

Solent

u3a

**GROUP
LEADERS'
HANDBOOK**

2022

Revised 2023

The purpose of this Handbook is to give guidance to potential Group Leaders setting up their Group and to act as an aide memoire for all Solent u3a Group Leaders.

All u3as, and all Groups within a u3a, are autonomous and, in general, are free to organise themselves in whatever way best suits their purpose. However, the majority of u3as are registered as charities and, as such, are bound by the rules and regulations of the Charities Commission, which are legally enforceable. To comply with these, all officers of a charity (which, in our situation, includes Group Leaders) are obliged to carry out certain functions in a prescribed way. In order to comply with the personal and collective liability of Solent u3a officers as described above, the few procedures indicated in bold italics in the FINANCE section of this booklet ***must*** be observed.

SETTING UP A GROUP

Any Solent u3a Member who is interested in setting up a new interest Group should initially contact the Groups Coordinator (GC) who will arrange for a notice to be placed on our website (u3asites.org/solent), advertised via the Programme, added to the Power Point Presentation and on our Notice Board at Talks Meetings. These will give outline details of the Groups' aims/purpose, in about 30 words, and contact details (email address/telephone number(s)) of the member proposing the new Group to whom Members should address their interest in joining, or for seeking further information.

If it is felt necessary, an initial meeting can be arranged where agreement for the range, content and nature of the subject to be studied, or followed, can be developed, together with how it is envisaged these objectives can be achieved. For example

- What study/learning methods does the Group want to employ?
- Suggestions for trips/events.
- Are there any volunteer experts who could be invited to demonstrate skills or give talks?
- Can books, DVD's, on-line materials, etc. be utilised?
- Where & when shall we meet?

see GROUP MEETING LOCATION

Whilst the philosophy of Solent u3a is that Groups shall be self financing, the Executive Committee is, however, prepared to help with reasonable “start-up” costs for a new Group. If you need assistance in this respect, please contact the GC with full details of the proposed expenditure *prior to* any being incurred.

All expenditure on behalf of the Group must be agreed by members of the Group. Where any expenditure on “capital” equipment is required, a detailed case and justification shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration and possible approval.

➤ **ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE**

In addition to this Guide, there are some sources of advice and assistance available.

These include

- Third Age News
- U3A National website u3a.org.uk

GROUP MANAGEMENT

➤ **GROUP’S COORDINATOR (GC)**

The Group’s Coordinator is a member of the Executive Committee who has been nominated to have the responsibility of overseeing the operation of all Groups within Solent u3a to whom any aspect of running the Group may be addressed. They are also available for support and advice when required.

➤ **GROUP LEADER**

As a Group Leader you are not expected to do everything for your Group.

Your key task is to act as a contact point between the Group and Solent u3a Executive Committee via the GC.

Other tasks could include:

- Maintaining members personal contact details
 - Postal address
 - Home Telephone No
 - Mobile Telephone No
 - email address
 - Current Membership No
 - Emergency Contact No

- Maintaining attendance records of Group meetings (see below)
- Contacting members after three unexplained absences from Group meetings to check if they are ill, or to free their place for a new member.
- Explaining fully to Group members the requirements for membership and adequate participation in the Group activities and any financial contributions which will be necessary.
- Informing the GC
 - When vacancies exist so that they can be advertised within Solent u3a
 - When you have a waiting list so that the formation of another, similar Group, can be canvassed by using Solent u3a internal advertising
 - If one of your members dies so that no insensitive contact is made with their family
 - Of any change to your Group's name, format or meeting arrangements.

It should be remembered that membership of any Solent u3a Group is restricted to current members of Solent u3a unless extending membership to members of other local u3as has been approved by the Executive Committee, e.g., associate members.

It should be remembered that how a Group is run, subject to certain conditions to be found below, is at the discretion of the Group Leader and the Members of the Group and that any u3a Group is, where appropriate, a learning cooperative of equals which, as a founder member of the u3a movement said, *“Those who teach shall also learn and those who learn shall also teach”*.

➤ SPECIAL GRANTS

- A special award can be granted, at the discretion of the Executive Committee, towards the start-up costs of a Group.

This Grant will be up to a maximum of £50 in each financial year

All applications for a Grant shall be submitted to the GC for presentation to the Executive Committee for decision at least two weeks prior to a Committee Meeting using the “GROUP GRANT APPLICATION” form obtainable from the GC. A facsimile of the form is shown as Appendix 2.

Examples of the type of expenditure that will be considered, but not necessarily limited to, are room hire for a single specific purpose, copier paper for a specific purpose etc., specialist craft equipment, reference books (eg. a Scrabble dictionary), subscriptions to a specialist magazine or other, subject specific, information.

Examples of the type of expenditure that will not be considered, but not necessarily limited to, are Group meals, Christmas celebrations and donations to any third parties.

All “capital equipment” (i.e., non-consumables) will remain the property of Solent u3a to be held by the Group Leader or a nominated Group member. If the latter, the GC shall be notified of the name and contact details of that member.

When considering any application, the Executive Committee’s decision will be final.

The Executive Committee reserves the right to withdraw Special Grants at any time and without notice.

DOCUMENTATION

Only the minimum of records has to be maintained but these are essential to meet the requirements of the Charity Commission and u3a Insurance parameters. These can be either paper based or electronically.

➤ MEETING ATTENDANCE RECORDS

A Register of members attending each Group meeting shall be maintained. Paper copies of the “Record of Attendance”, are available on request from the GC. A facsimile of this form is shown as Appendix 3

➤ MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

As stated above, only u3a members are eligible to join any Solent u3a Group and Group Leaders should confirm the membership number of all Group members each year.

➤ COMMUNICATIONS

Communication between all members is obviously of importance and the majority find that email is the most efficient method of keeping in touch. Some members may not check their emails regularly so the use of the telephone, land line or mobile, for quick voice or text messaging may be necessary.

Where regular communication is necessary and a member does not have email access, or an email “buddy”, stamped addressed envelopes should be requested from the member so that Group information can be sent to them as and when published.

➤ SECURITY

Membership numbers, together with Group members contact details shall be securely maintained and under no circumstances passed to any third party without the permission of the member concerned. Group Leaders shall:

- Delete information that is no longer required for membership purposes
- Keep personal data secure
- Ensure you use strong passwords
- Avoid sharing passwords with others
- Avoid sharing email address or personal information via email without permission. Use bcc (blind carbon copy) when sending group emails

➤ FINANCE

The philosophy of Solent u3a is that Groups shall be self financing. For many Groups, particularly those who meet at member’s homes, probably the only financial involvement is the covering of the cost of tea/coffee/biscuits for each meeting. Subject to the agreement of the Group members, no record of such income/expenditure is necessary. Where any money is spent on materials essential for the Group to operate, Group Leaders **must** ensure that an account is kept of all money received and paid out on behalf of the Group. Any receipts and payment vouchers **must** be retained. An annual statement **must** be published to inform your Group about its financial affairs.

No more than £100 in cash belonging to a Group may be kept in anyone’s home at any given time. If your Group has an annual turnover greater than £100, you may think it preferable to open a bank account through which the Group’s finances can be managed. Any Solent u3a account opened for a specific Group **must have a minimum of two cheque signatories with two to sign who must not be related.**

A Group with an annual turnover greater than £1000 **must** submit a copy of their accounts to the Executive Treasurer **as soon as possible after the Solent U3A financial year end.**

Groups **must not** make any long-term financial agreement with any third party.

If it is deemed necessary to consider any such arrangement, the Group Leader must discuss the full details with the Executive Treasurer prior to making any commitment.

➤ **GROUP MEETING LOCATION**

Many Groups meet at member's homes in rotation, some at the Group Leader's home and a few at a venue where a charge is made to hire a room. Arrangements for payment for room hire can be made by the Group Leader direct. Irrespective of the method of payment, costs must be recovered from the Group members on a meeting-by-meeting basis, or as agreed by the members.

➤ **GROUP SOCIAL TRIPS**

Where trips are arranged for members on a private basis (i.e., not under the u3a umbrella), the u3a insurance will not apply.

Where trips are arranged by Solent u3a, either at home or abroad, they must follow u3a National Guidelines for Group Travel, and ensure that only Solent u3a members can participate. If this rule is not followed, it will compromise the u3a insurance for the entire Group.

Other precautions for Social Trips may be necessary, depending on the nature of the trip, and organisers should, at the planning stage seek advice, initially from the Secretary.

➤ **GROUP PUBLICITY**

There are a number of channels through which information can be disseminated.

- **OUR WEBSITE,**
u3asites.org.uk/solent at any time Group Leaders, or a nominated Group member, can have access to the Group page on our website to update information. For details of how this is accomplished please contact our webmaster.
- **TALK MEETINGS**
PowerPoint Presentation
Group Leaders, or a nominated Group member, should send any details in respect to Group activities, photo-

graphs, etc by email, preferably as PowerPoint slide(s), to the PowerPoint Editor. Text slides should be limited to approximately **50 words** for maximum impact. This should be at least 5 days prior to a Talk Meeting.

- NOTICE BOARD
At Talk Meetings in Wallington Village Hall.
See either the Executive Secretary or the GC.
- PROGRAMME Quarterly sent to all Solent u3a members
Contact the Programme Editor or the GC.
- FACEBOOK
Solent u3a Members – a private Facebook page

INSURANCE

The “Third Age Trust” has arranged a central insurance policy for all paid up members of affiliated u3as in the UK. The policy insures members against *Public Liability and Product Liability* claims made against them. The policy does not provide cover against *Personal Accident*.

It should be noted that the insurance cover for your entire Group will be compromised if people who are not members of Solent or local u3a join the Group on more than two occasions in any calendar year..

Equipment belonging to Solent u3a is also insured. The Secretary can advise you on the terms of the insurance.

ASSESSING RISK

As stated, u3a insurance does not cover Personal Accident.

During outside activities e.g., walking, the GL, or activity leader, **should have emergency contact details with them**. Members do activities at their own risk and are responsible for their actions. They should inform the leader of the activity of any relevant information concerning their medical condition.

Inside activities e.g., bowling, the GL, or activity leader, **should have emergency contact details with them** and are covered by the venue’s risk assessment, which can be obtained. Members do activities at their own risk and are responsible for their actions. They should inform the leader of the activity of any relevant information concerning their medical condition.

In members’ homes the GL, or activity leader, **should have emergency contact details with them**. Members do activities at their own risk and are

responsible for their actions. They should inform the leader of the activity of any relevant information concerning their medical condition.

ACCIDENT REPORTING

Should an accident or other incident occur involving injury to any individual or damage to property during any Group activity, it is essential that a Solent U3A "Accident/Incident Report Form" is fully completed at the earliest possible time and passed to the Solent U3A Secretary.

Copies of the form are available from the GC. A facsimile of the form is shown as Appendix 1.

There is no requirement for any Group to have a First Aid qualified member, or to hold, or carry, a First Aid kit.

If a member needs medical attention, another Group member should contact the Emergency Services, who will advise on any immediate action thought necessary, and who will manage emergency recovery. It is **essential** for the Leader to have Next of Kin contact details. Especially when on an outing or walking.

