

CODE OF PRACTICE ACCESSIBILITY FOR MEMBERS WHO HAVE A DISABILITY

Waterlooville U3A take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure accessibility for existing and potential members at both General Meetings and those of Interest Groups. Disabilities come in many and varied forms – although this document covers the most common disabilities, the principles and suggestions can be applied more widely.

Waterlooville u3a is also aware that not all disabilities are visible and will try to accommodate the needs of people with hidden disabilities provided that these needs are made known to members of the Committee and/or Group Coordinators (see also individual sections below)

No assumptions will be made about a member's capability and all members will be treated as individual, responsible adults regardless of any impairments or disabilities they may have

Assistance to members may be offered wherever requested, provided that no risk is posed to the helper or other members of Waterlooville u3a

Where assistance is offered, it will only be given if the offer is accepted. Members requesting assistance should state exactly what assistance is needed and if practicable, it will be given in the way requested

Note :

Personal care cannot, and must not, be provided by any member of the Committee or Group Coordinators to any member of Waterlooville u3a.

Members of the Committee of Waterlooville u3a and Group Coordinators will at all times observe correct use of language relating to disability and will avoid using pejorative terms

Contact information provided for relevant support organisations is as recommended by u3a Third Age Trust and correct as at November, 2021.

What is covered in this document :

INSURANCE

VENUES – GENERAL MEETINGS

VENUES – INTEREST GROUPS

COMMUNICATION

INVISIBLE IMPAIRMENTS

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INSURANCE

The liability insurance cover arranged by the Third Age Trust covers all current members of any U3A and their personal carers.

VENUES – GENERAL MEETINGS

At General Meetings, the Meetings Manager or a designated and identifiable person will speak to members with disabilities to ensure that they have appropriate seating e.g. end of row for those with mobility problems. - nearer to the front for those with eyesight problems – the hearing loop is in place.

Waterlooville U3A will, as far as is possible, ensure that the venue :

- is served by public transport
- can offer car-parking facilities for members who have a disability
- has a ramped entrance
- uses ground-floor accommodation
- has an 'accessible toilet'
- possesses facilities suitable for all types of impairment
- has a hearing loop within the sound system
- has clear signage to enable members to easily find what they want
- is sufficiently spacious to cope with wheelchairs
- has good lighting
- has easy opening doors
- has access to the heating controls
- has-wheelchair storage space

General considerations :

- Ensure good circulation of air by opening the windows/external doors
- Make available supplies of drinking water for use by anyone feeling unwell
- Committee members to be aware of members who appear isolated, are seated alone, have little interaction with others, may not take refreshments, may have difficulty in accessing the interest tables or may avoid crowded areas
- In the event of an emergency evacuation of the hall, committee members will assist members with disabilities in proceeding to the assembly point.

VENUES – INTEREST GROUPS

Should a member with a disability or potential member of Waterlooville U3A wish to join an Interest Group which meets in a member's home which is not accessible to the member with a disability, the Group concerned will discuss the matter with the aim of making attendance possible where reasonable and practical to do so.

The following guidelines are offered :

- Coordinators to be aware of the limitations of the group's members and to 'make allowances' e.g. slow the pace, allocate more time, seat the member in the most accessible area, meet at a different location, perhaps the home of the member with a disability

- When on outings, coordinator to check that the member with a disability can keep up, see, hear - not be left behind.
- Should it be considered that the member requires extra support to attend, the coordinator could encourage the attendance of a family member or carer and/or put the member in contact with the Wellbeing Team
- For outside visits the coordinator could enquire about the availability of mobility scooters/wheelchairs and pass on the information to enable members to make own arrangements.
- Provide a map/directions for new members if destination unknown
- Where access remains an issue and cannot easily be resolved, the group coordinator should discuss the matter with the Wellbeing Team

COMMUNICATION

The Wellbeing Team are responsible for maintaining contact with members with disabilities and for ensuring that all measures that can reasonably be taken to assist members to participate in U3A activities are implemented. The Wellbeing Team report any issues to the Executive Committee for information and/or discussion or action.

The Wellbeing Team is the central point of contact for Group Coordinators and members, when seeking advice.

Group Coordinators should advise the Wellbeing Team if they become aware of any member who has developed a disability and requests advice or support.

Wellbeing Team contact : **wellbeing@waterloovilleu3a.org.uk**

INVISIBLE IMPAIRMENT

Some impairments and conditions are not immediately obvious. These are wide-ranging and include :

- autism
- chronic pain
- mental health conditions
- learning difficulties
- hearing impairments
- asthma
- diabetes

People with disabilities who have invisible impairments and conditions often experience negative attitudes, social isolation and a lack of understanding. Just because someone doesn't "look disabled", doesn't mean they don't experience day-to-day difficulties.

General support for people with disabilities :

- Scope - **<https://www.scope.org.uk/>** or **0808 800 3333**
(UK charity providing information and support to people affected by a variety of disabilities)

MOBILITY

Mobility problems may be due to a variety of causes and may include :

- Diminished movement.
- Use of wheelchair, crutches, walking aid.
- Inability to reach venues.
- Inability to leave home.

In general :

- 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.
- Make it clear what to do in an emergency.

HEARING LOSS

Moderate hearing loss is very common, especially in the over 60s. It can destroy natural confidence and lead to isolation and depression – sympathetic and knowledgeable support from friends and family can play a large part in minimising these feelings.

- A vital element is understanding and support from Group Coordinators and other group members.
- Being able to see the lip patterns of the speaker and ensuring one person speaks at a time can help people with hearing loss to follow what is being said.
- Make sure hearing-impaired members can explain their needs, confident of the support of the group.
- Indoor discussion groups should use a room appropriate to the numbers (not too big) and with good lighting.
- Where possible, display important information on a screen or provide printed handouts.
- Technical aids such as portable induction loops and personal listeners can be useful, but they should be tested first in a realistic situation before purchase.

Support organisations for people affected by hearing loss or impairment :

- RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf people) - <https://rnid.org.uk/> or **0808 109 4320**
(UK charity supporting deaf people and those with hearing loss and tinnitus)
- Hearing Link - <https://www.hearinglink.org/> or **07526 123255**
(UK charity providing support, information and advice for people with hearing loss, their family and friends)
- Ideas for Ears - <https://www.ideasforears.org.uk/>
(A social enterprise focusing on access and inclusion of people with hearing loss)

SIGHT LOSS

- Although some people are totally blind (severely sight impaired), 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.

General support can be given by being aware of these guiding tips :

- Members with poor sight may prefer to sit nearer the front
- Members with poor sight may appreciate help in finding a seat, or locating someone they wish to sit next to, and may welcome assistance with getting refreshments or signing up for activities.
- Speakers using PowerPoint or similar should be encouraged to talk through their slides.
- Members may not be able to read a name badge or instantly recognise your voice, so introduce yourself by giving your name.
- 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.
- On a walk or ramble, group members 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 that the member can read.
- 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.

Support organisations for blind and partially sighted people :

- RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind people) - <https://www.rnib.org.uk/> or **0303 123 9999**
- Sightline Directory - <https://www.sightlinedirectory.org.uk/>
(An online directory for services aimed at helping blind or partially sighted people)
- Guide Dogs - <https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/> or **0800 781 1444**
- British Blind Sports - <https://britishblindsport.org.uk/> or **01926 424247**
(UK charity that enables blind and partially sighted people to access and enjoy sport and recreational activities)

DEMENTIA

Dementia describes different brain disorders that trigger a loss of brain function. These conditions are all usually progressive, and Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. Social isolation can exacerbate dementia symptoms – remaining involved in everyday life and attending u3a activities/meetings with the support of group members can be of enormous help to those with dementia.

Symptoms can include :

- Memory loss.
- Difficulty with communication and reasoning skills.
- Changes in emotional behaviour (becoming sad, angry).
- Disorientation (confusion about time and place, even in familiar surroundings).
- Confused perception of physical environment (e.g. a doormat may be perceived as a puddle or a hole)

Support can be provided in many ways, including :

- Be aware that dementia does not necessarily equate with loss of intellect, and everybody is affected differently
- Be understanding - being unable to communicate something important is frustrating - especially so when this is due to memory loss or reasoning processes.
- Be patient.
- Be a friend - treat them as you always have done, show that you are pleased to see them or perhaps share a joke.
- Speak clearly and in short, simple sentences.
- Listen carefully to what the person is saying.
- Use people's names more than usual so the member knows who's who.
- Explain the format of the group and what is going to happen in the session
- Encourage all group members to be welcoming.
- Sometimes changes in someone's behaviour may cause an issue, if this happens try to lead the member to a quiet space and sort it out in a positive manner with little fuss.
- Offer reassurance and understanding – put someone experiencing difficulties at ease.
- Be aware of the surroundings – noisy or busy environments can make people with dementia uneasy or add to their confusion.

Support organisations for people affected by dementia :

- Alzheimer's Society - <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/> or **0333 150 3456**
(UK charity providing information and support to people affected by dementia)
- Dementia Friends - www.dementiafriends.org.uk/ or **0300 222 5855**
(An Alzheimer's Society initiative to change people's perceptions of dementia)

Document history	
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