

Cheltenham u3a Disability and Impairment Guidance

The following guidance aims to support our members with disability or impairment so that they can continue to enjoy and participate in our activities. Disability or impairment can be an isolating experience but there are ways in which we can support our members to continue to be part of the our community and have access to the the activities that we offer.

Most members will be informed about what their condition means for them and are able to suggest the support that they need but below are some general tips on how to adapt our activities to make them as accessible as possible and some additional sources of information.

General advice

Ensure group leaders are provided with advice (i.e this guidance) about how to support members with disabilities and impairments. Consider engaging a group member to explain (in person or over the telephone) which interest groups are available and to provide information on whether they are suitable for people with different levels of disability or impairment.

Ask members what their needs are and ensure they feel comfortable explaining their individual needs to the Group Leaders.

It is important to share our experiences and successes in making our activities more inclusive with other U3As at network meetings.

Members with Hearing impairment

Hearing impairment affects over 11 million people across the United Kingdom

At monthly meetings:

- Provide an induction loop and Public Address (PA) System – check that they work.
- Use meeting rooms which are suitable for the size of the audience (not too big).
- Brief presenters so that they understand the needs of members with hearing loss.
- Provide information visually on a screen or on printed handouts.

In interest groups:

- Use a room suitable to the size of the group with good lighting.
- Brief group leaders so that they understand members' needs.

Useful Contacts:

Action on hearing loss, UK charity supporting deaf people and those with hearing loss and tinnitus, 08081094320.

Ideas for ears, info@ideasforears.org.uk, 07739581059.

Hearing link, helpdesk@hearinglink.org 07526 123255.

Members with Vision impairment

Over two million people in the United Kingdom live with vision impairment.

Members can experience a range of degrees of vision loss: having low vision, being partially sighted, being visually impaired or registered blind.

At monthly meetings:

- Reserve seating at the front for those with sight loss.
- Brief presenters so that they understand the needs of members with sight loss.

- Ask presenters using power point presentations or other visual material to explain the content of the material.
- Reduce glare from external light by positioning chairs with their backs to windows.
- Provide written material using clear print guidelines and make it available by email or text.

In interest groups:

- On a walk or ramble, members of the group can offer a guiding elbow, if required, and provide a commentary on approaching features such as steps or overhanging branches.
- Ask members to describe what they are doing when demonstrating an activity.
- Provide written material using clear print guidelines and make it available by email or text.

Useful contacts:

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) www.rnib.org.uk

Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Action for Blind People

www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

The RNIB produces factsheets on how people with vision loss can continue to enjoy leisure activities, such as visiting galleries, going on trips and watching films and television, which could be applied to U3A group activities (www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living/home-and-leisure).

There is additional guidance for members who are visually impaired at the end of this note.

Members with Mobility problems

Over 5.7million people live with some mobility needs in the United Kingdom.

Members who cannot manage to participate in their chosen U3A activities without help, should be given the opportunity 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 TAT. The only exception to this is a professionally employed carer who would have to be covered by an individual liability policy.

At monthly meetings: (Also refer to the U3APlus venue accessibility checklist).

- Visit the venue to ensure that there are: ramps, handrails, toilets for the disabled, lifts, easy opening doors, not too many steps/stairs.
- Provide space for wheelchair users.
- Invite carers to accompany members as needed.
- Provide priority parking.
- Check what emergency evacuation procedures are in place.
- Introduce a car sharing scheme.

In interest groups:

- Be flexible about meeting in members' homes.
- Arrange meetings in the home of the person with accessibility requirements or find space within sheltered accommodation.

Members with Dementia

There are about 800,000 people with dementia in the United Kingdom.

It can impact on:

- Memory.
- Communication.
- Orientation even in familiar surroundings.
- Ability to carry out everyday tasks.
- Sight and vision.

At meetings and interest groups:

- Be supportive, reassuring and understanding.
- Communicate clearly using simple short sentences.
- Listen carefully to what the person with dementia is saying.
- Reduce noise and avoid busy environments which can make people with dementia feel uneasy or add to their confusion.
- Be prepared to offer practical support and assistance to someone if they are finding certain activities difficult.

Useful Contacts:

Alzheimers Society, 0333 150 3456.

Visual impairment Additional guidance

Providing Accessible Information

When producing text documents, remember:

- Light letters on a dark background are easier to read than dark on light.
- Avoid coloured lettering other than for large text titles. Dark blue and greens are the most effective.
- Ideal font size 18, minimum 16.
- Use either a standard Roman or Sans Serif font; Arial works well. Avoid decorative fonts, use bold type, avoid italics.
- Spacing between text should be wide; text with close letter spacing presents problems. A mono-spaced font such as Courier, which allocates an equal amount of space for each letter, is very readable.
- Avoid paper with a glossy finish.
- Consider engaging a volunteer to explain (in person or over the telephone) which interest groups are available and to provide information on whether they are suitable for people with different levels of vision loss.

Equipment to Consider

There is a range of assistive technology products available, such as:

- Magnifiers: these can be hand-held or digital.
- Computer software: can be used to convert text to speech.
- Computer hardware: helps to produce documents in easy to read formats by adjusting zoom, glare, contrast and style.
- Audio-description: cinemas, museums and galleries often provide headsets with an additional narration track.
- Braille technology: to produce documents in braille.