Health and Safety Policy Statement

Preamble

The u3a was founded in 1982 and established as The Third Age Trust, a registered charity with the number 288007. The Trust is the national representative body for the u3a movement in the UK, operating on the principle of "life-long learning". Its guiding principles are to promote non-formal learning through self-help interest groups covering a wide range of topics and activities as chosen by their members. Its objective is to encourage groups of people no longer in full-time work to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning, purely for pleasure rather than achieving qualifications, about subjects of interest to them. The u3a movement is self-funded and the Trust provides a wide range of support services to existing u3a associations whilst helping to develop new ones, raising the u3a profile, and increasing awareness of the movement throughout the UK.

Although there is no minimum age, membership is focused on people who are no longer in full-time employment or raising a family. Participation is through a collaborative approach, with peers learning from each other. There is no distinction between the learners and the group leaders (used throughout this Policy but also known as 'convenors'), and events organisers; everyone can take a turn at being both if they wish.

Although the u3a Trust has an overarching support and guidance role, the locally established individual u3a associations, whilst affiliated with the Trust, are independent entities, with their own governance arrangements. The common model is a trustee board of management (Committee) comprising of, but not limited to, the formal offices of chairperson, treasurer, membership secretary, and others as appropriate to the local arrangements. The trustees are volunteers drawn from the membership; they may be elected or co-opted.

Regarding health and safety law, local u3a associations are not employers; nor are they owners, or controllers, of premises made available as places of work or for work-related activities by, or for, third parties. Therefore, the duties of employers, the self-employed and controllers of premises under the *Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974* (HSWA), and its subordinate framework of regulations, do not apply to local u3a associations.

Nevertheless, third parties such as employers, the self-employed and controllers of premises are required by Section 3 of the HSWA to ensure that persons not in their employment, (such as local u3a association members who might hire a meeting room or larger venue, or visit premises such as a museum) are not exposed to risks to their health and safety arising from a third party's activities.

However, regarding civil law, local u3a associations do have a general duty of care in common law to their members, guest visitors (such as prospective members or those from another u3a), and guest speakers at their meetings. The duty of care also exists within u3a activities: one to another between members in their ordinary interactions; between group leaders and learners, and vice versa; and between the member participants in u3a activities which, through interaction, may impinge on third parties.

St Ives (Cambs) u3a Health and Safety Policy

The Policy objective

St Ives (Cambs) u3a, known as "u3aivo" in this Policy, is a registered charity with the number 1147162 and is managed by a volunteer board of trustees, also known as the management Committee. Although health and safety law does not apply to u3aivo (see foregoing Preamble) it is the policy of the management Committee to aspire to, and where appropriate, adopt the standards of the legislation which, in simple terms, is the codification in criminal law of the common law "duty of care". By adopting this approach, while total absence of hazards, associated risks and absolute safety are not achievable, since life and human activity is not risk-free, the Committee seeks to ensure that hazards are identified, and that their associated risks are assessed, mitigated, ameliorated and controlled in the activities undertaken by u3aivo members, thereby assuring their health and safety in so far as it is reasonable to achieve that. Fundamentally, this objective can be achieved in u3aivo by members ensuring that they do nothing by act or omission that could cause harm, to the health and safety of themselves or others, when participating in u3aivo activities.

Implementing the Policy to keep members safe and healthy in u3aivo activities

General: All members shall be made aware of this Policy by drawing it to their attention on the u3aivo website and by such other means as appropriate, and verifying that it has been understood. Specific training for group leaders and event organisers shall be arranged as necessary. This will be supported by guidance in the form of a handbook and such other media as appropriate.

Hazard identification, and assessment, mitigation, amelioration and control of risks in the activities undertaken by u3aivo members

Hazard identification

A *hazard* is anything which has the potential to cause harm. A *risk* is the likelihood that, in a particular set of circumstances, the harm may occur. *Risk assessment* is the iterative matrix methodology by which the foreseeable likelihood is determined, based on the potential severity of the harm and the possible frequency with which it may occur. This ranges from, at its highest, the extreme of certainty that a harmful event will always occur with the most serious consequences; and at its lowest extreme, the certainty that no consequentially harmful event will occur. In reality, the majority of assessed risks fall between these two extremes.

u3aivo has a large and diverse number of members, groups and activities. Physical activities may be inherently hazardous to varying degrees; or hazards may be introduced within activities, such as the use of equipment, materials or substances. It is therefore necessary first to systematically identify the hazards and then to assess the associated risks and the necessary control measures. Exposure to hazards may cause physical and/or psychological harm and so the health status of activity participants may need to be considered when assessing risks. Participants may therefore be asked to disclose, in confidence, any aspect of their health status of which a group leader may need to be aware to ensure, so far as is reasonable, that a participant's health would not be compromised by an activity, or to ensure that an appropriate response to an emergency situation has been devised. An example would be an allergic reaction (anaphylactic shock) triggered by exposure to an allergenic substance.

Physical activities (eg: badminton, bowls, cycling, dancing, walking, yoga) may be more hazardous to an individual than other, more sedentary activities (eg: meetings in halls, private homes and public venues). However, there are potential hazards even in these latter categories involving slips, trips and falls, and the more serious hazard of fire, where safe access to, and egress from, premises, or vehicles such as coaches, are critical. In all activities, inclusivity should be accounted for in hazard identification and risk assessments so that the needs of, for example, differently-abled and neurodivergent persons, and any accompanying carers are considered.

Assessment, mitigation, amelioration and control of risks

When setting up a group, the group leader should consider the most likely risks associated with the activity beyond those normally encountered in everyday life. A written risk assessment is the recognised way of demonstrating that each group activity has been considered and that the hazards specific to each activity have been identified and the risks assessed. Where possible, the hazards should be avoided. If that is not possible then the risk assessment should identify and record the necessary risk reduction measures (ie mitigation to make something less harmful; or amelioration to improve the circumstances). Control of risks is effected by the systematic adoption and implementation of procedures and processes derived from the risk reduction measures.

An important part of risk assessment generation is consideration of pertinent suggestions from group members and, where valid, their adoption or incorporation. Furthermore, risk assessments should be reviewed periodically and, when there have been any material changes, amended accordingly. Risk assessments should also be reviewed and, where necessary and appropriate, amended to incorporate the findings, and any recommendations arising from investigations of accidents, incidents and near misses.

Once risk assessments have been completed and compiled by group leaders, they should be uploaded to the u3aivo website and sent to all existing and new group members, who must agree to abide by them.

One of the benefits of u3a membership is the sharing of information and experience within and between u3a associations and their groups. Protecting the health and safety of members is a common objective. Sharing risk assessment information can be beneficial, and may provide helpful templates or models. However, it is important to avoid a "copy, cut-and-paste" approach when looking at what others have done. No matter what commonality there may be, risk assessments and their associated control measures are unique to the circumstances of each individual u3a association.

u3aivo Groups Risk Assessment process

There are sample risk assessments on the u3aivo website for groups which meet in private homes, hired venues and public venues. These show the most common risks and what can be done to mitigate them. Where venues already have their own risk assessments, these should be reviewed in consultation with venue providers and, where mitigations are identified, group leaders should ensure that they are actioned (eg: a venue may require that fire escape routes are kept clear and unobstructed; that no more than 5 chairs should be stacked together in a particular way to prevent manual handling injuries or toppling of stacks).

Many physical activities such as sports (eg: cycling, croquet, bowling etc) have national governing bodies, whose websites may have accessible sample risk assessments.

For further information about risk assessments please see u3aivo.uk/risk or contact the Group Support Team (gst@u3aivo.uk).

Accidents, Incidents, Near Misses and First Aid

Any accidents, incidents or near misses which could result in the health or safety of group members being compromised should be reported even if it appears that no-one was harmed. The form for reporting these is at https://u3aivo.uk/insurance-for-group-leaders/. The completed form should be sent to the Secretary at info@u3aivo.uk.

Causal factors should be identified by investigation. The relevant risk assessments should be reviewed to ensure that any new risks have been identified, and whether or not there are further control measures which could be employed to reduce existing or new risks in future.

First Aid

In the event of an accident/incident causing injury or harm to health, the Third Age Trust advises that a member can administer first aid, although in the event of a serious incident the emergency services must be contacted immediately. Members are not expected to act beyond the capacity of a member of the public. They do not have to administer first aid unless: they want to; or they know how to; or they feel confident or competent to do so. Members are covered by insurance should something go wrong.

St. John Ambulance provides free first aid guidance at www.sja.org.uk

Insurance cover for accidents or incidents; claims process; and third-party liability

What is not covered by u3aivo insurance: Members are not covered for personal accidents that they may suffer whilst taking part in a u3aivo activity. An example of a personal accident is where a member trips and breaks a limb, but no other person is involved.

What is covered by u3aivo insurance: Members are covered against a claim from a member of the public, or from another u3aivo member, where it can be shown that the member is legally responsible for an injury to the claimant. An example would be where a u3aivo member inadvertently jostles another person resulting in that person falling and sustaining an injury. Further details about the insurance cover can be accessed on the website https://u3aivo.uk, including: "Insurance for Group Convenors/Leaders – includes the need for incident reporting and a suitable form"; "Insurance - Further Information – more about the actual policies, and documents including Risk Assessment FAQs".

Claims process: Claims on the insurance policy should be made to the Treasurer on treasurer@u3aivo.org.uk in the first instance. In the event of a claim on the insurance policy, it should be assumed the insurers will require evidence that a risk assessment has been completed for the group activity and that the incident has been investigated. Although it is unlikely that a claim will be rejected simply because there is no risk assessment, or record of an accident/incident investigation, the lack of either may make a successful claim harder to pursue.

Third party liability

Any person or organisation that is not part of, or integral to, u3aivo is a "third party". This includes, but is not limited to, providers of venues, goods and services; hosts of visits and events; and visiting speakers at general or group meetings. These parties are responsible for their own personal professional indemnity, public liability and third-party insurances as appropriate to their engagement with u3aivo, its activities and members. It is important to verify that these insurances exist, which is most readily done by requesting sight of their current certificates when organising activities, events, and meetings, and booking speakers, visits and venues etc. This check can then be incorporated into the risk assessment record.

General advice and specific guidance

Members should inform the Committee, via the Secretary, of any concerns arising from health and safety issues. The Committee will investigate and report back within two weeks, ensuring that any agreed action is undertaken.

Specific guidance

Risk management

"Risk Management Guidance for Committees" is available on the u3aivo website https://u3aivo.uk

Lone volunteering

There may be occasions where u3aivo members may be carrying out activities for u3aivo on their own. For example, opening a venue for a meeting, setting up for a meeting etc. Where this occurs the u3aivo member should ensure someone else knows where they are and the approximate time of their expected return. The u3aivo member should also know who to contact in the event of an incident or accident and ensure that they have their mobile phone, or other means of contact with them. When operating alone they should avoid inherently hazardous activities such as using ladders or platform steps, or electrical equipment.

Manual handling

To avoid injury to themselves and others, all u3aivo members should think about manual handling in advance of an activity. Members should not carry out any manual handling tasks if they are not physically capable to manage them. Instead, they should ask for help from other u3aivo members who are capable. Manual handling activities can be many and varied. Although a suitable generic risk assessment for manual handling should suffice, there may be a need for something more specific.

Portable electrical equipment

Portable electrical equipment is commonplace. It may be provided by venues, eg a visual display projector; or it may be the personal property of group leaders or participating members, eg an electric guitar and amplifier. In every case, the party that provides the equipment is responsible for its safety in use. If group members are to use the equipment the provider must show them how to do so safely. If the equipment fails for any reason members should not attempt to find and fix the fault. Instead, it is the responsibility of the provider to take remedial action.

In venues, cable feeds to equipment from power sockets, or between items of equipment, should not be run across aisles, normal access and egress routes, nor designated emergency exit routes. Where this is unavoidable, suitable proprietary flexible cable ramps must be used to cover the cables so that the trip hazard is ameliorated.

Walking groups

There is a checklist on the u3aivo website, https://u3aivo.uk, showing the most common risks for walking groups which can be adapted to suit the capabilities, skills and experience of a walking group's membership.

Adoption of this Policy Statement

This Policy Statement has been considered, endorsed and adopted by the u3aivo management Committee and trustees. It is available on the u3aivo website, and a paper copy is available from the Secretary. It will be reviewed at least every three years, or at any other time when there has been a relevant change of circumstances, and revised as necessary.

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