



## **Bridport & District u3a - Group Convenor Notes**

### **About these guidelines**

Whether you are an established Group Convenor, taking over an existing group or interested in setting-up a new group, these guidelines are intended to help you establish and facilitate your group.

### **u3a Ethos**

The u3a was set-up with the main aim of supporting and encouraging life-long learning for all people in their third stage of life, with the accent on members sharing their knowledge and experience freely. Therefore, the availability to u3a members of a wide range of different interest/activity groups is the life-blood of the movement. A list of the current groups within the Bridport and District u3a is available on our website <https://bridportu3a.org.uk>

### **The Group Co-ordinator**

The Group Co-ordinator is appointed by the Committee to oversee the operation of all groups, to help set-up new groups and be available to support and advise all Group Convenors.

The current Group Co-ordinator is Paul Tebbutt contactable at <mailto:groups@bridportu3a.org.uk> or 01308 425945. Sylvia Henry is the Assistant Group Co-ordinator (01308 426581).

### **The Group Convenor**

It is important to mention that the role of the Group Convenor does not necessarily require you to be a specialist in the subject/activity offered nor to feel obliged to run every session. Rather, the role entails taking responsibility for discussing and co-ordinating the arrangement of the programme of activities, who is to take responsibility for their delivery, communication with current and potential members and resolution of any difficulties that may arise.

### **Starting an interest/activity group**

Anyone wishing to start a new group should in the first instance, contact the Group Co-ordinator with the following provisional details:-

- Name of the proposed subject or activity, together with a brief description of the group's aims and objectives and the level, if appropriate, at which it will operate e.g. "beginners", "improvers" or "advanced", in the case of a foreign language group.
- Name of the proposed Group Convenor and telephone number (optional)
- How group will meet i.e. in person (please specify proposed meeting place e.g. member's home/local venue), via video conferencing platforms such as "Zoom" or "Skype", Email or Phone.
- Day of week, frequency and time of meetings e.g. "every second Monday of the month, from 2pm to 4pm"
- Group's proposed commencement date

Following submission of the above information, the Group Co-ordinator will arrange for:-

- The Group Convenor to be allocated a “group specific” u3a email address for use by members wishing to register their interest in joining the new group and for any other u3a member wishing to contact the Group Convenor following the group's establishment.
- Email notification of the new group to be sent to all u3a members inviting applications.
- Details about the group to be placed on the “Groups” page of the Bridport & District u3a website. Please note that each group entry on the website includes a subject-related graphic/photo. Group Convenors can select their own graphic (which should be sent direct to Tony Dix at [webmaster@bridportu3a.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@bridportu3a.org.uk)). Alternatively, Tony can source an appropriate graphic on the group's behalf.
- Information about the new group to be included in the next issue of the Bridport & District u3a's Newsletter.

Following receipt of applications to join the new group, an inaugural meeting can then be arranged by the Group Convenor to discuss and agree the group's formation. It is important at this early stage, that consideration is given to how any special requirements identified by prospective members, such as mobility restrictions, can be accommodated.

***N.B.*** Before sending out any general emails to prospective members, it is important to first check with each individual that they are comfortable for their email address to be shared with other group members. If their agreement is withheld, they should be bcc'd into such notices.

It is suggested topics for the group set-up discussion include:

- Who is to lead the group and if required, a deputy
- The purpose of the group including the range, content and nature of the subject/activity
- When, how often and where\* the group will meet
- The optimal size of the group
- What skills, expertise and knowledge relating to the proposed activity exist within the group
- What additional resources may be required
- Study/learning methods to be used e.g. books, DVDs, online materials/courses, volunteer experts, use of Bridport & District u3a website \*\* for accessing the group's activities
- Sharing of responsibility for organisational matters, such as room booking and when relevant e.g. outdoor activities, the completion of risk assessments (a risk assessment is available on the Bridport & District u3a website <https://bridportu3a.org.uk> under “Downloads”)
- An indication of any likely costs that members might incur e.g. cost of materials/equipment
- Consideration of matters members wish to raise, including any special requirements

\* A list of public meeting places is available from the Bridport Tourist Information Office.

**\*\*** *Such use should be discussed and agreed beforehand with Tony Dix our Webmaster, contactable at <mailto:webmaster@bridportu3a.org.uk>*

### **Some general pointers about learning & facilitating your group:**

- Use of a variety of learning/study techniques avoids the risk of members getting bored
- All members should be encouraged to participate
- Everyone's opinion should be valued and respected, even if people differ in views
- Allow time for socialising, some of the best discussions take place over a cup of tea!
- Keep to start and finishing times

### **General Administration**

Group Convenors are requested to observe the following points:

- Notify the Group Co-ordinator of any changes in group arrangements, such as time of meetings, venue or cessation of the group.
- Ensure website information relating to their group is accurate and if any changes are required, notify the Group Co-ordinator.
- If a member stops coming try to find out why, as there may be a reason which can be overcome e.g. difficulty with transport/access.
- If a member fails to attend the group for a period of three months without a reason being provided, it is reasonable to advise them that their place will be offered to someone on the waiting list, when such a list exists.
- Keep a note of any u3a member interested in joining your group to whom you cannot yet offer a place, and contact them when a space becomes available.
- If the waiting list increases, encourage the formation of a new group with support from the Group Co-ordinator, if required.
- At beginning of May, email a current list of group members to the Membership Secretary.

### **Refreshments**

The national recommended contribution towards refreshments provided by the host, if meeting in a member's home, is 30 pence.

### **Finance**

#### ***Hall and venue hire***

Whilst many groups meet in members' homes (sometimes in rotation), some larger groups may require alternative accommodation for which a fee is payable. In the case of the latter, any rental agreement must first be agreed by the u3a committee (via the Treasurer, Valerie Gierth on 01308 420301) **before signing**. In all cases, the agreement must be in the name of Bridport & District u3a. Invoices for room hire rental should be sent to the Treasurer for settlement. Bridport & District u3a pays the total sum, group members contributing the balance, which the Group Convenor is responsible for collecting and passing onto the Treasurer, preferably via cheque.

#### ***Use of Zoom***

Whilst the current Covid restrictions remain in force, the committee is willing to finance the cost of a paid for Zoom account for use by any group that normally meets indoors. All such requests should be referred to the Treasurer, Valerie Gierth on 01308 420301 before a Zoom account is opened.

#### ***Special equipment/resources***

Some groups may require special equipment/resources for which there is a charge. Although all groups should aim to be self-funding, some support with the certain types of expenditure may be considered, on the basis of exceptional circumstances. All such applications must, however, be referred to the Committee via the Treasurer for a decision **before** any expenditure is incurred.

***Other expenditure***

All other expenditure relating to u3a activities such as the cost of outings and refreshments are paid by the participants directly.

***Record of spending***

Whenever expenditure is incurred by any group, it is important that the Group Convenor keeps a record of all receipts and payments.

## Insurance

Everyone attending a group must be a current member of the Bridport & District u3a (or neighbouring u3a) in order to be covered by our insurance policy, provided by The Third Age Trust *(The only exception to this rule is in the case of a prospective member, who can trial up to two sessions of any one group before joining. If the individual decides to continue their involvement with the group, they must subsequently join the u3a before their third group attendance at the latest)*. It is therefore important that Group Convenors check their group members' cards at least once a year, preferably during April. Membership of any additions to the group should also be checked at the time. If required, a copy of our insurance policy can be obtained from the Business Secretary, John Collins (01308 420728).

## Accidents and Incidents

If a member needs urgent medical attention, your group should contact Emergency Services. It is very important that any accidents or incidents that occur to any u3a member whilst participating in any u3a activity are reported, **as soon as possible**, to the Business Secretary, John Collins to whom an accident form/incident form (available on our website <https://bridportu3a.org.uk> under "Downloads" and "Links") should also be submitted. Whilst there is no requirement for any group to have a first aider, it is advisable for groups undertaking a physical activity, such as walking, to carry a First Aid kit. The cost of this can be reclaimed from the Treasurer on production of a valid receipt. The kit remains the property of Bridport & District u3a and should be passed on in the event of a change in Group Convenor.

## Privacy

It is very important that Group Convenors fully comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 provisions in respect to the data they hold about their members. Specifically, Group Convenors may hold personal data pertaining to the recorded membership of their group including: membership number, title, first name, surname, postal address, email address and landline and mobile telephone numbers, all to facilitate the effective running of the group and to communicate group information to members. If any group member does not wish to receive email communication, they should inform the Group Convenor who will delete their details. Similarly, the Group Convenor should delete all the relevant data relating to members who have left the group. Group Convenors must ensure that all members' personal data are stored securely and in a manner which cannot be accessed by unauthorised third parties. For further details, please see our **privacy statement** available in the "Downloads" section of our website <https://bridportu3a.org.uk>

## Problem resolution

Problems requiring intervention from outside the group are very rare within our u3a. However, in the unlikely event that a serious problem arises, you should refer the matter to the Group Co-ordinator. If the problem cannot be resolved within the group, it may be referred to the Committee, whose decision will be final.

## Annual Reception

Each year we hold a reception for all Group Convenors to which you will receive an invitation. The event is usually held in November and is primarily intended to thank Group Convenors for their work during the year, share experiences and provide a networking opportunity.

## Promoting/celebrating your group's activities

The following channels are available to promote your group to the wider membership:

- Bridport & District u3a Members' Handbook
- Groups' page on our website <https://bridportu3a.org.uk>
- Email to all members from The Business Secretary
- Bridport & District u3a Newsletter
- Monthly meeting announcements and noticeboards
- Coffee mornings for existing and new members
- Open days

## **Equipment**

Bridport & District u3a has the following items of equipment available for short term loan in support of group activities:

- Laptop computer
- Epson LCD digital projector
- 35mm slide projector
- Projector stand
- A3 laminator
- Portable radio/cassette player (no CD)
- Flip chart (A1 size) and collapsible easel
- White board

## **Further resources**

In addition to the collective skills, knowledge and expertise of our u3a members, the library service and the internet, the u3a has its own resource facilities, which can be found on their website [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk) (click 'Resources' button). We are also able to offer some training support for subject presenters, on request.

***Thank you on behalf of the Bridport and District u3 committee for undertaking the role of Group Convenor - your involvement and support is highly valued.***