

EXETER U3A

ACCESS POLICY

Exeter U3A is committed to ensuring that it is as inclusive and accessible as possible for those who meet the criteria for Membership. This policy document should be read alongside the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

This policy takes into account the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and the need for Exeter U3A to avoid discriminating directly or indirectly against members with disability and/or health needs.

This policy acts as a reference point for Committee members, Group Conveners and members in terms of steps Exeter U3A will take.

Exeter U3A is a Membership charity and not a service provider, and therefore, whilst reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that individuals can participate and can attend with carers to support their needs (if required), 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.

Disability

Disability comes in many forms, some of which are not immediately apparent. In addition to barriers to physical access, disability can be in the form of sight, hearing, physical and mental comfort and requires provision of appropriate facilities.

Accessibility Officer

An Accessibility Officer will be identified from amongst the Membership. He/she will have responsibility for liaising with Group Conveners on an ongoing basis to ensure that groups are accessible and that Group Conveners are aware of what the expectations are and what adjustments may need to be made, if possible.

He/she will contact new Members who indicate that they have a disability or health related issue which needs additional support.

Group Conveners will liaise with the Accessibility Officer where there are concerns about an individual's ability to participate.

Access

Exeter U3A will do all it reasonably can to provide access to Monthly Meetings and Interest Groups for existing and potential new Members with any accessibility requirement. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that people with disabilities and access requirements can attend the interest groups of their choice independently.

Members who are not able to participate in their chosen U3A activities without assistance will 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 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.

Venues

Exeter U3A will take all reasonable steps to ensure that meeting venues are suitably accessible for persons with disabilities involving physical access, sight, hearing, physical and mental comfort and the provision of appropriate facilities wherever possible.

The Mint

The Mint is fully accessible to persons with physical disabilities including those using wheelchair and mobility scooters. Although most rooms in the building are physically accessible with the aid of ramps and the lift, there are a few that cannot be accessed without the use of stairs. Where a person with disabilities wishes to join a group where access for them is not possible, then all reasonable steps will be taken to find alternative accommodation in the building for the group session. There is an accessible disabled toilet.

Members' Homes

Some meetings are held at the homes of members. It is unlikely that these will have disability access and it would not be practicable for the home owner to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate them. Unless an alternate venue is agreed by all existing members in the group, then unfortunately it will not be possible to provide access.

Other Venues

Some meetings take place at venues which are not at the Mint or in people's homes. Where a person with an access disability wishes to join a group at any of these venues, all reasonable steps will be taken to facilitate access or seek alternative accommodation in consultation with other Members of the Group.

Joining a Group

In all cases for U3A members it is necessary to communicate with the Group Convenor before joining an Interest Group. Where a person with an accessibility issue wishes to join a particular group it is necessary for that person to make the Convenor aware of any specific requirements. Any changes required can then be discussed with the Group and a decision taken on feasibility.

Joining Groups involved in Physical Activities

Where a group activity is of a physical nature e.g. exercise, walking, birdwatching, then it is a requirement that a Member with any disability or relevant physical or mental health issue informs the Group Convenor/Leader in private before taking part (at least the day before) and a decision on participation reached. Neither the Group Convenor/Leader nor Exeter U3A can take any responsibility for health issues, the taking of medications etc. which may place an unacceptable responsibility on or risk to other Members.

U3A Committee

Exeter 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 be taken through discussion between the individual and his/her carer (if appropriate), the Group Convenor and Accessibility Officer to ensure that a fair and considered decision is taken.

If a Member or prospective Member has an accessibility issue which they feel has not been satisfactorily considered then they can make representation to the Committee for the situation to be further considered.

Accessibility will be reviewed by the Committee on an ongoing basis with a view to considering any additional adjustments that need to be made.

Exeter U3A will seek additional advice and support from the National Office, national website and external specialists as required.

Adoption and Review

This policy is based on the Privacy Policy Template ref U3A-KMS-POL-007 published by the Third Age Trust and was adopted by Exeter U3A on 6 November 2023.

Policy review date: November 2025