

Venue Policy and Procedures

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy is aimed at helping Interest Group Leaders (“IGLs”) choose and pay for suitable venues for their groups. It seeks to ensure that the level of financial subsidy members receive when attending group meetings in paid venues are in line with HMRC¹ Gift Aid rules whilst not imposing a significant financial burden on those members. We also need to ensure that the level of subsidy is fair (to all members) and financially sustainable.

1.2 The issue of subsidising venue costs is a dilemma and people take opposing views:

- some u3as pay for all venue costs out of the subscription and set a higher subscription level; and,
- other u3as pay no venue costs out of the subscription and expect groups to be self-funding, potentially making some groups not financially viable.

Your Executive Committee (“we”) has always followed a compromise approach between these extremes, expecting members to fund venue costs up to a certain level (the so-called AVCs) and subsidising above that level where necessary, trying to take account of different circumstances. For example, we are more generous in funding start up groups which have not yet attracted sufficient members to cover their costs.

Other issues include:

- recognising accessibility issues;
- some members being on a limited income; and,
- where members are unable to attend meetings for a sustained period due to illness or other commitments

1.3 Groups have flexibility in addressing these issues when making decisions about venue costs. We are not proposing to change that policy but venue costs are increasing. We would ask IGLs to seek to reduce costs where possible and use free venues (e.g. members’ homes/cafes) where this meets the needs of their group.

1.4 Additionally, to enjoy the financial savings from Gift Aid, we need to restrict the amount that we spend in subsidies to keep within the HMRC limit of 25% of membership subscriptions¹. This should not be an enormous change and we believe it will be outweighed by Gift Aid benefits.

¹ His Majesty’s Revenue & Customs

2.0 Gift Aid rules

- 2.1 Member subscriptions are treated as donations to a charity. As such, we can claim 25% for every member who is a taxpayer and consents to Gift Aid their subscription. We can also claim Gift Aid retrospectively over the last 4 years.
- 2.2 However, the subsidies that members receive when attending paid venues complicate the matter. If these subsidies are greater than 25% of our total revenue from subscriptions we will be unable to claim Gift Aid. One approach would be to identify all members who have benefited from a venue subsidy by more than £3.00 in the current year and exclude them entirely from our claim, including for the past 4 years. This approach would be cumbersome to administer. Guidance from National u3a (See Appendix 1) states that it is possible to aggregate these subsidies over our u3a i.e. we can claim Gift Aid for all those who have signed up for it, provided that the level of subsidy does not exceed 25% of our revenue from our subscriptions.

3.0 Additional Voluntary Contributions (“AVCs”)

- 3.1 The Committee considers the term AVC confusing, as it suggests that the venue fees paid by a member are voluntary. Attendance at a meeting at a paid venue is voluntary: paying for the venue is not². **As such, the term AVC will be replaced by Group Meeting Costs or GMC for short.**

4.0 Financial year 6 April 2023 onwards

- 4.1 IGLs should seek to use fee free venues in the first instance. As well as considering members’ homes, IGLs should think about in cafes or public houses to keep costs to a minimum. Where this is inappropriate (for example, because of accessibility issues, size of group or because the nature of the group activity does not lend itself to private venues) the IGL can consider paying for a venue. We do, of course, encourage all groups to ensure that their meetings are compatible with the needs of all members of our u3a, including those with accessibility needs. This may require changing the venue to allow full participation.
- 4.2 Before committing to any spend, the IGL will need to agree it with the Treasurer to ensure that we have a full understanding of costs, that the expenditure is affordable and to agree the appropriate level of subsidy.
- 4.3 In general, where a paid venue is chosen, participating members must pay the appropriate Group Meeting Costs (“GMC”) regardless of whether they attend all the meetings.
- 4.4 Groups hiring venues will be able to claim a maximum subsidy based upon their size, as on Beacon on 30 June of each year, using the following methodology:

² Subject to Committee approval of specific circumstances where it is unreasonable for a member to pay venue costs, e.g. long term illness

Moseley, Kings Heath & District u3a Venue policy

Size of group	Subsidy available (% of venue cost)
Up to 12	Up to 30%
13 – 20	Up to 20%
Over 20	Up to 10%
Over 40	0%

These percentages are the subsidies that a group can expect to receive: the exact amount of subsidy available will depend on the affordability of the venue/frequency of meeting and will be confirmed on a case-by-case basis by the Treasurer. The size of the group (and by extension, the percentage subsidy) will be set on 30 June each year³. If a group is experiencing difficulties with the subsidy level, then the IGL should discuss it with the Treasurer (see 4.11).

- 4.5 If an IGL feels that a member is struggling financially, then a reduced payment may be offered to that individual at the discretion of the IGL though we would ask that if possible that money is made up by the payments made by the group as a whole.
- 4.6 The IGL should pay the money into our u3a bank account on receipt, or notify the Treasurer, ideally by email, of the sum collected with arrangements to pay it asap.
- 4.7 The Committee recognise that individual circumstances can have an impact on the ability to pay GMCs in circumstances such as:
- members with limited financial means going to a number of groups which require GMCs;
 - a sudden reduction in group membership (due, for example, to illness or caring responsibilities); or,
 - new groups without an established membership.
- 4.8 IGLs are invited to raise issues with the Committee if such situations arise or if the arrangements pose too much of a challenge for an individual member or threatens the viability of their group. The committee will consider any such submission and advise further.
- 4.9 We anticipate that the level of GMCs set should allow some flexibility to accommodate such circumstances.
- 4.10 The Committee is continuing to explore other venues in the area which may offer more affordable options for groups.
- 4.11 If a group requires a greater level of subsidy than set out in this policy the Committee may need to consider if it is financially sustainable and whether the group should continue to be supported under existing arrangements (of, e.g. frequency and venue).
- 4.12 It is always difficult to accurately predict venue costs over the course of the full year, so to strike an appropriate balance between supporting groups and maintaining

³ This is to avoid financial implications for group members should the size of the group change during the year, allowing our members to budget more effectively.

Moseley, Kings Heath & District u3a Venue policy

subsidies within a manageable level, groups are asked to initially collect GMCs to the end of December at which time the Treasurer will review the position and advise each group of contributions then needed to the end of our financial year, which is 31 March.

5.0 Approval and review

This policy was approved by the Executive Committee of the Moseley, Kings Heath & District u3a on 27 February 2024 and will be reviewed by the end of January 2026

Signed..... Chair

Signed Treasurer

5.0 Policy Review

5.1 This policy will be reviewed in January 2024