

## Beccles u3a – Accessibility Policy

### Policy Statement

Beccles u3a is a learning co-operative and membership charity which enables members to share educational, creative and leisure activities. Members of each u3a draw upon their knowledge, skills and experience to teach and learn from each other (peer to peer learning).

Beccles u3a is committed to ensuring that u3a is as inclusive and accessible as possible for those in their third age who meet the criteria for membership. This policy document should be read alongside Beccles u3a's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

### Aims of the Policy

This policy has been drawn up to ensure that Beccles u3a takes steps to review accessibility needs for individual members and makes reasonable adjustments, where possible, to accommodate the needs of members with disabilities and/or health related needs. The policy takes into account the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and the need for Beccles u3a to avoid discriminating directly or indirectly against members with disabilities and/or health related needs. The policy will act as a reference point for committee members, group leaders and individual members in terms of the steps Beccles u3a will take. The policy will also identify the parameters of the adjustments that can be made. Beccles u3a is a membership charity and not a service provider, therefore whilst reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that individuals can participate and can attend with carers to support their needs, there will be certain needs that Beccles u3a will not be able to accommodate due to the level of care that an individual may need.

### Definitions

**Impairment:** an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological function.

**Disability:** the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers.

An Impairment is any condition of the body or mind that causes a Disability making it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).

Therefore a disabled person is a person with an impairment who experiences disability. Disability is the result of negative interactions that take place between a person with an impairment and their social environment. Impairment is thus part of a negative interaction, but it is not the cause of, nor does it justify, disability.

### All u3a Members should:

- Try to understand the difference between disability and impairment
- Understand 'reasonable adjustments' – for example a bird watching group (outdoors) with a very frail member whose attendance caused concern when visiting areas with poor ground conditions and it was acknowledged that not every impairment could be accommodated on every occasion.
- Consider the power of language, affinity with marginal groups and the role of convenors in welcoming and accommodating members.
- Think about the language you use. For example, be aware of the current terms used for physical conditions and people of colour, and consider adopting gender-neutral vocabulary (most obvious example – Chair rather than Chairman).

A concept of 'allyship' has been suggested where one member could become an ally of someone needing help. Details of this are on the u3a Sources blog: <https://sources.u3a.org.uk/>

## **Practical Approaches to Increasing Access**

In ensuring equality of access Beccles u3a will take the following steps:

- ◆ An Accessibility Officer will be identified from amongst the membership. This will be a volunteer role/committee member role.
- ◆ The Accessibility Officer will have responsibility for liaising with Group Leaders on an ongoing basis to ensure that groups are accessible and that group leaders are aware of what the expectations are and what adjustments may need to be made e.g. relocating a group held within someone's home to a wheelchair accessible venue.
- ◆ The Convenor will contact new members who indicate that they have a disability or health related issue that may need additional support and/or adjustment and discuss with them what needs they have and how these could be met – as appropriate.
- ◆ General meetings will, as far as possible, be held at a well lit, fully wheelchair accessible venue, spacious enough to cope with wheelchairs and mobility scooters, with wheelchair accessible toilet and hearing aid loop system, and with a sound system in use.
- ◆ Speakers giving visual presentations will be asked to give a good description of the presentation if there is a possibility that people with visual impairment are present.
- ◆ At the monthly members meetings the front row of seats will be reserved for members who have impaired hearing or vision.
- ◆ Access will be reviewed by the committee on an ongoing basis with a view to considering any additional adjustments that may need to be made e.g. availability of a hearing loop or access to dementia friends training.
- ◆ Committee members and Group Leaders will receive an induction and/or training designed to support them in having an awareness of and facilitating access.
- ◆ Group Leaders running groups that require a certain level of fitness and/or mobility will be asked to provide this information to members in advance so that members can decide as to whether the group is suitable for them.
- ◆ Group Leaders will liaise with the Accessibility Officer where there are concerns about an individual's ability to participate.

### **Beccles u3a will:**

- ◆ Try to ensure that there are a range of groups available that will provide access to members so that members do not feel excluded from too many interest/activity groups.
- ◆ Encourage and may require members to bring carers with them to u3a activities, as needed, with no additional cost for the carer. The carer will fall under Beccles u3a liability insurance unless they are a professional carer, in which case the individual will be covered by their employer's insurance cover.
- ◆ Maintain a database of venues and the facilities offered by each venue to accommodate different needs.
- ◆ Acknowledges a duty of care to all members and this may mean that difficult decisions have to be taken in assessing an individual's ability to participate either in the u3a as a whole or within individual activities. These decisions will always be taken through discussion with the individual member and his or her carer in order to ensure that a fair and considered decision is taken. This may include developing a risk assessment with the individual regarding their ability to participate.
- ◆ Seek additional advice and support from the Regional Trustee, National Office, the national website and external specialist organisations as required.

Members are urged to be aware of the resources available on the u3a website:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-and-inclusion-downloads>

For more information: <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Northern-Officers-Group-defining-impairment-and-disability.pdf>