



**University of the Third Age**

**Perth U3A**

# **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**Handbook for group leaders**

**Updated January 2020 v1.3**

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# INTRODUCTION

It is the duty of every organisation to take care of the health and safety of its members. Additionally, there are legal requirements which have to be followed. The consequences potentially resulting from legal action claiming negligence can be financially crippling. For these reasons Perth U3A has reviewed its existing documentation on health and safety. In doing so it has drawn on material developed by the Third Age Trust for the use of all U3As. (See [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk) for full information on TAT publications)

This pack is available to each interest group leader. It applies particularly to leaders whose groups meet in public places, but there are some sections which refer to groups which meet in private homes.

Group leaders are requested to familiarise themselves with the contents and to ensure that should they hand over leadership of a group to someone else they make them aware of the contents of the pack.

Occasional updates will be necessary and these will be issued as and when they are published. An up-to-date version of the pack will always be on the website at [www.perthu3a.org.uk](http://www.perthu3a.org.uk)

**Fire evacuation procedures:** It is the responsibility of Group Leaders using hired premises to familiarise themselves with the evacuation procedures for the premises they use and the contact details for the relevant link person in their venue.

**Insurance:** Insurance cover for U3A activities is an important but complex subject. One of the advantages of membership of the national U3A movement is the public liability cover arranged through the Third Age Trust (TAT). The information provided by TAT is referred to in this pack. It is not always easy to interpret the detail of the cover, and we have on occasion sought clarification from TAT. If you have any questions concerning insurance matters please refer them to the secretary of Perth U3A.

**Physical activity groups:** Perth U3A has a number of groups engaging in physical activities. These range enormously in what they do and no one document can cover the variety. We have therefore left specific guidance to the discretion of group leaders. However the committee has agreed the following statement to be delivered to group members at the start of the season.

*This group involves a physical activity with implications for your health and safety. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are physically capable of undertaking the activities involved and to conduct yourself in a manner that does not place either yourself or other members of the Group at risk. If you are at all uncertain about your ability to undertake or continue an activity stop and inform the Group Leader immediately. You should be prepared to raise any health problems or concerns privately with the Group Leader at the beginning of the group activity so that they are aware of them.*

Many groups have devised and adopted their own safety policies relevant to their specific activities. This document is intended to be indicative rather than prescriptive, and to serve as a reminder to groups of the kind of safety issues they need to be alert to and make

known to participating members. We have decided against requiring participants to sign a disclaimer, as is the practice in some walking groups, as it is not clear that it would be legally binding – particularly if negligence can be proven. For this reason it is particularly important that group leaders take all necessary steps to safeguard members – for their own sake as well as for the sake of group members.

**Are there any gaps?** There may be health and safety issues which are not covered here. If so, and you have a concern that they are addressed, please contact the secretary or another committee member.

## **FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURES IN HIRED ACCOMMODATION**

It is the responsibility of the Group Leader to be fully informed of Fire Evacuation Procedures for the venue in which the group is meeting. It is the Group Leader's responsibility to ensure that members understand the required action in the event of a fire alarm and/or fire. The Group Leader may decide that this requires a rehearsal of the procedure.

Perth U3A Committee recommend that group members are reminded of the procedures as often as the Group Leader deems necessary but at least twice in a session – e.g. at the first meeting and at the first meeting following the Christmas break.

In order to ensure safe evacuation a record of members attending should be kept at each meeting. It is important to recognise that in some venues the U3A group may be the only occupants of the building at the time.

Group Leaders should note the following:

1. Before the start of each session make contact with an officer for the venue. Contact details are available from the U3A Secretary.
2. Determine the Fire Evacuation Procedures or any changes to them. (Some venues e.g. Letham St Mark's and Unit 7 have detailed written Evacuation Procedures.)
3. In the event of there being no written procedures the Committee advise that the Group Leader rehearses evacuation with an officer of the letting agency.
4. This will include familiarisation with :-
  - i. evacuation routes
  - ii. assembly points
  - iii. alarm systems.
5. Should the U3A group be the only occupants of the building in the event of a fire the Group Leader should be able to contact the Fire Brigade and an officer of the letting agency. **In the event of needing to contact the emergency services, Group Leaders should be familiar with the post code of the venue as this information will be required by the operator.**
6. In the event of a U3A group ever having to evacuate a building the Group Leader should provide a report of the occurrence for the Committee. The Committee will forward its consideration of the event to the letting agency.

# INCIDENT REPORTING

## Attendance List

For health and safety reasons an attendance sheet should be completed at each interest group meeting, especially in hired premises. In the event of an evacuation of premises where a group activity is taking place it is essential that all members present can be accounted for. At the start of a group meeting members should be reminded of the location of the meeting point in the event of an evacuation. If an evacuation takes place the group leader must ensure that the attendance sheet is taken to the meeting point and a roll call taken to account for all members.

See also section on Fire evacuation procedures in hired accommodation

## Incidents

It would be useful if group leaders knew if any of their group members had medical or first aid experience as people who might be called on in the event of an accident or medical emergency during a group session (although you should also be aware that their experience may not be relevant to the incident or their accreditation may be out of date).

It is important that any incident involving a member participating in a group activity is recorded on the report form below. This will ensure that any claim that has to be made to our insurers is completed in full. The form should then be forwarded to the Secretary of Perth U3A who will process the claim and make a report to the committee.

# DEALING WITH ACCIDENTS AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

## Introduction

Group leaders may find themselves faced without notice during a group meeting with an accident or a medical emergency involving someone in their group. It is important to be prepared in advance for such an eventuality, particularly if the group is meeting in rented accommodation. This is intended to offer some guidance on how to respond in such a circumstance.

## What you should expect from the venue

- The venue where you meet should have procedures for dealing with an accident or medical emergency on display. Where possible this will be included in the venue-specific information you receive from U3A as part of our Health and Safety briefing.
- This should include the exact address of the venue, postcode and location in relation to surrounding streets. (The NHS emergency centre is not local so will not be familiar with local geography)

- There should be a phone available for dialing 999, and it should be accessible whilst groups are meeting. If not you will need to check that there is a mobile phone to hand for this eventuality.
- Every meeting place should have a first aid kit available on the premises and you should be familiar with how to access it.
- It is the responsibility of every organisation owning a building to report accidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the RIDDOR system. Best practice for doing so is to keep an accident book. As users of the premises it is our responsibility to inform the contact person in rented accommodation of any incidents, as well as to follow the U3A reporting procedures.

### **Assessing and responding to an accident or emergency**

- If a blow to the head has been incurred it is important to call an ambulance, even if the person appears to be OK and wants to be taken straight home.
- If someone has fainted, it is also advisable to call for outside medical help. Ambulance staff can assess whether a visit to hospital is required.
- When an ambulance attends the paramedics may ask for information about the casualty. Encourage group members to have an 'in case of emergency' (ICE) contact on their mobile. Leaders taking names for their group at registration have the opportunity to get home phone numbers. Some leaders might also want to compile a list of emergency telephone numbers and/or to emphasise that members take part in activities at their own risk.
- Err on the side of caution! Some accidents can be dealt with by basic first aid. But, if it appears that the person is in any way unwell, ensure that someone accompanies them home, or that medical assistance is called before they leave the premises.

### **Record keeping**

Every group leader should have a Health and Safety Pack. (If not ask the Secretary for a copy) This contains an accident report form to be completed and submitted to the Secretary for consideration by committee. Record the incident in the accident book at the venue as well.

The Third Age Trust provides accident insurance cover for U3A activities. Should this be needed it is very important that accident report procedures have been followed correctly.

It is the policy of Perth U3A that, for each venue used by groups, the committee member with oversight of health and safety will liaise with the local contact person and collate fire safety and accident and emergency procedures..

## Incident Report Form – Perth U3A

**An incident is defined as any occurrence which: a) results in personal injury to anyone (including a member of the public) b) is classifiable as a near miss with potential to cause serious injury c) causes damage to property d) involves ill health or sickness e) results in conflict or complaints f) is something which could cause damage to the reputation of Perth U3A.**

It is important that this incident/accident report is completed as soon as possible whilst the details are able to be recalled accurately You should also notify the Secretary verbally in case they want to visit the scene of the accident.

**REMINDER: Group leaders should have a post code for their venue available in case emergency services are called.**

U3A group involved with incident:
Nature of Incident:
Date/ Time/ Location of Incident:
Details of any assistance required at the scene:
Injuries incurred (if any):
Property damage (if any):

Actions Taken:

Follow-up required after incident (Eg. Medical advice/ attention sought afterwards):

Any other comments:

Witnesses (incl. contact details if not U3A members):

Names and contact details of parties to incident, and nature of their involvement:

Name of Group Leader.....

Telephone Number .....

Signed.....

Date .....

**Completed forms to be sent to Perth U3A Secretary**

## SOCIAL EVENTS AND TRAVEL

Perth U3A arranges social events ranging from day trips and outings to Christmas lunches, as well as organising travel either in the UK or Europe which can either be for a specific study group or for all members. The TAT website provides recommendations of best practice, describes insurance cover provided and gives information to ensure that neither participating members nor the organisers are putting themselves at risk. This is available here:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/committee-responsibilities/210-social-events-and-travel>

There are three types of activities that are considered:

1. Social Events – Day trips; wine & cheese events; Xmas lunches; garden parties etc. open to all members of the U3A.
2. Study Group Travel – Outings including both travel and accommodation as an extension of a study group activity.
3. Holiday – Trips over several days in either UK or Europe, open to all members of the U3A.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

It is important that group leaders are alert to risks associated with the activities of their groups and have taken appropriate measures to address these. See also other sections of this pack.

Perth U3A does not require formal risk assessments to be completed, except in very specific instances where such an assessment is of particular importance.

The Third Age Trust (TAT) does recommend that attention be paid to its 'Venue risk assessment checklist' and its 'Venue checklist – Day of use'. These is reproduced below for the general guidance of group leaders who are asked to be aware of the risks the checklist highlights.

## VENUE RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- Is the access suitable for the group attending the activity especially anybody with limited mobility?
- Is wheelchair access adequate
- Is the area free from obstructions and trip hazards?
- Are there adequate means of escape in an emergency?
- Are there appropriate direction signs to aid escape?
- Is there a fire alarm?
- Is there emergency lighting?
- Is there a designated assembly point? Where is it?
- Is there an emergency procedure for the building? Do you have a copy?
- Is seating always laid out? Is it a U3A responsibility to deal with seating before and after the activity?
- Is food or drink being provided/ prepared? If so: Is the kitchen adequate and hygienic? Are food safe cleaning materials available? Do a visual safety check on electrical equipment.
- Are the toilet facilities adequate and accessible?
- Is equipment being brought into the venue? Has it been safety checked?
- Is there a first aid box or is U3A to provide?

A copy of this checklist with tickboxes is available for download from the TAT website:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/documents/documents/advice/insurances-and-safety-1/993-venue-risk-assessment-checklist>

## VENUE CHECKLIST – DAY OF USE

- Emergency exits unobstructed?
- Emergency exits unlocked?
- Fire extinguishers in place?
- Toilet facilities open and clean?
- Walkways free from trip hazards?
- Kitchen facilities accessible and clean?
- Electrical equipment in good condition?
- Refreshment materials available?
- First aid equipment accessible?
- Safety briefing given?

A copy of this checklist with tickboxes is available for download from the TAT website:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/documents/documents/advice/insurances-and-safety-1/994-venue-checklist-day-of-use>

# WALKING GROUPS

**See also 'Physical activity groups' in the INTRODUCTION**

Perth U3A has a number of walking groups of differing standards, ranging from gentle strolls to demanding hill walks of considerable length and difficulty. The former require minimum guidelines. The latter need more detailed and rigorous ones. No one policy can cover such a variety of activity.

## **Responsibility of leaders**

Each group leader has responsibility for ensuring that appropriate safety guidelines are written and made known to all group members. Leaders require discretion on the detailed safety measures for their group, and should draw these up taking note of the practice of other walking groups undertaking comparable activity.

U3A Committee should satisfy itself when approving the setting up of a group or the appointment of a new leader, that the leader has relevant knowledge and experience to undertake their leadership role effectively. Thereafter it is the responsibility of the leader in consultation with group members to agree the ground rules for their group.

## **Responsibility of group members**

All participants on walks should understand that they are ultimately responsible for their own safety. They must determine their fitness to undertake the walk. The leader may overrule them if he/she has serious concerns as to their ability to undertake the walk, but cannot accept responsibility if the participant has not advised them of any risk factors, such as a medical condition.

Except for the most simple and straightforward of walks, participants should be made aware of the following statement on safety which is based, with their agreement, on a document used by Perth Hillwalking Group:

*Each participant voluntarily assumes the risk of taking to the hills and should therefore familiarise him or herself with navigation and walking techniques suitable for the standard of walk chosen and be suitably equipped to ensure his or her own safety in the hills at all times. Members should note that hillwalking can be a dangerous pastime and that the U3A has no control over the condition of the terrain to be walked or weather conditions. Perth U3A cannot be held responsible for any loss, injury or damage caused on a U3A walk or weekend nor on the journey to and from each walking venue, however caused.*

It should be made clear that any participant with particular health problems which it is important to know about in an emergency is responsible for informing the leader of these. On moderate to strenuous walks every participant must carry a note of their emergency contact and of any medical condition.

Leaders should note that the statement above will not exempt them from the normal operation of the law relating to negligence.

The following notes are applicable to groups undertaking moderate to strenuous walks/ climbs.

### **Preparatory work**

The designated leader for the day is expected to have familiarised themselves with the route and probable conditions and to have briefed participants on distance, anticipated walking time, terrain, amount of climbing involved and standard of fitness required.

They should advise participants on what equipment to bring and provide information on all practical details. The main points should be highlighted to participants before the start of the walk.

Any special requirements over and above the normal arrangements are at the discretion of the leader.

### **On the day**

The leader should have a 'plan B' in the event of bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances, and should form an assessment of the ability of all participants to cope with the walk. If there is any doubt as to this the leader should speak with the participant(s) concerned and take steps to minimise the risk of mishap.

During the walk the leader should satisfy themselves at all times that every participant is accounted for and should moderate the pace, or take other measures (such as asking another participant to stay with anyone experiencing difficulty) to ensure safety.

### **Conclusion**

Most groups already have a checklist and requirements, devised specifically for their own purposes. In some instances these will be less detailed than the above notes whilst in others they will be more comprehensive.

Perth U3A committee reserves the right to see a copy of the safety guidance adopted by each group and to require it to be amended if it is considered inadequate relative to the nature of the group's walks.

## **PORTABLE EQUIPMENT AND PAT TESTING**

Perth U3A owns a wide range of portable equipment, both electrical items such as laptops and data projectors and non-electrical items such as screens. Much of this is available to be borrowed for meetings. A list is maintained by committee members of all such assets, and a version of the list shows items which can be borrowed for meetings (see <https://u3asites.org.uk/perth/page/65724>).

Before a piece of equipment can be used by a group, a group member must ensure that they are familiar with how to use it. It is the group leaders' responsibility to book the equipment with the equipment holder and to arrange its collection and return. All users should visually inspect equipment they have borrowed for obvious signs of damage before using it. Any damage or problems encountered with the use of the equipment must be reported on its return.

For electrical equipment, the asset list includes details of PAT inspection and testing. It is the policy of Perth U3A that all portable equipment is PAT tested every 3 years. Certification (test certificate and equipment register) is kept by the committee member responsible for equipment, currently the Groups Coordinator.