



University of the Third Age

Perth u3a

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Handbook for group leaders

Updated August 2025

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This document for Perth u3a is designed to cover areas of health and safety aspects. It should not be confused with safeguarding. Where safeguarding is about protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect, health and safety is about minimising or removing the risk of accidents and injuries.

This pack is available to each interest group leader. It applies particularly to leaders whose groups meet in public places, but there are some sections which refer to groups which meet in private homes.

Group leaders are requested to familiarise themselves with the contents and to ensure that should they hand over leadership of a group to someone else they make them aware of the contents of the pack.

The [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#) only applies to paid workers, although volunteers must still be protected from risks. The u3a should ensure that reasonable care has been taken to avoid harming others and that participants are aware of the risks.

Insurance

Perth u3a is covered by the insurance provided by The Third Age Trust (TAT). Further details about the insurance cover can be accessed on the u3a website <http://www.u3a.org.uk/advice>. If any activities are being considered that Perth u3a is unsure if they are covered, they will contact the u3a Office for further advice. The Third Age Trust provides third party liability insurance however extreme sports and high hazard activities may not be covered. Please check before running an activity.

Risk

Perth u3a will ensure the Committee, Group Leaders or those responsible for a meeting are aware of the need for an informal check of possible risks. This will be used to identify any issues/risks and explore how they could be mitigated. Perth u3a is aware that some venues used for meetings/events may already have their own risk assessment, these should be reviewed and where mitigations identified, ensure they are actioned. E.g. a venue may state that no more than 5 chairs should be stacked together and or nothing placed in the way of fire escapes. Where relevant, clear instructions and guidance should be provided to anyone who requires it. Further information, guidance and templates about risk assessments can be downloaded from the u3a website: www.u3a.org.uk/advice

Responding to accidents/incidents and dealing with emergencies

In the event of an incident/accident the designated Health and Safety Officer within

the Committee of Perth u3a should be informed as soon as appropriate. Where a u3a member is involved in an accident or incident whilst taking part in a u3a event Perth u3a will ensure those who witnessed the event and were involved complete an incident report (template available to download from <https://perth.u3asite.uk/documentation>). This must be completed and shared with those who need to have access to it and kept on file. It will also need to be shared with the insurers in the event of an insurance claim.

Lone volunteering

There may be occasions where u3a members may be carrying out activities for Perth u3a on their own. For example, opening a venue for a meeting, setting up for a meeting etc. Where this occurs the u3a member should ensure someone else knows where they are and when they should be expected back. The u3a member should also know who to contact in the event of an incident or accident and ensure they have, for example, their mobile phone with them and avoid activities at height e.g. using a ladder.

Home-based Groups

Some groups will be located within member's homes. It should be standard policy that no smoking rules apply as it will for all hired venues. If there is a likelihood that smoking will be tolerated within a private house – then that should be made clear to would-be members, so they can assess if they would still wish to attend.

Fire evacuation procedures: It is the responsibility of Group Leaders using hired premises to familiarise themselves with the evacuation procedures for the premises they use and the contact details for the relevant link person in their venue. It is the responsibility of the Group Leader to be fully informed of Fire Evacuation Procedures for the venue in which the group is meeting. It is the Group Leader's responsibility to ensure that members understand the required action in the event of a fire alarm and/or fire.

In order to ensure safe evacuation a record of members attending should be kept at each meeting. It is important to recognise that in some venues the u3a group may be the only occupants of the building at the time.

Group Leaders should note the following:

1. Before the start of each annual session, they need to take note of the Fire Procedures including the person responsible for the venue. Contact details are available from the u3a Accommodation Officer.
2. Determine the Fire Evacuation Procedures or any changes to them. (Some venues e.g. Unit 7 have detailed written Evacuation Procedures.)
3. In the event of there being no written procedures the Committee advise that the Group Leader rehearses evacuation with an officer

- of the letting agency.
4. This will include familiarisation with:
 - i. evacuation routes
 - ii. assembly points
 - iii. alarm systems.
 5. Should the u3a group be the only occupants of the building in the event of a fire the Group Leader should be able to contact the Fire Brigade and an officer of the letting agency.
In the event of needing to contact the emergency services, Group Leaders should be familiar with the post code of the venue as this information will be required by the operator.
 6. In the event of a u3a group ever having to evacuate a building the Group Leader should provide a report of the occurrence for the Committee. The Committee will forward its consideration of the event to the letting agency.

Incident Reporting: For health and safety reasons an attendance sheet should be completed at each interest group meeting, especially in hired premises. In the event of an evacuation of premises where a group activity is taking place it is essential that all members present can be accounted for. At the start of a group meeting members should be reminded of the location of the meeting point in the event of an evacuation. If an evacuation takes place the group leader must ensure that the attendance sheet is taken to the meeting point and a roll call taken to account for all members.

It would be useful if group leaders knew if any of their group members had medical or first aid experience as people who might be called on in the event of an accident or medical emergency during a group session (although you should also be aware that their experience may not be relevant to the incident or their accreditation may be out of date).

It is important that any incident involving a member participating in a group activity is recorded on the correct report form. This will ensure that any claim that has to be made to our insurers is completed in full. The form should then be forwarded to the Secretary of Perth u3a who will process the claim and make a report to the committee.

Accidents and Medical Emergencies

Introduction

Group leaders may find themselves faced without notice during a group meeting with an accident or a medical emergency involving someone in their group. It is important to be prepared in advance for such an eventuality, particularly if the group is meeting in rented accommodation. This is intended to offer some guidance on how to respond in such a circumstance.

What you should expect from the venue

The venue where you meet should have procedures for dealing with an accident or medical emergency on display. Where possible this will be included in the venue-specific information you receive from U3A as part of our Health and Safety briefing. This should include the exact address of the venue, postcode and location in relation to surrounding streets.

Currently, we are making extensive use of Unit 7/Unit 6 within the Perth Business Centre, 28, Glasgow Road, Perth **PH2 ONX**

Note: Unit 7 has a First Aid box located in the adjacent kitchenette next to the entry door to the room.

The Fire Escape routes are well signed with one immediately straight ahead on leaving Unit 7, exit is via a storage room; another escape is through the main entrance to the building. The current meeting point is **the Rear Car Park next to the Sports Centre.**

It is the responsibility of every organisation owning a building to report accidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the RIDDOR¹ system. Best practice for doing so is to keep an accident book. As users of the premises, it is our responsibility to inform the contact person in rented accommodation of any incidents, as well as to follow the u3a reporting procedures.

Record keeping

If there is a notifiable incident, please complete the accident report form and submit it to the Secretary for consideration by the committee. Record the incident in the accident book at the venue as well.

The Third Age Trust provides accident insurance cover for u3a activities. Should this be needed it is very important that accident report procedures have been followed correctly.

SOCIAL EVENTS AND TRAVEL

Perth u3a arranges social events ranging from day trips and outings to Christmas lunches, as well as organising travel either in the UK or Europe which can either be for a specific study group or for all members. The TAT website provides recommendations of best practice; describes insurance cover provided and gives information to ensure that neither participating members nor the organisers are putting themselves at risk. These are all available on the u3a advice page, referred to above.

¹ Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations

There are three types of activities that are considered:

1. Social Events – Day trips; wine & cheese events; Xmas lunches; garden parties etc. open to all members of the u3a.
2. Study Group Travel – Outings including both travel and accommodation as an extension of a study group activity.
3. Holiday – Trips over several days in either UK or Europe, open to all members of the u3a.

RISK ASSESSMENT

It is important that group leaders are alert to risks associated with the activities of their groups and have taken appropriate measures to address these.

Perth u3a does not require formal risk assessments to be completed, except in very specific instances where such an assessment is of particular importance. However, it is advised that with new venues, that attention is paid to the checklist below to ensure that there any possible issues are considered.

The Third Age Trust (TAT) does recommend that attention be paid to its 'Venue risk assessment checklist' and its 'Venue checklist – Day of use'. These are reproduced below for the general guidance of group leaders who are asked to be aware of the risks the checklist highlights.

VENUE RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- Is the access suitable for the group attending the activity especially anybody with limited mobility?
- Is wheelchair access adequate
- Is the area free from obstructions and trip hazards?
- Are there adequate means of escape in an emergency?
- Are there appropriate direction signs to aid escape?
- Is there a fire alarm?
- Is there emergency lighting?
- Is there a designated assembly point? Where is it?
- Is there an emergency procedure for the building? Do you have a copy?
- Is seating always laid out? Is it a u3a responsibility to deal with seating before and after the activity?
- Is food or drink being provided/ prepared? If so: Is the kitchen adequate and hygienic? Are food safe cleaning materials available? Do a visual safety check on electrical equipment.
- Are the toilet facilities adequate and accessible?
- Is equipment being brought into the venue? Has it been safety checked?
- Is there a first aid box or is u3a to provide?

A copy of this checklist with tick boxes is available for download from the TAT website referred to above.

VENUE CHECKLIST – DAY OF USE

- Emergency exits unobstructed?
- Emergency exits unlocked?
- Fire extinguishers in place?
- Toilet facilities open and clean?
- Walkways free from trip hazards?
- Kitchen facilities accessible and clean?
- Electrical equipment in good condition?
- Refreshment materials available?
- First aid equipment accessible?
- Safety briefing given?

A copy of this checklist with tick boxes is available for download from the TAT website.

WALKING GROUPS

Perth u3a has a number of walking groups of differing standards, ranging from gentle strolls to demanding hill walks of considerable length and difficulty. The former requires minimum guidelines. The latter need more detailed and rigorous ones. No one policy can cover such a variety of activity.

Responsibility of leaders

Each group leader has responsibility for ensuring that appropriate safety guidelines are written and made known to all group members. Leaders require discretion on the detailed safety measures for their group, and should draw these up taking note of the practice of other walking groups undertaking comparable activity.

The u3a Committee should satisfy itself when approving the setting up of a group or the appointment of a new leader, that the leader has relevant knowledge and experience to undertake their leadership role effectively. Thereafter it is the responsibility of the leader in consultation with group members to agree the ground rules for their group.

Responsibility of group members

All participants on walks should understand that they are ultimately responsible for their own safety. They must determine their fitness to undertake the walk. The leader may overrule them if he/she has serious concerns as to their ability to undertake the walk, but cannot accept responsibility if the participant has not advised them of any risk factors, such as a medical condition.

Except for the most simple and straightforward of walks, participants should be made aware of the following statement on safety which is based, with their agreement, on a document used by Perth Hillwalking Group:

Each participant voluntarily assumes the risk of taking to the hills and should therefore familiarise him or herself with navigation and walking techniques suitable for the standard of walk chosen and be suitably equipped to ensure his or her own safety in the hills at all times. Members should note that hillwalking can be a dangerous pastime and that the U3A has no control over the condition of the terrain to be walked or weather conditions. Perth u3a cannot be held responsible for any loss, injury or damage caused on a u3a walk or weekend nor on the journey to and from each walking venue, however caused.

It should be made clear that any participant with particular health problems which it is important to know about in an emergency is responsible for informing the leader of these. On moderate to strenuous walks every participant must carry a note of their emergency contact and of any medical condition.

Leaders should note that the statement above will not exempt them from the normal operation of the law relating to negligence.

The following notes are applicable to groups undertaking moderate to strenuous walks/ climbs.

Preparatory work

The designated leader for the day is expected to have familiarised themselves with the route and probable conditions and to have briefed participants on distance, anticipated walking time, terrain, amount of climbing involved and standard of fitness required.

They should advise participants on what equipment to bring and provide information on all practical details. The main points should be highlighted to participants before the start of the walk.

Any special requirements over and above the normal arrangements are at the discretion of the leader.

The leader should be aware of all the participants prior to the walk. It is highly recommended that all walkers carry mobile phones and they freely ensure that their number is known to all or at least some of the other walkers in case of the need to make contact. It is also considered sensible that all registered members of the walking group allow details of their home contacts to be known to all or at least some of the other members of the group. This can be supported by requesting that all walkers include an In Case of Emergency Card (ICE) within their packs providing basic information on home contacts.

On the day

The leader should have a 'plan B' in the event of bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances, and should form an assessment of the ability of all participants to cope with the walk. If there is any doubt as to this the leader should speak with the participant(s) concerned and take steps to minimise the risk of mishap. He/she should have basic contact details of the members of the group.

During the walk the leader should satisfy themselves at all times that every participant is accounted for and should moderate the pace, or take other measures (such as asking another participant to stay with anyone experiencing difficulty) to ensure safety.

Conclusion

Most groups already have a checklist and requirements, devised specifically for their own purposes. In some instances, these will be less detailed than the above notes whilst in others they will be more comprehensive.

Perth u3a committee reserves the right to see a copy of the safety guidance adopted by each group and to require it to be amended if it is considered inadequate relative to the nature of the group's walks

PORTABLE EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY TESTING

Perth u3a owns a wide range of portable equipment, both electrical items such as laptops and data projectors and non-electrical items such as screens. Much of this is available to be borrowed for meetings. A list is maintained by committee members of all such assets, and a version of the list shows items which can be borrowed for meetings.

Before a piece of equipment can be used by a group, a group member must ensure that they are familiar with how to use it. It is the group leaders' responsibility to book the equipment with the equipment holder and to arrange its collection and return. All users should visually inspect equipment they have borrowed for obvious signs of damage before using it. Any damage or problems encountered with the use of the equipment must be reported on its return.

For electrical equipment, the asset list includes details of the necessary Portable Appliance Testing or PAT. It is the policy of Perth u3a that all portable equipment is PAT tested every 3 years. Certification (test certificate and equipment register) is kept by the Equipment Coordinator (currently Bob Kerr, bob.kerr.u3a@gmail.com).

APPENDIX Incident Report Form – Perth U3A

An incident is defined as any occurrence which: a) results in personal injury to anyone (including a member of the public) b) is classifiable as a near miss with potential to cause serious injury c) causes damage to property d) involves ill health or sickness e) results in conflict or complaints f) is something which could cause damage to the reputation of Perth u3a.

It is important that this incident/accident report is completed as soon as possible whilst the details are able to be recalled accurately You should also notify the Health and Safety Officer or Secretary verbally in case they want to visit the scene of the accident.

REMINDER: Group leaders should have a post code for their venue available in case emergency services are called. Use: www.royalmail.com/find-a-postcode

u3a group involved with incident:
Nature of Incident:
Date/ Time/ Location of Incident:
Details of any assistance required at the scene:
Injuries incurred (if any):

Property damage (if any):	
Actions Taken:	
Follow-up required after incident (Eg. Medical advice/ attention sought afterwards):	
Any other comments:	
Witnesses (incl. contact details if not U3A members):	
Names and contact details of parties to incident, and nature of their involvement:	
Name of Group Leader	Telephone Number
.....
Signed.....	
Date	
Completed forms to be sent to Perth u3a Secretary/HS Officer	