to produce accounts, only confirm a nil return.

**Safety and insurance**

In all cases members are responsible for taking reasonable care in activities they follow. However we also have third party and product insurance. This is arranged centrally by the Third Age Trust.

*(An overview of this insurance can be found on the Members’ page of our website.)*

Coordinators are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the cover provided. Essentially public liability protects our Members against a claim from a member of the public or another u3a Member (i.e. the third party) where it is shown that the Member is legally liable for personal injury of the claimant or had damaged property. Examples of this would include a Member of a walking group slipping and causing injury to a third party or a landowner claiming one of our groups had damaged fencing.

Product insurance covers Members from claims arising from injury or damage from equipment that we are responsible for, e.g. a display board falling and injuring someone.

**Paid tutors**

The Third Age Trust believes that using paid tutors is against the ethos of the movement. However the Committee recognise that there are some activities that are popular and have no Members suitably qualified to lead the group. A good example is Pilates, where it is vital to have an experienced and competent tutor. In these cases the permission of the Committee should be sought and the Group Coordinators should satisfy themselves that the tutor is suitably qualified, self-employed, and insured.

*Further advice can be obtained from the Treasurer.*

**Visitors**

All u3a Members are automatically covered by this insurance. In addition some categories of visitor are also covered:

1. *Prospective members of the u3a;* the Committee have decided that prospective Members can attend up to three “taster” sessions in total, subject to the agreement of the Group Coordinator;
2. *Casual visitors;* being friends or family of existing group Members who would not normally be eligible for membership, e.g. grandchildren on a walk;
3. *Carers;* should a Member require a carer to participate in the activity. If the carer participates in the activity themselves they cannot be classed as a carer and should be treated as a non-Member.

The guiding principle, with the exception of carers, is that visitors should **never** attend regularly as they, and we, will not be covered by our insurance. The Committee has defined regularly as on more than three occasions. Non-Members attending for a fourth time should be politely refused access to the Interest Group activities. Following these simple guidelines will ensure we never get into a situation where third party or product risk falls upon Glenfield U3A Trustees, Coordinators, or Members and we can carry on enjoying ourselves.

**Publicity**

Let the Website Manager know the activities you are planning so that the website is kept up-to-date, and report back anything that was particularly successful for the quarterly Newsletter and notice boards. Photos are always welcome. Contact details can be found on the website.

**Finally**

Our website www.u3asites.org.uk/glenfield is full of information and advice. You can also go to the Third Age Trust website www.u3a.org.uk and create an account so that you can use the Members’ Area. Particularly useful are the Resource Centre, Document Downloads, and Subject Advice.

If you have comments, suggestions, concerns, queries or ideas for future development, please let one of the Committee know.

*August 2019*