

Registered Charity No. 1101615

Sudbury u3a Guidance for Group Leaders Part 1

The Role of a Group Leader

The Role of a Group Leader (In brief)

- To represent Sudbury u3a.
- Guide the group through the activity.
- Assess the risk of the group meeting place or journey.
- Check the safety of any equipment being used.
- Complete any accident reports, if necessary.
- Ensure that all group members subscriptions to Sudbury u3a are up to date.
- Maintain a list of group members and their ICE (emergency) details.
- If membership of a group is full, maintain a waiting list of members wishing to join and update the Groups Coordinator.
- Arrange for payments of group expenses with Treasurer.
- Collect monies from the group to cover the reimbursement of expenses.
- Keep a financial record of a group's income and expenditure.
- Complete the financial statements required by the Treasurer.
- Attend a Beacon 'Awareness' session to become familiar with the system.

The Importance of Interest Groups

All u3a's are independent of the National u3a organisation and have their own constitution. How we operate is largely dependent on what our members want. Sudbury u3a has evolved to have a balance between social and academic activities, our monthly meetings and current interest groups clearly indicate this.

More than anything, we need to have Interest Groups to which people wish to belong – otherwise our existing members might leave and others will not see any reason to join us.

Our Constitution

Our u3a is run by an elected committee, all of whom are Trustees of the Sudbury u3a. All Group Leaders represent our u3a in their activities, and whatever they do is on behalf of the u3a. For instance: if anything goes wrong during a group meeting that might result in an insurance claim - it's our u3a's insurance; or if the group's finances get in a muddle – it's our u3a's trustees who are held responsible in law.

The job of the Group Leader

In each group there will be one, or two people who will take on the central role. It is one of the tenets of the u3a that the group leaders are drawn from the membership of the group and that all group members must also be members of the u3a.

A group leader's role is to guide a group through a course of activity during which they may, or may not, lead the group. Most people prefer a democratic style of leadership where responsibility is shared by the group and people are expected to take an active part. Different subjects will make different demands on the group.

Sudbury u3a Guidance for Group Leaders Part 2

Responsibilities of the Group Leader

Responsibilities of the Group Leader

Our group leaders are not independent. The ultimate responsibility for what happens in our u3a rests on the Trustees, who are the members of our Executive Committee. This means that group leaders have to follow some simple rules, mainly relating to finance and health and safety, which should not detract from the main emphasis of a group leader to support, encourage and inspire the members of the group.

Risk Assessment

This is in two parts:

1. To confirm that all reasonable precautions have been taken to make sure that the venue is safe.
2. To check on the day to ensure it's still OK.

It's really common sense, and the checklists are just to make sure you don't miss anything.

Workshops have different hazards, so we have a separate checklist for group leaders who use workshops. Similarly, the safety requirements for walkers, amblers and cyclists are different.

Electrical Equipment

It is the group leader's responsibility to ensure that any electrical equipment used is in a safe working order.

If you notice a fault in any electrical equipment used by the group, please ensure it is disconnected and labelled as faulty. The appropriate person should be notified of the fault.

Accident Reporting

Even after you have evaluated the possible risks and taken all the precautions yet something goes wrong resulting in an accident it must be reported to the Secretary as soon as possible. It may become necessary to bring our insurers in, and they will need to know what happened.

We have a form to help you to provide a full report, so please use it even if the accident might appear to be of little significance. It might become more so later.

Use of Beacon

Leaders should familiarise themselves with the Beacon system and to update group lists as appropriate and download ICE contact details as appropriate to the activity. Use the Beacon email system in preference to personal emails maintained on personal computers. Group Leaders have been advised not to store personal information of their groups on personal computers due to hacking and GDPR issues.

Ensure Group Members Belong to Sudbury u3a.

It is essential that Group Leaders ensure all members of their group have joined or re-joined our u3a. The easiest way to check is to look at your group members on Beacon and if their name is in red, they have yet to be renewed. If their name is not listed then they have chosen not to renew and may have lapsed or resigned. Alternatively, you may check membership cards but this can be time consuming.

Keeping financial records

Groups with a larger income and expenditure or who have to set up credit accounts with suppliers are expected to keep their funds in a 'holding account' which enables the Treasurer to make payments on behalf of the group. The group leader is responsible for collecting funds, approving payments and maintaining a financial record.

Use of personal credit cards

The use of a personal credit card is not allowed for purchases on behalf of the u3a as it disqualifies any insurance claim by the u3a, as legal title remains with the holder of the card.

Payments can be made by other means and reimbursement will be arranged immediately by the Treasurer. Alternatively, the Treasurer can arrange payment using our u3a bank card.

Payments for Coach Trips, Holidays, Field Trips and Theatre Visits

In order to facilitate u3a insurance purposes all payments for these items require committee approval prior to purchase.

Payments for holidays are to be paid by members directly to the holiday company.

Spare Cash

It is important to note that in accordance with Charity Commission regulations no groups are allowed to make a profit.

However, any financial surplus a group holds at the end of a year can be rolled forward to the next. It is acceptable for a group to maintain a small cash float appropriate to the group's needs. This cash float should not exceed £100. Larger amounts should be given to the Treasurer who will keep them in the dedicated holding account where they are available to be drawn down as needed. If a group has a growing surplus, then the leader should consider reducing the charges payable by members or having a free period.

In the event that a group closes then any surplus funds held, belong to Sudbury u3a and not the members of the group.

Equipment for Groups

The cost of equipment required for a group is normally the responsibility of that group. However, in certain circumstances capital equipment may be purchased by the Sudbury u3a on behalf of a group, providing it is deemed by the Executive Committee to be beneficial to the Sudbury u3a overall. Any such purchases must be approved by the committee prior to payment.

Financial Return – Annual Report – Money In and Out

If your group has a holding account or has to pay out money (perhaps to rent a room or hall, stationery, postage, etc) in cash and then charge its members to recover the cost, we need a very simple expenses statement completed every 12 months, at the end of December. You need to keep a record of all expenditure, together with receipts as far as possible. Plus, all monies collected. At the end of each period complete the simple return, available on the website or from the Treasurer, and return it to the Treasurer. If you have any problems completing this form please talk to the Treasurer or Groups Coordinator.

Financial Return - Annual report – “nil return”

Some groups, particularly those meeting in members' houses, have no or very minimal transactions, merely charging members for tea, coffee and biscuits to repay the host. For these groups only a “Nil Return” is required. This can be in the form of an email

clearly stating the group name and the words 'Nil Return'. It is essential that the Treasurer receives this return at the end of every financial year. All groups must be accounted for to fulfil our obligations to the Charities Commission.

Further Assistance

If you require further assistance, please refer to the Groups Coordinator or for financial matters the Treasurer.

Our website contains a number of reference documents which leaders will find helpful including-

- Constitution
- Risk Assessments
- Insurance Certificate
- Insurance overview of policies and cover
- Accident Form
- Holiday and Excursion Form
- Group Leaders Financial Return
- Appendices for Groups

This Guide and the various reference documents are to help you ensure that you haven't missed anything in trying to look after your group. The Trustees rely on you to refer to them and make sure you address all risks appropriate to your group. You might feel it worthwhile however to go through a checklist and tick the boxes as appropriate to keep for your own records, annually.

Ian Mathews. Chair, Sudbury u3a

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