



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE
DUMFRIES

CHARITY NUMBER: SCO21683

www.u3adumfries.org.uk

HANDBOOK FOR GROUP LEADERS

Interest groups are a core part of the ethos of a U3A and one of our priorities is to ensure we have a wide range of successful groups available for members. The success of these groups is the direct result of the inspiration, commitment and enthusiasm of our group leaders. We have prepared this handbook to help when setting up new groups and in running established ones. Your committee would like to thank you for undertaking this vital role.

GETTING STARTED

If you haven't already decided, you will need to plan, preferably with the other members of the group:

- **WHO WILL BE THE POINT OF CONTACT**

It will be your responsibility to ensure that members are kept informed of times and locations of your meetings.

- **ESTABLISHING THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP**

Consider the scope of the subject matter or activities (what the group is going to do) and the level at which the group will work (beginners, improvers, advanced).

- **CHOOSING A VENUE**

Take into account the size of the group and what the group needs, e.g. chairs, tables, equipment, space for physical activities. Think also about the subject matter and please have due regard to the safety of members.

If you have fewer than 10 members, think about meeting in members' homes. If you want a bigger or more formal space, contact the Groups Coordinator or Treasurer for advice.

- **THE FIRST MEETING**

A successful group will be clear about and share expectations. If there is a wide variety of expectation, then consider forming more than one group. If this is not feasible, then plan a programme in such a way that as many approaches as possible are included. It is a useful exercise at the first meeting to get agreement to a

short description of what the group hopes to do and how they hope to do it. This will subsequently form a statement of intent which will help to keep the group on track and will inform potential new members.

- **DISCOVER THE EXPERTISE WITHIN THE GROUP**

It is important to find out what knowledge and experience exist in the group and decide how these are going to be used. Shared learning does not mean that a group cannot seek to extend its learning base by inviting others to join them either permanently or for specific purposes. The ethos of U3A is that its members share their knowledge and experience freely.

There is a large body of research into later life learning which suggests that older people learn best when they are in control of their own learning. Participation by all group members should be encouraged from the start.

- **WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?**

Find out what help is available locally, regionally and nationally;

Talk to our Groups Coordinator;

Contact the national Network Coordinator for your subject to see what material they have (details in national magazine);

Contact the Third Age Trust Resource Centre and register as a borrower.

- **RUNNING YOUR GROUP**

A few practical things will help you to run your group smoothly and will help ensure our U3A as a whole is run in an efficient and proper manner:

- Inform your members of times and locations of your meetings.
- Keep a list of the members of your group and their contact details, also of anyone interested in joining but to whom you cannot yet offer a place. The Groups Coordinator will ask you to provide a list of your members at least once a year.
- Ensure everyone attending is a member and always check when someone new arrives.
- Potential members may try out a group for up to two meetings.
- You should expect members to inform you if they will not be able to attend any meeting.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

As a charity, we are required to follow sound financial practices. - hence the recommendations on bookings and money handling below. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Treasurer.

- We do not wish or expect a group leader to be out of pocket, therefore expenses can either be shared among the group, or reasonable expenses can be submitted to the Treasurer.
- If monies are collected for group visits, coach trips or other activities, these should be passed to the Treasurer who will subsequently make all payments.
- Never open a bank account.

- Never pay members' money into your personal account.
- Do not pay for others using your own money.
- Get receipts wherever possible when you hand money over.
- Discuss any financial transactions with the Treasurer.

WHO CAN JOIN A GROUP?

Membership of a U3A group is restricted to current members of Dumfries U3A and members of neighbouring U3As. If you are in doubt about a member's status, seek help from the Membership Secretary. Repeated attendance by a non-member would disqualify that individual and possibly the other group members from U3A insurance cover.

SUPPORT WITHIN DUMFRIES U3A

Dumfries U3A is run by a Committee, elected at the AGM each year. A member of the Committee is appointed Groups Coordinator to provide Group Leaders with help and support. The Groups Coordinator should be the first person to turn to for help. You may also have contact from time to time with other members of the Committee as explained in this Handbook. You will find all Committee members' contact details in our bi-annual magazine and on our website.

AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT

Dumfries U3A has equipment which you may borrow:

- Digital projector;
- Projection screen
- Laptop computer
- Multi-purpose printer, scanner, copier
- Flip chart board and paper

If you wish to borrow any of this, please contact the Meetings Organiser.

INSURANCE

In your group activities you are covered by Public & Products Liability Insurance. This covers U3A members for loss due to accidental injury to a person or accidental loss or damage to property not belonging to them, as long as it arises from or in connection with a U3A activity.

It covers U3A cash, held in members' homes, on hired premises and in transit.

Home contents are covered if there is damage to property while your home is being used to host a U3A group meeting.

Should you ever experience such a situation, please contact the Secretary for advice and an Accident Report Form.

Details of the insurance policy and a copy 10 of the form can also be seen on the Third Age Trust website www.u3a.org.uk.

NB. Anyone giving lifts to fellow U3A members will be covered by their own motor insurance in the usual way. Drivers can accept money when giving lifts without compromising their car insurance policy.

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THE THIRD AGE TRUST RESOURCE CENTRE

The Resource Centre in the National Office at Bromley has a collection of material (other than books) available for all U3A groups to borrow free of charge except for the cost of return postage. There are slides, videos, audio cassettes, CDs and DVDs available in many subject areas. Lists are free and available on request. You will be issued with a user number that will allow you to search the catalogue online. Loans are for a period of three weeks and may be renewed on request if not needed elsewhere. You may register with the Resource Centre either by telephoning 020 8315 0199 between 9.30am and 4pm on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday or online at the national U3A website (www.u3a.org.uk)

THIRD AGE MATTERS AND SOURCES

Members receive the national magazine *Third Age Matters* several times a year. This contains news from U3As across the country, experiences, ideas, contact details and useful advertising. Some articles may be of interest to group leaders.

Sources is the national U3A educational journal. Each issue has a subject focus, and is published three times a year.

NATIONAL SUBJECT COORDINATORS AND NETWORKS

Group Leaders in individual U3As may work together to share ideas and materials. Our neighbouring U3As are Stewartry and Carlisle.

Many subjects have a national Subject Coordinator whom you can contact directly. In some cases there is also material available online that you can use or adapt to meet your needs. Contact details for the Subject Coordinator are given on the national U3A website www.u3a.org.uk/

ON-LINE COURSES

A list of courses is to be found on the national website. Some have been written by U3A members in the UK: some are from Australia. Their high standard has been recognised by a National Institute for Adult Continuing Education award. They are low cost, some untutored, with tutored ones costing slightly more. Although they may be followed individually, the material may also be used for groups. Untutored courses can be downloaded and printed for group study. You are also encouraged to use the Open University's 'Open Learn' courses. Also available are MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).

SHARED LEARNING PROJECTS

A typical Shared Learning Project involves U3A members working with a local institution, such as a gallery or museum, on a project of mutual benefit. These co-

operative ventures offer an exciting opportunity for sharing expertise and learning. The Third Age Trust website describes what shared learning projects are and how to start one. There are also regular reports of such projects in *Sources*.

DATA PROTECTION

The Data Protection Act requires us to store personal data securely so as to avoid unauthorized or illegal use and to restrict access to it to those who need it for the purpose for which it was collected, i.e. in our case contacting or communicating with members. It covers all personal data whether stored in paper or electronic form.

Hence:

- A group leader may hold contact details of the members of the group but should not pass these to others without the prior approval of those concerned.
- However, all members of certain groups, e.g. the walking groups, legitimately need the home and/or mobile telephone numbers of all the other members for organisational and safety reasons.
- Group leaders are required to give their approval to their own contact details being circulated to all Dumfries U3A members.
- E-mails circulated to large groups of members should place the addressees in the "Bcc" box and not in the "To" box, so that each member is not inadvertently given the e-mail addresses of all the others.

OTHER DOCUMENTS - available from www.u3a.org.uk/

- **Travel policy**
- **Insurance**
- **Data Protection**
- **Social events and travel**
- **Walk leader checklist**