

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Stubbington u3a aims to be as inclusive as possible and to provide equal rights of access to our u3a activities as far as is reasonably practicable.

Our policy has been developed in line with guidance from the Third Age Trust and considers the Equalities Act 2010 and the need to avoid discriminating directly or indirectly against members with disabilities and/or health related needs.

Members with a disability are encouraged to make contact with the Disability Liaison Officer, who will try to ensure that everything reasonable is done to make life easier for them whilst they are participating in u3a activities. Members requiring assistance should also speak to the relevant Group Leader. Group Co-ordinators and Leaders who are aware of any disability issues should refer the matter to the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO).

Because there is such a wide range of disabilities (some obvious, some hidden), members should be expected to talk to the DLO to express their individual needs.

Members who are unable to participate in their chosen u3a activities without help may be able to bring a companion/carer with them, who, for the time that they are in attendance, will be covered by the liability insurance provided by The Third Age Trust. The only exception to this is a professionally employed carer who would require their own individual liability policy. U3a members are not expected, nor insured to provide assistance or care to another member.

Disabled members should note that, for **u3a trips and holidays**, we are happy to include them wherever possible. However, it is important that any disabled member who wishes to travel makes their own arrangements for care sufficient for their needs. The organiser or any U3A member is not responsible for anyone who cannot manage without help.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR MEMBERS WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Whilst there is no obligation for Stubbington u3a to make all groups accessible to all members; we will make every effort to make any group as accessible as reasonably possible both for our existing members and potential members. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that members with disabilities can attend the interest groups of their choice and will support them and make their attendance as easy and stress-free as possible.

Venue for General Meetings

Our venue complies with the following criteria:

- Served by public transport.
- Car parking facilities onsite including disabled parking bays are available.
- Level access to the building, with good disabled access.
- Ground floor accommodation.
- Accessible and usable disabled toilet facilities.
- A sound system and loop.
- Good lighting.
- Appropriate location of seating for disabled members.

Venues for Interest/Activity Groups

Many of our meetings are held in Community centres, church halls and other public venues which are fully accessible. Some have hearing loops. It is recommended that anyone with a hearing problem sits as close to the speaker as possible.

However, a number of groups are held in private houses, where accessibility may be a problem. We advise that before joining a group you make contact with the DLO or the Group Leader to discuss your needs and assess if the venue is suitable.

If a disabled member cannot attend a group of their choice, they might be assisted and encouraged to set up a group at a location suited to their needs.

As noted above, disabled members may bring a carer with them to any group they attend if that is necessary and there is capacity.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS WITH VISION LOSS

U3a members with vision loss will be supported as far as reasonably possible so that they can continue to enjoy and participate in u3a activities. Group Leaders, if necessary with the help of the DLO, should be able to explain whether a particular group is suitable for people with different levels of vision loss.

We will

- Provide seating close to the front to allow members with some vision loss to be as close to visual displays as possible, and to use their hearing more easily to follow what is going on.
- Try to reduce glare from windows and lights if possible.
- Have a good contrast between text and background, e.g. White on blue or black on yellow. Coloured lettering other than for large text titles should be avoided.
- Ideally have a minimum type size of 14 point (or 18 point if produced specifically for visually impaired people), with a wide line spacing (1.5 or double spacing).
- Use a regular (upright) font (e.g. Arial, Verdana or Sans Serif). Avoid italics and decorative fonts.
- Avoid paper with a glossy finish.

Adaptive technology e.g. speech synthesis and magnification cannot be supplied by Stubbington u3a.

Assistive technology

Members will be encouraged to use their own assistive technology aids to enable their interest group participation. Stubbington u3a does not provide any member with assistive technology.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS WITH HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss can vary from mild to severe and may also prevent members from taking part in events and groups because they want to avoid feeling cut off from people in social situations. In all cases, it is important to approach the matter sensitively and appreciate that it can be difficult for members to admit, either to themselves or to others, that they are losing their hearing.

We will:

Ensure that Group Leaders and other relevant members are made aware of the best ways to communicate with a person who has hearing loss (see below).

Group Leaders should

- Inform speakers that some members of the group are hard of hearing, so they can adapt their speed and position.
- Try to minimize extraneous noise.
- Encourage those who are hard of hearing to sit nearest the speaker or group leader.
- Make sure that members take turns in speaking and encourage use of hand signals to attract attention.
- Have a pen and paper ready to write something down if necessary.

Best practice for communicating with someone with a hearing loss:

- Gain the members attention, say the member's name before beginning a conversation. This gives the listener opportunity to focus attention so the first few words are not lost.
- Ensure that you are speaking clearly and distinctly but without shouting or exaggerating mouth movements.
- Speak at normal speed or just slightly slower, pausing between sentences and making sure you have been understood before moving on.
- Use plain language and don't waffle.
- Avoid using sentences that are unnecessarily long and complex, and if the member has not understood what has been said, try and find a different way of saying it.
- Face the person you are talking to as much as possible and keep your hands away from your face when talking.
- Horseshoe or boardroom-style layouts can increase visibility.
- If you have speakers, ideally they should be in front of a plain background and not too high.
- If using lapel microphones or hand-held microphones ensure they do not obscure the speakers' face.

Stubbington u3a 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 the u3a as a whole or within individual activities.

These decisions will always be taken through discussion with the individual member and their carer to ensure that a fair and considered decision is taken.

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