Thorley U3A - Accessibility Policy

1. Policy

1.1. Statement

Thorley U3A is a learning co-operative and membership charity which enables members in their third age 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). Thorley U3A is committed ensuring that the 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 Thorley U3A's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

1.2. Aims of the Policy

This policy has been drawn up to ensure that Thorley 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 Thorley 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 Thorley U3A will take.

The policy will also identify the parameters of the adjustments that can be made. Thorley 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 the U3A will not be able to accommodate due to the level of care that an individual may need.

1.3. Practical Approaches to Increasing Access

To try and provide equality of access Thorley U3A will endeavour to take the following steps:

- An Accessibility Officer will be identified from amongst the membership. This will be a volunteer 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 Accessibility Officer 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 a 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 it is intended that some of the front row of seats will be reserved on request for members who have impaired 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.
- Group Leaders running groups that require a certain level of fitness and/or mobility will be asked to provide accessibility 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.
- Thorley 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.
- Thorley U3A will 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 U3A liability insurance unless they are a professional carer, in which case the individual will be covered by their employer's insurance cover.
- Thorley U3A has 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.
- Thorley U3A will seek additional advice and support from U3APlus, the Regional Trustee, National Office, the national website and external specialist organisations as required.