

Accessibility *Copied from u3a Website*

Please find below some guidance on making u3a events/groups accessible where possible. This is general information and when a member engages with a group or event, they are the expert on their own needs and preferences in support.

Sight loss

- Although some people are totally blind, or retain only light perception, a much greater number have varying degrees of useful residual vision.
- Some people have lost central vision while retaining peripheral vision, while for others it is the opposite; others may have “blotchy” or blurred vision.
- Some people will have good distance vision but poor close vision, e.g. for reading, while for others it will be the reverse.

Making open meetings accessible

- Members with poor sight may prefer to sit nearer the front (see also notes on people with hearing impairment)
- Members with poor sight may well appreciate help in finding a seat, or locating someone they wish to sit next to, and may welcome assistance with getting a cup of tea or signing up for other activities.
- Speakers using ‘PowerPoint’ or similar should be encouraged to talk through their slides.
- Members may not be able to read your name badge or instantly recognise your voice, so introduce yourself by “Hello, Fred here” or something similar.
- When guiding someone with sight loss, remember that they take your arm and follow you half a pace behind. Do not propel them forward into the unknown.
- Try to reduce glare by positioning chairs with their backs to windows.
- Produce all written information in accordance with clear print guidelines and make it available by email or text.

Making interest groups accessible

The notes on meetings also apply to group activities and visits.

In addition:

- On a walk or ramble, different members of the group can assist by offering a guiding elbow, if required, and information on approaching features such as steps or overhanging branches.
- Cinema or theatre groups should consider timing their visits to coincide with audio described shows.
- Book groups should check whether the titles they select are available in a form which the member can read, preferably on loan or at a reasonable price.
- Playing cards are available with tactile or with enlarged visual markings.
- Many board games are available in an adjusted form.
- For physical activities such as yoga or Pilates, the tutor should be encouraged to verbalise rather than just demonstrate.

Hearing loss

- Moderate hearing loss is very common especially in the over 60s.
- It can destroy a sufferer's natural confidence and lead to isolation and depression.
- It can be compensated by hearing aids and other technical devices but most of all by sympathetic and knowledgeable support from peers.
- u3a activities are an ideal therapy for the social isolation which hearing loss can bring.

Making open meetings accessible

- Provide a well installed induction loop and PA system.
- Check the equipment before the meeting.
- Use a room which is the right size for the numbers (not too big).
- Ensure that speakers understand the needs of members with hearing loss.
- Display important information on a screen or provide printed handouts.

Making interest groups accessible

- The vital element is understanding and support from group leaders and members.
- Make sure hard of hearing members can explain their needs confident of the support of the group.
- Indoor discussion groups should use a room appropriate to the numbers and with good lighting.
- Technical aids such as induction loops and personal listeners can be useful but they should be tested first in a realistic situation before buying.
- u3as should share their experiences and successes in making their activity more accessible.

Mobility problems

- ~~Diminished~~ Movement and mobility affected/reduced.
- Use of wheelchair, crutches, ~~Zimmer~~ Walking frame.
- ~~Rheumatoid arthritis or similar.~~ Medical conditions or a disability affecting mobility.
- Transport to venues.
- Inability to leave home.

Making open meetings accessible

- Review all venues re steps, ramps, handrails, toilets for the disabled, lifts, easy opening of doors.
- Ask members what help they require.
- Provide suitable space for wheelchairs at meetings and offer practical assistance.
- Encourage carers to accompany a member.
- Look at accessibility implications for parking at venues.
- Make it clear what to do in an emergency.
- Suggest car sharing.

Making interest groups accessible

- Be flexible about meeting in members' homes, are they accessible?
- [Would the person like to](#) host the group?
- Arrange meetings in retirement and/or care homes.