



Policy and guidance on accessibility

u3a in Ludlow will take all reasonable steps to ensure that existing and potential members with impaired mobility, hearing or vision can participate as fully as possible in both general meetings and study groups.

Policy statement

The practical guidelines below are intended to facilitate this, and have been produced by taking account of advice notes from the Third Age Trust. The guidelines will be amended as necessary in the light of further experience.

As the choice of venue and the facilities offered by those venues will often be critical for accessibility, a database of venues indicating relevant features will be maintained for reference by study group coordinators and members.

The Committee will nominate one member to have particular responsibility for accessibility. This Committee member will be available to any member with accessibility problems or concerns in relation to mobility, hearing or vision, to discuss how **u3a in Ludlow** can best help him/her participate in and benefit from u3a activities.

Members who cannot manage to participate in their chosen u3a activities without help may 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 have to be covered by an individual liability policy.)

Guidelines

General meetings

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.

The person in charge of the meeting should remind those attending that the hearing aid loop system is working, explain the location of accessible toilets and identify emergency evacuation routes.

Speakers giving visual presentations should be asked to give a good description of the presentation if there is a possibility that people with visual impairment are present. At the monthly meetings the front row of seats will be reserved for members who have impaired hearing or vision.

Study group meetings

Study groups should take all reasonable steps to make their activities accessible and available to members and potential members with impairment of mobility, hearing or sight. Clearly there will be some activities of a physical nature, such as sports or walking, where participation has to be restricted for some if not all sessions. This should be carefully explained by coordinators to members or potential members and any difficulties should be reported to the committee member responsible for accessibility.

Study group coordinators should follow the specific guidelines below.

1. All study groups should endeavour to use premises that are accessible to group members or aspirant members with impaired mobility. For example, a group may be currently using a venue with entrance steps, or an upstairs room. If a current or aspirant member cannot climb steps or stairs, or uses a wheelchair, the group should make every effort to find an alternative venue which has access without steps or stairs, or full wheelchair access, as appropriate for the particular member or aspirant member. If this is considered not to be possible, the matter should be reported to the committee member responsible for accessibility.
2. Groups meeting in members' homes can often be inaccessible to those with special needs. If possible, meetings should take place in a member's home which is accessible because it has a level entrance or a wide doorway or a ground floor toilet or no internal stairs. If groups do have a disabled member who wants to attend a group held in a house which is inaccessible for any reason, investigate whether there are any other options available to you, for example, could the group be hosted by that member.
3. Where there is a hearing aid loop system the study group coordinator should ensure that it is switched on, and tell members that it is available. Members with impaired hearing, including hearing aid users, can have difficulty in venues with even a moderate level of background noise, which can occur in public rooms where there is a background of conversation by others. Coordinators should ensure that all members can clearly hear any speaker and other members in discussion; if there is a problem those in difficulty should be consulted about possible solutions. Printed notes can be useful to supplement presentations, either during or following the presentation.
4. Members with impaired vision can have very particular needs, depending on the type and severity of loss of vision. Any group members or aspirant members with impaired vision should be consulted about the way in which their needs can best be met. This might include technical matters such as the best digital format for electronic documents and other electronic aids; it could also include the format, and the font type and size and the colour of documents. (For example, black or dark blue typescript on yellow paper is often considered to provide the best contrast for people with impaired vision.)