

NORTHWOOD AND DISTRICT U3A.

POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON ACCESSIBILITY

POLICY STATEMENT

Northwood and District U3A will take all reasonable steps to ensure that existing and potential members with impaired mobility, hearing or vision can participate as fully as possible in both general meetings and interest/study groups.

The guidelines will be made available on the Northwood and District U3A website and will be amended as necessary in the light of further experience.

The committee will nominate one of its members to have responsibility for accessibility. This committee member will be available to any members with accessibility problems or concerns in relation to mobility, hearing or vision, to discuss how Northwood and District U3A may help him/her participate in and benefit from U3A activities.

Members with impaired mobility, hearing or vision will be advised to make their needs known to the nominated committee member responsible for accessibility.

Members who cannot manage to participate in their chosen U3A activities without help may bring a companion/carer with them who need not be a member. For the time that the carer is in attendance he/she will be covered by the liability insurance provided by The Third Age Trust, unless they are a professionally employed carer who would have to be covered by an individual liability policy.

GUIDELINES

GENERAL MEETINGS

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

Members with specific requirements should make their needs known and every effort will be made to assist them.

STUDY GROUP MEETINGS

Study groups will take all reasonable steps to make their activities accessible and available to members and potential members with impairment of mobility, hearing or sight.

Group leaders need to follow the specific guidelines below, and take note of any advice from The Third Age Trust. These will be issued to all current group leaders and to new group leaders on appointment.

1. Under the Equalities Act 2010 there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments. The duty is an anticipatory and continuing one that we owe to disabled members. We should not wait until an individual disabled member approached us before considering how we include people.
2. Group leaders need to plan ahead and anticipate the requirements of disabled members and the adjustments that might need to be made for them. You are not expected to anticipate the needs of every prospective member, but you do need to think about and take reasonable and proportionate steps to overcome barriers that may impede people with different kinds of disabilities.
3. At the formation of a study group all reasonable steps will be taken to use premises that are accessible to group members with impaired mobility, wherever necessary. If this is considered not to be possible the matter should be reported to the committee member responsible for accessibility. The group leader will be made aware that different or altered premises may have to be used should the needs of the group change in the future.
4. If a member with mobility, hearing or visual impairment should wish to join an existing group, the group leader will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the member. If after due consideration this is not possible the matter should be referred to the committee member responsible for accessibility.
5. Where there is a hearing aid loop system the group leader should ensure that it is switched on. Members with impaired hearing, including hearing aid users, can have difficulty in venues with even a moderate level of background noise, which can occur in public rooms where there is a background of conversation by others. Group leaders should ensure that all members can clearly hear any speaker and other members in discussion; if there is a problem those in difficulty should be consulted about possible solutions.
6. Members with impaired vision can have very particular needs, depending on the type and severity of loss of vision. Any group member with impaired vision should be consulted about the way in which their needs can best be met.
7. These guidelines are intended to help members with impaired mobility, hearing or vision to participate as fully as possible, but there may be times where the adjustment necessary goes beyond what is reasonable and discussions will take place with the individual member about this..