

## **NORTH WALSHAM U3A INFORMATION SHEET FOR GROUP LEADERS**

Interest groups are the lifeblood of u3a and without our groups there would be no North Walsham u3a so a huge thank you for taking on the role of group leader.

North Walsham u3a aims to be a friendly and informal organisation but, as part of a national network with a public profile, we have to ensure that our meetings meet certain expectations of safety and good practice.

In this document there is an assumption that the group you are leading has been agreed in advance with your committee and remember that there is plenty of help and support available to you with the Groups Coordinator as your first port of call with any problem.

### **U3A ETHOS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The u3a movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main principles:-

#### **The third age principle:**

- Membership of a u3a is open to all in their third age, which is not defined by a particular age but by a period of life in which full time employment has ceased.
- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.
- Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a u3a can do so.

#### **The self-help principle:**

- Members form interest groups covering a wide range of topics and activities as they desire, by the members, for the members.
- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There is no distinction between learners and the teachers; they are all u3a members.

#### **The mutual aid principal:**

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of the Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the u3a movement.
- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any u3a.
- Each u3a is self funded with membership subscriptions and costs kept as low as possible.
- Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the u3a movement.

### **THE ROLE OF GROUP LEADER**

The primary role is to be responsible for the smooth running of the group and to be the point of contact between the group and the committee.

Other responsibilities may include:-

- The initial setting up of the group
- Planning and coordinating the group's activities
- Keeping accurate membership and attendance records
- Keeping accurate financial records if money is collected from group members (see the section on expenses below for more on this)
- Dealing with enquiries from u3a members wishing to join the group and helping new members settle in
- Ensuring that the group's website details are up to date by advising the committee
- Ensuring that North Walsham u3a policies and procedures are observed
- Contributing to the monthly newsletter

Make sure you give sufficient information for potential new group members to make an informed choice as to whether they wish to join. This is particularly important if you are running a physical activity.

If a group member's behaviour is inappropriate and/or regularly disturbs other group members, ask the Groups Coordinator for advice. If you have a serious problem in a session, it is acceptable to

ask the member to leave but contact the Groups Coordinator as soon as possible after the end of the session.

If damage is caused to property by a member of the group, take full details as it may lead to an insurance claim.

If a member stops coming to the group try to find out why. It may be possible to persuade them to return or at least find out about any problems that might lead others to leave.

If a group is in danger of closing, try to find ways to prevent this, such as a change in it's activities or venue or a recruitment campaign to attract new members. However, it may also be appropriate for a group to close because it has simply run it's course and achieved what it set out to do or because group members don't want to meet any more. In any case, discuss the matter with group members and the Groups Coordinator before closing your group. Group leaders who wish to give up being a leader should ask members of the group if anyone is willing to take over.

This may all sound daunting but there is no need for you to do everything and we actively encourage participation by all group members. Delegate where you can and spread the workload.

## **THE ROLE OF THE GROUPS COORDINATOR**

The Groups Coordinator is a member of the North Walsham u3a committee whose focus is to coordinate the activities of our many varied groups, to provide advice and support to the Group Leaders and to ensure good communication between Group Leaders, the committee and North Walsham u3a as a whole. The Groups Coordinator is the first person to turn to for any advice about your group.

## **THE ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE**

The committee is responsible for the smooth running of North Walsham u3a. It represents the membership and aims to ensure that there is a wide range of groups and activities that are intellectually stimulating, physically beneficial and/or just for fun.

## **VENUES FOR GROUP MEETINGS**

All venues used for groups should as far as reasonably practical be:

- Suitable for the activity of the group
- Large enough to accommodate members who want to attend
- Accessible to members who want to attend, including members with disabilities
- Safe for attendees (see the section below on health and safety for more on this)
- Covered by public liability insurance (required for all public buildings and included in standard buildings insurance for private homes)

Where venues that are not member's homes, such as church or village halls, are used any letting agreement or similar arrangement must be authorised at a committee meeting.

## **EXPENSES**

Group leaders should not be out of pocket for running a group so the cost of room hire, refreshments, postage, photocopying etc. should be shared among group members.

Do not open a separate bank account, apply for grants or put member's money into your personal account.

If cash cannot be avoided, this must be paid directly into the North Walsham u3a account, with a reference of the group name, or given to the Treasurer.

Report to the treasurer as regularly as is requested and for advice on group financial matters.

If you feel your group would benefit from having a particular item of equipment consult your Groups Coordinator in the first instance.

North Walsham u3a has a licence which covers photocopying and playing recorded music.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Ethically and legally, we are obliged to consider hazards that may arise from group activities and take reasonable steps to avoid members being harmed.

This may seem daunting, but it's important to remember that most of the hazards of u3a activities are actually not very serious and/or only have a very small chance of arising in practice. We therefore **DON'T** generally need the sort of lengthy, detailed risk assessments that might apply for example to hang gliding, parachuting or rock climbing!

In considering the risks that do exist, there are four areas to look at:

- Ensuring that the activity itself and the way it is done is safe
- Ensuring that the location where the activity takes place is safe
- Ensuring that any travel during sessions is safe
- Ensuring the risk of Covid-19 transmission is mitigated
- Ensuring that people taking part in the activity are able to do so safely

Each of these is covered in our safety checklist attached to these guidance notes. The document is designed to be suitable for most, if not all groups, and to minimise the time needed to complete it.

In an emergency, where first aid is required, call 999.

In the case of an accident which results in injury or a near miss to a person or damage to property, complete an accident form available from the Group Coordinator or send a report to the committee including details of witnesses.

## **DATA PROTECTION**

North Walsham u3a's Beacon database holds contact information for all members, such as their home addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. Group leaders are encouraged to use this as their sole store of information about members and to send emails to them as it is secure and complies with data protection regulations.

Group leaders may keep other electronic or paper records of group members' details if:

- Group members give their consent to this
- Information is stored securely
- Information is destroyed when it is no longer needed or if a member asks for this to be done.

Group leaders may only share personal details among group members with their express consent. For example, where emails are sent to group members without going through Beacon, you must use the 'bcc' function so group members can only see your sender's and their own email addresses, unless they have agreed to have their email addresses shared with other group members.

## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Groups must be equally open, welcoming and respectful to all North Walsham u3a members. As well as being part of our own ethos, it is required under the Equality Act 2010. This stipulates that organisations cannot treat someone less favourably on the basis of what is called 'protected characteristics', which are nationality, race, age, disability, religion or belief, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender reassignment and political belief.

Carers are welcome to attend meetings and should not be charged. They are covered by the u3a insurance.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

Please contact the Groups Coordinator, or another committee member, if you have any concerns for the physical or mental welfare of any of your group members.

## **APPENDICES**

Attached is the paperwork that you will need to complete as a group leader:-

A Risk Assessment - when completed, give this to a committee member

A membership register - complete for each meeting and keep.

You may be asked to forward details to the group coordinator periodically so that the Beacon system can be updated.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

is available from the Groups Coordinator and the Third Age Trust Website - [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)

The North Walsham u3a committee thank you again for taking on the role of group leader.