

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR U3A

The U3A has a Duty of Care for our activities, and part of this is to assess for hazards. Risk Assessment means to many, a checklist of tick-boxes, which is a pointless exercise. The real purpose is to think of possible hazards and thereby prevent any adverse consequences. As an association, we are older than the average person and may have disabilities and vulnerabilities.

So, it's a matter of thinking about Risk.

Who is thinking about and taking the Risk? Firstly, the Group/Course Organiser, who must think of how to tackle risk where we have it, among members and venues of events; then the Group/Course Leader, who must think of Risk in their own Group/Course members.

Who is at Risk? U3A members in their events and possibly bystanders who are not members; and not to forget, the Leaders and Organiser who will feel responsible for any adverse consequences.

Risks to whom or of what?

Think of your Group/Course members, with regard to

- Falls – footwear, trip hazards
- Mobility, mobility-aids and walking-aids; arthritis
- Heart and Lungs – breathlessness on effort, chest pain, palpitations
- Weakness, frailty and balance – for whatever reason
- Medication – for side-effects
- Infections – suddenly occurring to the member
- Episodes – 'funny turns' – (fits, faints, vertigo)
- Stroke recovery and Parkinson's disorder
- Public infections – epidemics and pandemics, and the prevailing NHS advice

Where is the Risk?

- Our own homes – for Groups and Courses held there: these are to be assessed by the Leader with the homeowner
 - Venues- new or used before, for Groups or Courses: these are assessed by the Organiser and the Leaders
 - Outside activities – assessed by both Organiser and Leaders.
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- Home - think of the possible hazards
 - Entrances
 - Steps and stairs
 - uneven surfaces
 - poor visibility

- toilet access
 - protrusions, blind corners
 - hazards of hot liquids
 - unfamiliarity with the layout
 - ventilation
- Outside situations. Clearly it is impossible to think of every situation, but consider:
 - routes you are likely to take
 - roads for visibility and traffic, crossing points, diversions
 - off-road hazards – cliffs, deep water, obstructions, uneven ground, falling objects
 - group cohesion outdoors – consider lookouts fore and aft of the group when on the move.
 - Weather extremes – Met. Office warnings
 - Consider the less able members (of course you would)
 - Someone should be carrying a mobile phone.

Action:

Too be taken by a Group/Course Leader is to identify any potential Risks and to point out any to the Group or Course participants and to consider preventative measures to reduce the Risk(s).

1. Make sure you have your register of members to check who is present
2. Advise every participant that an emergency contact is desirable.
3. On starting a Group or Course, ask your participants if they have any disabilities or medical conditions that they wish to divulge to you in confidence
4. What risks, if any, have you identified?
5. Report these risks to the group
6. What have you done to reduce any risk you have detected?
7. Keep a short note of the risk and what you have done
8. Enjoy the activity