# Accessibility

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 saying "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.
- u3a's should share their experiences and successes in making their activity more accessible.

**Mobility problems**

- Movement and mobility affected/reduced.
- Use of wheelchair, crutches, ~~w~~alking frame.
- 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.

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