

Cheltenham u3a Access, Equality and Inclusion Policy

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1 Statement

Cheltenham u3a is a learning co-operative and membership charity which enables members in their third age to share educational, creative and leisure activities and is available to all those no longer in full time employment. Members of the u3a draw upon their knowledge, skills and experience to teach and learn from each other.

The Cheltenham u3a committee is committed to promoting positive attitudes towards accessibility, equality, valuing diversity and is as inclusive and welcoming as possible. Hence there is a specific "Access, Equality and Inclusivity" ("A, E & I") committee role to be a Point of Contact and provide the necessary support.

2 Aims of this policy

This policy has been drawn up to take into account the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Act stipulates that organisations cannot treat someone unfairly on the basis of what it calls 'protected characteristics', which are:

- ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race
- age
- disability
- religion or belief (including the absence of belief)
- marital or civil partnership status
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy
- gender reassignment
- political belief

Cheltenham u3a will strive to ensure that members do not experience any form of discrimination on the basis of their protected characteristics. This will include ensuring equal access to groups and behaviour between members and by committee members and group leaders. The Equality Act highlights that organisations need to consider what '**reasonable adjustments**' can be made in order to accommodate those who may have disabilities and/or health needs. The Committee will review the reasonable adjustments needed for all members and individual members with particular needs on an ongoing

basis. Where necessary, the Committee will seek guidance and additional support from the Local Authorities.

As stated this policy takes into account the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and the need for Cheltenham u3a to avoid discriminating directly or indirectly against members with disabilities and/or health related needs. (Further guidance is provided in the "Safeguarding" policy document).

The policy will act as a reference point for committee members, group leaders and individual members in terms of the steps that the u3a will take. The policy will also identify the parameters of the adjustments that can be made. Cheltenham u3a is a membership charity and not a service provider, therefore whilst reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that individuals can participate and can attend with carers to support their needs, there will be certain needs that the u3a will not be able to accommodate due to the level of care that an individual may need.

3 Practical approaches to inclusion and accessibility

The committee will make sure all new members are aware of our policies and procedures in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion and accessibility as well as the Member Code of Conduct.

3.1 Inclusion

The committee will make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure a wide range of people can participate in our activities and meetings. Appendix I contains details of the approaches that should be considered.

3.2 Accessibility

In ensuring equality of access the committee will take the appropriate steps as identified in Appendix II. The committee may also seek additional advice and support from the Regional Trustee and National Office, the national website and external specialist organisations, as required.

4 Code of Conduct

Cheltenham u3a has a member code of conduct. The code of conduct outlines that members should abide by the u3as policies and procedures as well as treating each other with dignity and respect. This would include not acting in a way that would be deemed discriminatory or offensive.

5 Dealing with discrimination and harassment

Where the Committee become aware of any discriminatory practice or harassment, the committee will seek to address this through consultation with all parties concerned and, where necessary, through invoking formal procedures.

If any member of the Cheltenham u3a feels they have experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour or harassment, this should be reported to the Committee. Any matters of concern will be reviewed by the Committee and a decision will be made, in line with the constitution and formal procedures (such as the Safeguarding Policy), as to what steps will be taken to address the issue.

This policy was adopted on: 7th September 2021

Review date:

APPENDIX I – Practical Approaches to Inclusivity

The committee will make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure a wide range of people can participate in our activities and meetings. This may include:

- Consideration given to the time of day of meetings and their location.
- Consideration of venues for meetings including:
 - Accessible to wheelchair users.
 - Access to PA system and a hearing loop.
 - Parking and disabled parking available.
 - Disabled toilet facilities available.
- Publicity:
 - Using a variety of methods and platforms to communicate externally and raise the profile of the u3a.
 - Make communications available to those who don't have access to the internet.
 - Use a range of images that reflect the local community.
- Recruiting new members:
 - Doing outreach sessions and contacting agencies working with community groups which may be harder to reach.
 - Encouraging members who are representative of the groups which are underrepresented within the u3a.
 - Managing growth so that we ensure that new members can be accommodated.
- Monitoring:
 - The committee will monitor member numbers, i.e., the numbers of members who join, re-join and leave each year, in order to identify any trends in membership.
 - The committee will review the diversity of the membership on an ongoing basis and will seek to ensure that the u3a remains attractive and accessible to all.
- Tasks and Roles:
 - Ensure a range of people get their voices heard by encouraging more members to take on roles such as leading groups.
 - The Groups Coordinator will ensure that new group leaders are made aware of issues in relation to accessibility and what steps they may need to take in meeting access requirements. Each group will be reviewed on an individual basis as groups may require a certain level of fitness or mobility and members need to be made aware of this in advance.

APPENDIX II – Practical Approaches to Accessibility

In ensuring equality of access the committee will take the following steps:

- The A, E & I committee representative will have responsibility for liaising with group leaders on an ongoing basis to ensure that groups are accessible and that group leaders are aware of what the expectations are and what adjustments may need to be made, e.g., relocating a group held within someone's home to a wheelchair accessible venue.
- The A, E & I committee representative will contact new members who indicate that they have a disability or health related issue that may need additional support and/or adjustment and discuss with them what needs they have and how these could be met – as appropriate.
- General meetings will, as far as possible, be held at a well-lit, fully wheelchair accessible venue, spacious enough to cope with wheelchairs and mobility scooters, with wheelchair accessible toilet and hearing aid loop system, and with a sound system in use.
- Speakers giving visual presentations will be asked to give a good description of the presentation if there is a possibility that people with visual impairment are present.
- Access will be reviewed by the committee on an ongoing basis with a view to considering any additional adjustments that may need to be made, e.g., availability of a hearing loop or access to dementia friends training.
- Group leaders running groups that require a certain level of fitness and/or mobility will be asked to provide this information to members in advance so that members can decide as to whether the group is suitable for them.
- Group leaders will liaise with the A, E & I committee representative where there are concerns about an individual's ability to participate.
- Cheltenham u3a will try to ensure that there are a range of groups available that will provide access to all members so that members that require additional support do not feel excluded from too many interest/activity groups.
- Cheltenham u3a will encourage and may require members to bring carers with them to u3a activities, as needed, with no additional cost for the carer. The carer will fall under u3a liability insurance unless they are a professional carer, in which case the individual will be covered by their employer's insurance cover.
- Cheltenham u3a will maintain a database of venues and the facilities offered by each venue to accommodate different needs.
- Cheltenham 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 his or her carer in order to ensure that a fair and considered decision is taken. This may include developing a risk assessment with the individual regarding their ability to participate.

APPENDIX III - Definitions

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, when or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics. Promoting equality is about behaving in a way that tackles inequalities, aiming to ensure that all members are treated fairly and do not experience discrimination.

Promoting diversity is about recognising that everyone is different and creating an environment that values members and ensuring that the u3a is as accessible as possible to different groups within the community.

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking practical steps to ensure members feel respected.

Direct Discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably because of their ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race, age, disability, religion or belief (including the absence of belief), marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender reassignment, political belief.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is applied equally to all groups of people but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group. This also includes associative discrimination where the discrimination is a result of association with another person who possess a protected characteristic or is perceived as having a protected characteristic.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to 'protected characteristics' that has the purpose or effect of violating a members dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment is also unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has that same purpose or effect.

Victimisation occurs when a member is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances because he or she has made a complaint or an allegation of discrimination, harassment or bullying or given information regarding such a complaint or allegation.