

Reading u3a: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Purpose

This policy provides guidance to the members of Reading u3a in how to comply with the Equality Act 2010. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

These are called 'protected characteristics'.

Equality is making sure that everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and respect. This means challenging discrimination and removing barriers, so that everyone has opportunities to achieve their desired outcomes.

Diversity is recognising the benefits of different values, abilities and perspectives and celebrating people's differences. This means promoting an environment that welcomes and values diverse backgrounds, thinking, skills and experience.

Inclusion is providing a space where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, and where everyone feels valued and accepted and is able to contribute and have a voice.

Context and rationale

Ru3a is a learning co-operative and membership charity which enables members in their third age to share educational, creative and leisure activities. The Equality Act requires that organisations consider what 'reasonable adjustments' can be made in order to facilitate participation in such activities.

Charitable associations such as Reading u3a may restrict membership and benefits to people who share a protected characteristic, such as age, provided membership is not based on someone's colour. The Charity Commission may require charities to confirm that they have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy when they submit their annual return.

Principles

The Reading u3a Committee expects that members will abide by the u3a's policies and procedures as well as treating other members with dignity and respect. This includes not acting in a way that would be deemed discriminatory or offensive.

discrimination and harassment and is committed to making sure that the u3a is as The Committee recognises that some people are particularly likely to experience inclusive and welcoming as possible. This will include seeking to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that members with protected characteristics have equal access to groups, convenors and Committee members and do not experience discrimination on the basis of their protected characteristics.

While Reading u3a does not have the legal obligations required of a public sector organisation, the Committee will keep under review the reasonable adjustments which may be made to enable members with particular needs to participate as fully as reasonably possible in u3a activities. However, Reading u3a is obliged to respect constraints imposed by the managers of premises used for u3a activities, which may include convenors' homes, and expects members to be responsible for managing their own personal risks.

Procedure

1. Raising awareness

The Committee will make sure all new members are aware of Reading u3a's policies and procedures in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

2. Monitoring

The Committee will monitor the numbers of members who join, re-join and leave each year in order to identify any trends in membership, will review the diversity of the membership on an ongoing basis and will seek to ensure that the u3a remains attractive and accessible.

3. Recruitment

The Committee will consider working with community groups to assist with the recruitment process. The Committee will seek to manage growth so that new members can be accommodated.

4. Reasonable adjustments

Within the financial and capacity constraints of a volunteer-run association holding meetings in convenors' homes, the Committee will make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure a wide range of people can participate in u3a activities and meetings. This may include:

- Timing: consideration given to the time of day of meetings;
- Location: consideration of venues for meetings including access for wheelchair users, availability of PA system, hearing loop, parking and disabled parking, disabled toilet facilities;
- Communication: using a variety of methods and platforms to communicate externally and raise the profile of the u3a; making communications available to those who don't have access to the internet; using a range of publicity images that reflect the local community; having hybrid meetings when circumstances allow.

5. Encouraging personal responsibility

When u3a activities take place in premises which Reading u3a does not own or manage, including convenors' homes, it is expected that members will take responsibility for managing their own personal risks. The Committee will make members aware that they need to be sensible about what they can manage, especially where their circumstances or abilities have changed, and consider what actions they will take to reduce any specific risks they may encounter during a u3a activity.

6. Tasks and Roles

The Committee will seek to ensure a range of people get their voices heard by encouraging more members to take on roles such as leading groups. The Groups Coordinator will ensure that new Group Convenors are made aware of issues of accessibility and what steps they may need to take in meeting access requirements. Each group will be reviewed on an individual basis as certain groups may require a certain level of fitness or mobility and members need to be made aware of this in advance. The Committee will identify sources of training around equality, diversity and inclusion to Committee Members and Convenors on an ongoing basis.

7. Discrimination and harassment

When the Committee becomes aware of any discriminatory practice (when a person is treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics) or harassment (unwanted conduct related to protected characteristics that has the purpose or effect of violating a members dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment), it will seek to address this through consultation with all parties concerned and, where necessary, through invoking formal procedures. If any member feels they have experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour or harassment, this should be reported to the Committee. Any matters of concern will be reviewed by the Committee and a decision will be made in line with the constitution as to what steps will be taken to address the issue.

8. Further guidance

Where appropriate, the Committee will seek guidance and additional support from the Third Age Trust.

Roles and responsibilities

The Committee will be responsible as a whole for the implementation of this policy and for keeping under review the reasonable adjustments which may be made to enable members with particular needs to participate as fully as is reasonably practicable in u3a activities.

The Groups Coordinator will ensure that new Group Convenors are made aware of issues of accessibility and what steps they may need to take in meeting access requirements.

Group Convenors are responsible for identifying the level of fitness or mobility required and for making members aware of this in advance.

All Reading u3a members are responsible for abiding by the u3a's policies and procedures and for managing their own personal risks.

Monitoring and review

The Committee will monitor the implementation of this Policy and Procedure annually. Every two years from the date of adoption the Policy and Procedure will be fully reviewed by the Committee.

Adopted by Reading u3a on: 20 March 2023

Review date: March 2025