

RUTLAND U3A ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

Rutland u3a will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it is as accessible as possible both to existing members and to third agers in their local communities who may wish to join.

Ensuring as far as possible meeting / group venues are suitable for members with disabilities including appropriate physical access, and the provision of facilities in relation to hearing and or sight impairments.

Members Support

Members who cannot manage to attend meetings or participate in any group / activity without support are welcome to bring a carer/companion with them, who for the time they are in attendance will be covered by the liability insurance provided by the Third Age Trust. The only exceptions are professionally employed carers, who would have to be covered by their own individual liability insurance.

If other U3A members or group leaders are willing to help they cannot be allowed to take responsibility for another member's care as this could be deemed to be outside the Third Age Trusts insurance cover if any injury or damage resulted.

Members will be encouraged to use their own assistive technology aids to enable their interest group participation. Rutland U3A does not provide any member assistive technology.

Possible issues to consider when considering the suitability of a meeting Venue

- Served by public transport.
- Adequate car parking facilities including disabled parking bays.
- Level access to the building, with good disabled access, including for wheelchairs/mobility scooters.
- Ground floor accommodation and or lift
- Accessible and usable disabled toilet facilities.
- A sound system and loop.
- Good lighting.
- Appropriate location of seating for disabled members, e.g., at the front for those who have a sight or hearing impairment and at the end of a row for those with mobility impairments.

Generally, however most group meetings are held in members home, where accessibility may be an issue for a minority of members. It is suggested in these cases that group leaders, where possible, check with the group members to try to ensure that the venue is suitable for all. Any changes required can then be discussed with the group and a decision taken on feasibility. If not feasible unless an alternate venue is agreed by all existing members in the group, then unfortunately it will not be possible to provide access.

Joining Groups involved in Physical Activities

Where a group activity is of a physical nature e.g., exercise, walking, birdwatching, then it is suggested that any Member with a physical / mental health issue informs the Group Leader in private before taking part and a joint decision on participation reached. The Group Leader cannot take any responsibility for health issues, the taking of medications etc. which may affect that group activity or place an unacceptable responsibility on or risk to other members.

Social Trips

Members with disabilities should note that, for U3A trips it is important that the individual who wishes to travel makes their own support arrangements. Every effort will be made by the Trip organisers to offer the appropriate transport and bookings to enable members with a permanent impairment to participate.

U3A Committee

If a member or prospective member has a permanent impairment issue which they feel has not been satisfactorily considered then they can make representation to the Committee for the situation to be further considered.

Advice on Printed information

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, e.g. black on white or dark blue on cream. Coloured lettering other than for large text titles will 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 eg (Arial or Verdana). Avoid italics and decorative fonts.
- Avoid paper with a glossy finish.

Advice on supporting people with hearing loss

- Try to minimize extraneous noise.
- Encourage those who are hard of hearing to sit nearest the speaker or group leader.
- Ask a member if they have better hearing in one ear or another and make sure you are standing in the best place.
- Face the person you are talking to as much as possible and keep your hands away from your face when talking.
- 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.
- If you have speakers, ideally, they should be in front of a plain background and not too high.
- 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.
- Ensure that 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, and 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.

2023 Review Date 2025

Reference U3A Trust Document; Accessibility Policy for U3A's.