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Change Log

Version	Summary of changes
Nov 2020	First Draft A. G Olsson. Derived from Central Office templates. Uses 2020 brand logo.
Jan 2021	Section 4 bullet 5 revised. Approved at EC meeting 14 th Jan 2021.

1. **Scope of this Policy**

This policy applies to the running of Shipston on Stour Area U3A ('SOSAU3A'). The policy identifies that SOSAU3A has a legal obligation to provide equal access to all U3A activities and to actively seek to ensure this. The policy is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the SOSAU3A executive committee to ensure that SOSAU3A remains compliant.

2. **Aims of this Policy**

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Equality Act 2010. The Act stipulates that organisations cannot treat someone unfairly on the basis of what it calls 'protected characteristics', which are:

- ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race
- age
- disability
- religion or belief (including the absence of belief)
- marital or civil partnership status
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy
- gender reassignment
- political belief

SOSAU3A will strive to ensure that members do not experience discrimination on the basis of their protected characteristics. This will include ensuring equal access to groups and behaviour between members and by the SOSAU3A Committee Members and group leaders. The Equality Act highlights that organisations need to consider what 'reasonable adjustments' can be made in order to accommodate those who may have particular needs. The SOSAU3A Committee will review the reasonable adjustments needed for all members and individual members with particular needs on an ongoing basis. Where necessary, the Committee will seek guidance and additional support from the U3APlus sub-committee and/or National Office.

3. **Practical Approaches to Inclusion**

SOSAU3A will make sure all new members are aware of our policies and procedures in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion and accessibility as well as the Member Code of Conduct. SOSAU3A will make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure a wide range of people can participate in our activities and meetings. This may include:

- Consideration given to the time of day of meetings and their location.
- Consideration of venues for meetings including:
 - o Accessible to wheelchair users
 - o Access to PA system and a hearing loop
 - o Parking and disabled parking available

- o Disabled toilet facilities available
- Publicity:
 - o Using a variety of methods and platforms to communicate externally and raise the profile of SOSAU3A.
 - o Make communications available to those who don't have access to the internet
 - o Use a range of images that reflect the local community
- Recruiting new members:
 - o Doing outreach sessions and contacting agencies working with community groups who may be harder to reach
 - o Encouraging members who are representative of the groups who are underrepresented within SOSAU3A i.e. men or younger members to assist with the recruitment process
 - o Managing growth so that we ensure that new members can be accommodated
- Monitoring:
 - o SOSAU3A will monitor member numbers i.e. the numbers of members who join, re-join and leave each year in order to identify any trends in membership.
 - o The SOSAU3A Committee will review the diversity of the membership on an ongoing basis and will seek to ensure that SOSAU3A remains attractive and accessible to all.
- Tasks and Roles:
 - o Ensure a range of people get their voices heard by encouraging more members to take on roles such as leading groups.
 - o SOSAU3A will appoint an Accessibility Officer whose role it will be to ensure that both new and existing members can access the members meetings and groups that they would like to join and consider what reasonable adjustments may be needed to ensure this.
 - o The Groups Coordinator will ensure that new Group Leaders are made aware of issues in relation to accessibility and what steps they may need to take in meeting access requirements. Each group will be reviewed on an individual basis as certain groups may require a certain level of fitness or mobility and members need to be made aware of this in advance.
 - o SOSAU3A will offer induction and training around equality, diversity and inclusion to Committee Members and Group Leaders on an ongoing basis.

4. Practical Approaches to Accessibility

Equal accessibility is an important and practical component of this policy and warrants specific consideration.

In ensuring equality of access SOSAU3A will take the following steps:

- An Accessibility Officer will be identified from amongst the membership. This will be a volunteer role/committee member role.
- The Accessibility Officer will have responsibility for liaising with Group Leaders on an ongoing basis to ensure that groups are accessible and that group leaders are aware of what the expectations are

and what adjustments may need to be made e.g. relocating a group held within someone's home to a wheelchair accessible venue.

- The Accessibility Officer will contact new members who indicate that they have a disability or health related issue that may need additional support and/or adjustment and discuss with them what needs they have and how these could be met – as appropriate.
- General meetings will, as far as possible, be held at a well-lit, fully wheelchair accessible venue, spacious enough to cope with wheelchairs and mobility scooters, with wheelchair accessible toilet and hearing aid loop system, and with a sound system in use.
- Organizers of meetings involving visual presentations will adopt practical measures to facilitate the participation of any people with visual impairment who are present
- At the monthly members meetings, the front row of seats will be reserved for members who have impaired hearing or vision.
- Access will be reviewed by the committee on an ongoing basis with a view to considering any additional adjustments that may need to be made e.g. availability of a hearing loop or access to dementia friends training.
- Committee members and Group Leaders will receive an induction and/or training designed to support them in having an awareness of and facilitating access.
- Group Leaders running groups that require a certain level of fitness and/or mobility will be asked to provide this information to members in advance so that members can decide as to whether the group is suitable for them.
- Group Leaders will liaise with the Accessibility Officer where there are concerns about an individual's ability to participate.
- SOSAU3A will try to ensure that there are a range of groups available that will provide access to members so that members do not feel excluded from too many interest/activity groups.
- SOSAU3A will encourage and may require members to bring carers with them to U3A activities, as needed, with no additional cost for the carer. The carer will fall under U3A liability insurance unless they are a professional carer, in which case the individual will be covered by their employer's insurance cover.
- SOSAU3A will maintain a database of venues and the facilities offered by each venue to accommodate different needs.
- SOSAU3A has a duty of care to all members and this may mean that difficult decisions have to be taken in assessing an individual's ability to participate either in SOSAU3A as a whole or within individual activities. These decisions will always be taken through discussion with the individual member and his or her carer in order to ensure that a fair and considered decision is taken. This may include developing a risk assessment with the individual regarding their ability to participate.
- SOSAU3A will seek additional advice and support from U3APlus, the Regional Trustee, National Office, the national website, and external specialist organisations as required.

5. Code of Conduct

SOSAU3A has a member code of conduct. The code of conduct outlines that members should abide by SOSAU3A's policies and procedures as well as treating each other with dignity and respect. This would include not acting in a way that would be deemed discriminatory or offensive.

6. Dealing with discrimination and harassment

Where the SOSAU3A Committee becomes aware of any discriminatory practice or harassment, the committee will seek to address this through consultation with all parties concerned and, where necessary, through invoking formal procedures.

If any member of SOSAU3A feels they have experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour or harassment, this should be reported to the Committee. Any matters of concern will be reviewed by the Committee and a decision will be made, in line with SOSAU3A's constitution and formal procedures, as to what steps will be taken to address the issue.

7. Definitions

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, when or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics. Promoting equality is about behaving in a way that tackles inequalities, aiming to ensure that all members are treated fairly, and do not experience discrimination.

Promoting diversity is about recognising that everyone is different and creating an environment that values members and ensuring that the U3A Movement is as accessible as possible to different groups within the community.

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking practical steps to ensure members feel respected.

Direct Discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably because of their ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race, age, disability, religion or belief (including the absence of belief), marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender reassignment, political belief

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is applied equally to all groups of people but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to 'protected characteristics' that has the purpose or effect of violating a members dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment is also unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has that same purpose or effect.

Victimisation occurs when a member is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances because he or she has made a complaint or an allegation of discrimination, harassment or bullying or given information regarding such a complaint or allegation.

This policy was adopted on: 14/1/2021

Signed: _____ Committee role: Chair

Print name: Caroline Green

Policy review date: 14/1/2022

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Guidelines for members/Officers accepting responsibility for Diversity and Inclusion within their U3As.

First, thank you for accepting responsibility for increasing awareness of diversity and inclusion in your U3A. We have received requests for guidelines related to these responsibilities. Many of the suggestions below have been provided by U3As as examples of their own activities:

- Find out whether your U3A has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. If it has not, there is a model policy on the national U3A website which can be adopted by your U3A. (go to the Support for U3As area, select Advice, then Policy documents)
- Establish what your committee considers to be covered by the term 'Diversity'. Does it include physical conditions (sight, hearing, mobility, etc.), gender issues, ethnicity? Become familiar with the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 (also set out in the U3A model policy document) or its equivalent in Northern Ireland.
- Look at the new Diversity and Inclusion guidelines on the national U3A website (go to the Support for U3As area, then select Diversity and Inclusion). These cover physical conditions and include several helpful links. More recommendations will be added soon for neurologically atypical and gender issues and ethnicity.
- In view of the current increasing use of technology in U3A, remember the less confident or less experienced members of your U3A and create support systems.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Committee has created a workshop which will become available for use by U3As, Networks and other groupings of U3As. Please ask the Diversity and Inclusion Committee about this if you wish us to bring it to you virtually.
- Find your Regional website and get to know your Regional Trustee and make contact with your local Network. Their meetings provide valuable opportunities to meet others doing what you are doing and to share solutions.
- Think about the language used by your U3A. For example, be aware of the current terms used for physical conditions and people of colour, and consider adopting gender-neutral vocabulary.
- Look at the racial and cultural diversity in the area covered by your U3A. Is your U3A representative of its community? Are there groups you could approach as part of your outreach initiatives?
- Look at the range of interest groups offered by your U3A. Might it be possible to introduce other subjects of wider interest? Might it also be possible to include aspects of other cultures in relation to the areas already studied, for example books by BAME writers?
- When considering the range of interest groups, think also about their appeal to the newly, possibly younger, retired.
- Invite representatives from a range of cultures to speak at Monthly Meetings.

If you have other suggestions, or if you want to discuss any of these issues further, please ask to speak to a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Ring National Office on 0208 466 6139 or email Doreen Raine