

Reading u3a Health and Safety Policy

Purpose

Health and safety are important to Reading u3a, which takes its duty of care seriously. Although the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 only applies to paid workers, Reading u3a aims to provide and maintain safe and healthy conditions and environments for all members during the activities of its groups, at regular meetings and at one-off events. The policy sets out how Reading u3a seeks to achieve this and to deal with any issues which arise.

Health and safety should not be confused with safeguarding. Safeguarding is about protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect; health and safety is about minimising or removing the risk of accidents and injuries.

Context

The Charity Commission expects that charity trustees regularly review and assess the risks faced by their charity in all areas of its work and plan for the management of those risks. One significant area of risk for Reading u3a is potential injury to its members, as well as to non-members involved in Reading u3a activities.

For organisations which have volunteers carrying out activities for the organisation but which have no employees health and safety law does not normally apply. However, voluntary organisations and individual volunteers have a duty of care to each other and to others who may be affected by their activities. Where something goes wrong, individuals may, in some cases, sue for damages using the civil law if they are injured as a result of another person's negligence. Reading u3a wishes to minimise the potential for such action.

Scope

The policy applies to all members while undertaking Reading u3a activities – its general meetings, group meetings, outings and physical activities. This extends to non-members invited to participate in Reading u3a activities.

Although Reading u3a trustees, convenors and event organisers are unpaid volunteers and are not covered by health and safety at work legislation, such volunteers play a key role and must be protected from risks.

Principles

Identifying and managing the possible risks that Reading u3a may face as it evolves are a key part of effective governance. By managing risk effectively, trustees can help ensure that

- significant risks are known and monitored, enabling trustees to make informed decisions and take timely action
- Reading u3a makes the most of opportunities and develops them with the confidence that any risks will be managed
- Reading u3a's aims are achieved more successfully.

While acknowledging that risks cannot be completely eradicated, Reading u3a seeks to ensure that reasonable care has been taken to avoid harming others and that group convenors and event organisers are aware of any risks and communicate them in an appropriate manner to the participants.

Members also have a personal responsibility to avoid any situation in which they do not consider themselves to be safe. It is a condition of membership that members are aware that they should have the appropriate ability to take part in any activity of their chosen group.

Procedures

(1) Risk assessments

Through the trustee in charge of health and safety, the committee will ensure that risk assessments are completed for all activities using Reading u3a's risk assessment form. These may not be required for venues which already have their own risk assessments – see (2) below. The committee will use these assessments to identify any risks and explore how they can be mitigated. Where appropriate, the committee will provide clear instructions and guidance to group convenors and activity leaders and may place restrictions on the activity in order to minimise any identified risks.

(2) Venues

Some venues used for meetings or events may already have their own risk assessments. The committee will ensure that these are reviewed at least annually and, where mitigations are identified, will ensure they are actioned. Convenors or event organisers are also responsible for ensuring that exits are clear, that nothing has been placed in the way of fire escapes and that all attendees are aware of what to do in the event of a fire alarm or evacuation.

(3) Attendance sheets and emergency contacts

All convenors and organisers of other activities are required to maintain attendance sheets or lists. For activities which involve travel or are not in one of the regular venues, such as outings and walks, the risk assessment also requires that contacts in case of emergency (or disclaimers) are held for all participants. An emergency contact is normally a close friend or a neighbour who the activity leader can contact if something arises (this is not the same as next of kin, although the contact named may be the next of kin). Where the group convenor is not taking part in the specific activity, the activity leader has this responsibility. If it is not possible for activity leaders to hold emergency contacts, the risk assessment requires that they note what actions they have taken to mitigate the risk.

(4) Insurance

Reading u3a is covered by public liability insurance provided by the Third Age Trust and further details of this policy are held by the trustee in charge of health and safety. There are exclusions in the policy: if any activities are being considered that may not be covered, the trustee in charge of health and safety will contact the Third Age Trust for further advice. The cover is not a personal accident insurance, only an insurance against legal liability and only applies if it can be shown that Reading u3a, its agents or members had in some way been negligent in causing injury to the claimant or damage to the claimant's property. The risk assessment can be used as evidence in the case of a claim being made.

(5) Dealing with emergencies and responding to accidents or other incidents

In an emergency a witness (ideally the convenor, organiser or activity leader) should contact the emergency services in the normal way. As soon as appropriate, and in the event of any non-emergency accident or other incident, the trustee in charge of health and safety should be informed. Where a participant is involved in an accident or incident whilst taking part in a u3a activity the trustee in charge of health and safety or (if the trustee is unavailable) the group convenor or activity leader will complete an Incident Report Form (which can be downloaded from <https://www.readingu3a.org.uk/about/policies-public/>) giving details of the incident, those who were involved or those who witnessed the event (if possible, with photographs). This will be shared with the Chair, referred to the committee if appropriate,

and kept on file. Although insurance is not the primary reason for completing the form, it will be shared with the insurers in the event of an insurance claim.

(6) Manual handling

Reading u3a members should plan manual handling (such as moving furniture or equipment) in advance to avoid injury to themselves and others.

Roles and responsibilities

Members have a personal responsibility to avoid any situation in which they do not consider themselves to be safe. It is members' responsibility to ensure that they have the appropriate ability to take part in any activity of their chosen group, that they are wearing appropriate clothing and that they have the appropriate equipment.

As the responsibility for the management and control of Reading u3a rests with the trustees collectively their involvement in the key aspects of the risk management process is essential, particularly in setting the parameters of the process and reviewing the results regularly.

The trustees will delegate elements of the risk management process and the reporting of any health and safety incidents to a trustee with specific responsibility for health and safety. All incidents should be reported to this trustee in the first place and, if required, an Incident Report Form completed and the committee informed. Incident Report Forms will then be kept on file by the Secretary.

Monitoring and review

The committee as a whole has responsibility for the policy and its implementation and will ensure the policy is kept up to date and reviewed annually and after any significant incident. The trustee in charge of health and safety will report to the committee on significant incidents and changes in the risks and the committee will take this into consideration when reviewing the policy.

Adoption

Adopted by Reading u3a Committee on: 17 December 2025

Next review due: December 2027