

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy – Tunbridge Wells u3a

“There is so much to be gained by reaching out to others...diversity is indeed a strength and not a threat.” HRH Queen Elizabeth II

Tunbridge Wells u3a aims to create a more accessible and inclusive environment for all, including for those under-represented in our local organisation. We will regularly review how we welcome new members into our u3a.

We aim to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ where possible to support individual needs. This reflects the 2010 Equality Act *. The u3a Code of Conduct states that all members should abide by its policies and procedures and treat each other with dignity and respect.

Race, Culture and Ethnicity We strive to reach out to potential new members from different cultures and to reflect the diversity within the wider British community within our activities. We can, for example,

- Show an awareness on our social media and publications of key festivals and cultural events for diverse groups within the community
- Be sensitive to members’ food rules and customs and ask when not sure
- Explore resources within our local area, for example, ethnic restaurants, places of worship. speakers from different ethnic groups, nationalities and cultures
- Ensure our language used is appropriate and that any discriminatory comments, harassment or stereotypes are immediately responded to

Hearing We endeavour to hold our large meetings at venues with induction loops and PA systems. Interest groups held in homes and other venues may offer opportunities for more adjustments to be made. We can, for example,

- Ideally plan the seating in the room so there is an unobstructed line of vision. Ensure that people speaking should face towards the person who is deaf or hearing impaired, so lips can be read
- Ask for raised hands to indicate the next person to speak
- Enable auto-captions for Zoom and other video conference meetings

Sight Members of our u3a can experience difficulties with sight loss. Some may be severely sight impaired and others have varying degrees of useful residual vision. We can, for example,

- Tell members about Third Age Matters’ online Screen Reader edition
- Provide, where reasonably practical, adjusted materials to enable members with some visual loss to access documents, or advice in how to use technology to do this
- For physical activities, verbal instructions can accompany demonstration of movement

Mobility Mobility difficulties can lead to challenges in accessing venues and in attending meetings generally or during certain times of the day. We can, for example,

- Suggest a member with a mobility difficulty hosts a group
- List venues with good access, including toilet facilities and disabled parking spaces
- Be flexible to members' mobility needs, for example, including wheelchair friendly paths in walks when appropriate

Dementia Dementia can cause memory loss and difficulty with communication and reasoning skills. Emotional behaviour can change and there can be disorientation with time and place. We can, for example,

- Explore setting up a Dementia Support interest group
- Welcome a carer to meetings to accompany a member with dementia
- Signpost a member who may be showing signs of dementia to helpful information from the Alzheimer's Society about [memory loss](#)

Neurodiversity There are differences in the way our brains work and process information. As well as conditions as ADHD, dyslexia and prosopagnosia (face blindness), our members' understanding can be affected by brain damage caused by strokes.

Older people may not have had a diagnosis of autism, yet may be on the spectrum. They can experience difficulties with communication and understanding and may be socially isolated. We can, for example,

- Reflect the growing awareness of autism in society and the experience of members by holding meetings with relevant speakers
- Be aware that there is a wide spectrum of autism. Some may find it difficult to read social signals and are very direct in their communication
- Understand that for autistic people with sensitivity to sound, background music in a restaurant or noise in a crowded social setting can be disturbing

LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other identities)

Although there is now greater understanding towards different sexual orientation and gender in society, we recognise that older people from the LGBTQI+ community may have experienced negative attitudes and abuse in their lives. We can, for example,

- Take into account that any member could be from the LGBTQI+ community
- Raise awareness of the [over 50s LGBTQI+ website](#)
- Highlight events such as Pride Week on our Facebook page

We will engage with wider u3a initiatives, such as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion awareness online sessions run by the Third Age Trust.

A focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion should help us take Tunbridge Wells u3a into the future.

**According to the Equality Act, 2010, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity are protected characteristics, and these characteristics are aspects of a person's identity that make them who they are.*