

Guidelines for Group Leaders

Swaffham & District u3a

We are delighted you have offered to set up a group. Groups are the life blood of our u3a so your group will add to the other 20 plus groups that exist that provide a varied and vibrant mix to our members.

Running a group is pretty straightforward and common sense. There are one or two rules that you need to be aware of set down by National u3a so we've put together a few pointers to help get you started.

ETHOS First of all, the ethos of the u3a is about learning, having fun and supporting each other. It's not about passing exams or being an expert. As the group organiser it's your role to bring people together in a welcoming way, creating a fun learning atmosphere, encouraging everyone to take part irrespective of background, ability or knowledge. It's helpful as well to encourage someone to help you run the group in case you can't make all the meetings - a deputy maybe.

MEMBERS of the group - it's very important that you check everyone in your group is a paid up member of the Swaffham u3a. This is to ensure you personally and your members are covered by National u3a Insurance in the event of any accidents, incidents or injuries. Please let the Groups Coordinator and Membership Secretary know who is in your group, and when anyone leaves or joins, so the main database can be kept up to date.

WAITING LIST It's a good idea to maintain a transparent waiting list if your group is full to avoid complaints about 'queue jumping' or operating a clique.

BEACON As the group organiser you will be given a password which gives you access to the BEACON database. This enables you to communicate quickly with your group by dedicated email keeping them up to date with group meetings, events and sending out reminders. Training is available for Beacon and once you get the hang of it it's easy - honestly!

DATA PROTECTION If you do hold a member's contact information elsewhere, such as phone numbers or addresses you must keep this secure and password protected and only share with others with their explicit consent. This is to ensure you are complying with Data protection rules. However we would encourage you to use Beacon so that you don't have to worry about pressing a wrong button!

VENUE Depending on your type of activity you might be meeting in your or another members home or you might be hiring a community hall or room somewhere. Check out there

is easy access for any member who has mobility issues and easy parking close by. Try to encourage members to lift share wherever possible.

RISK ASSESSMENTS You'll need to carry out a simple health and safety risk assessment for the venue and your activity for Insurance purposes. It's not as daunting as it sounds as we've developed an easy template for you to use suitable for different venues. These can be found on the Group Leaders section of the Swaffham & District website.

SAFETY At each meeting we ask you to take a register for safety reasons. It's a good idea to ask your members to supply emergency contact details in case of an accident or ill health during your meetings.

ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS Should you need to make a report everyone should have an accident form and spare copies can be found on the Swaffham website under the Group Leaders documents section. These forms are important for insurance purposes. A more detailed incident form is also available on the website for more serious incidents. Remember it's individual members responsibility to determine whether they are sufficiently fit and suitable for any activity involved.

COVERING YOUR COSTS The ethos of the U3A is not to make a profit or loss from group activities. However, you need to make sure you cover your costs eg room hire and refreshments by charging a suitable fee for each session. It's a good idea to keep a record of monies collected and any expenses at each meeting.

SAFEGUARDING we hope your group gets on well together and has an inclusive and welcoming approach. In the event of unacceptable behaviour, bullying or abuse which can't be addressed between parties, don't tackle it yourself - you should seek advice from Pam Ruddy our Safeguarding Officer. In very extreme cases the U3A committee may invoke the u3a Complaints and Disciplinary procedure.

I hope this information reassures you that running a group is straightforward and common sense.

There's much more help and guidance available if you need it from:

Your u3a Committee	Pat Weir Groups Coordinator
National topic advisers	Local u3a groups and networks

Our u3a website has a dedicated section where you'll find a variety of forms/templates and a handbook for detailed reference.

Once again thank you for your continued support in making Swaffham u3a a vibrant organisation with lots on offer to our members

Have fun make friends and carry on learning!

Best wishes Your u3a committee 05/26