

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

### DOCUMENT STATUS:

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<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	Wadhurst & District Trustees & Committee
<b>DATE OF INITIATION:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2023
<b>SIGNED</b>	<i>Mike King</i>
<b>DESIGNATION</b>	Chair on behalf of the Trustees
<b>DATE OF LAST REVIEW:</b>	October 2025
<b>DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:</b>	September 2028

### 1. PURPOSE

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy has been developed and agreed by Wadhurst & District u3a Trustees and Committee members in recognition of our collective responsibilities, and adopted across the membership. The Charity Commission in England and Wales also seeks assurance of the existence of this policy within the annual return questionnaire.

### 2. STATEMENT

Wadhurst & District u3a is a learning co-operative and membership charity which enables members in their third age to share educational, creative and leisure activities. Members draw upon their knowledge, skills and experience to teach and learn from each other (peer to peer learning). We recognise that some people are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and harassment, and we are committed to ensuring our u3a is as inclusive and welcoming as possible.

### 3. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Equality Act 2010. The Act stipulates that organisations cannot treat someone unfairly on the basis of what it calls ‘protected characteristics’, which are:

- *ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race*
- *age*
- *disability*
- *religion or belief (including the absence of belief)*

- *marital or civil partnership status*
- *sexual orientation*
- *pregnancy*
- *gender/gender reassignment*
- *sex*

Wadhurst & District u3a will strive to ensure that members do not experience discrimination on the basis of their protected characteristics. This will include ensuring equal access to groups and behaviour between members and by our trustees, committee members and group convenors. The Equality Act highlights that organisations need to consider what ‘reasonable adjustments’ can be made in order to accommodate those who may have particular needs.

Our Committee will review on an on-going basis the reasonable adjustments needed for all members and individual members with particular needs. Where necessary, the Committee will seek guidance and additional support from the national u3aPlus sub-committee and/or National Office.

#### **4. PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO INCLUSION**

Wadhurst & District u3a will:

- Ensure all new members are aware of our policies and procedures in relation to equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility as well as the Members’ Code of Conduct (see section 5).
- Make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure a wide range of people can participate in our activities and meetings. This may include:
  - ❖ **Time and day of meetings**
  - ❖ **Venue(s)**  
For example, ensuring wherever possible:
    - Access for wheelchair users
    - Access to PA system and a hearing loop
    - Availability of general parking and disabled parking spaces
    - Availability of disabled toilet facilities.
  - ❖ **Publicity:**
    - Using a variety of methods and platforms to communicate externally and raise the profile of Wadhurst & District u3a
    - Making communications available to those who do not have access to the internet
    - Using a range of images that reflect the local community.
  - ❖ **Recruiting new members:**
    - Doing outreach sessions (eg u3a stalls at local fairs and markets) and contacting agencies working with community groups whose clients/members may be harder to reach (eg Carillon Cottage)
    - Encouraging members from those groups who are under-represented within our u3a (eg men, younger members, those from ethnic minorities) to assist with the recruitment process for roles such as Trustees, Committee members, Group Convenors.
    - Managing growth so that new members can be accommodated, for example by:

- inviting members on waiting lists to attend group meetings, when there are spaces available;
- establishing a second interest stream such as our Art Groups and Book Groups 1, 2. and 3

### ❖ **Monitoring:**

- Monitoring and analysing member numbers ie the numbers of members who join, re-join and leave each year, and their participation in special interest groups, in order to identify any trends, and make any operational adjustments necessary to
  - (i) minimise loss of members/increase retention rates
  - (ii) increase attendance at u3a events
  - (iii) increase participation in special interest groups
  - (iv) promote recruitment of new (and former) members.
- Reviewing the diversity of the membership on an ongoing basis and ensuring that the u3a remains attractive and accessible to all.

### ❖ **Tasks and Roles:**

- Ensure a range of people get their voices heard by encouraging more members to take on roles such as co-opted members of the Wadhurst & District u3a Committee or Social Committee or as. group convenors.
- Ensure Group Convenors understand (i) the importance of **accessibility** so that both new and existing members can access the members' meetings and groups that they would like to join, and (ii) consider what reasonable adjustments may be needed to ensure this.
- Appoint an **Accessibility Officer** whose role it will be to ensure that both new and existing members can access the members meetings and groups that they would like to join and consider what reasonable adjustments may be needed to ensure this.
- Task the Groups Coordinator with ensuring that new Group Leaders are made aware of issues in relation to accessibility and what steps they may need to take in meeting access requirements. Each group will be reviewed on an individual basis as certain groups may require a certain level of fitness or mobility and members need to be made aware of this in advance.
- Offer induction and training around equality, diversity and inclusion to Committee Members and Group Leaders on an ongoing basis.

## 5. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Wadhurst & District u3a has a members' code of conduct. The code of conduct specifies that members should abide by the u3a's Policies and Procedures and treat each other with dignity and respect. This includes not acting in a way that would be deemed discriminatory or offensive.

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## 6. DEALING WITH DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Should our Committee become aware of any discriminatory practice or harassment, we will seek to address this through consultation with all parties concerned and, where necessary, through invoking formal procedures.

If any member of Wadhurst & District u3a feels they have experienced or witnessed discriminatory behaviour or harassment, this should be reported to the Committee. Any matters of concern will be reviewed by the Committee and a decision will be made, in line with our constitution and formal procedures, as to what steps will be taken to address the issue.

## 7. DEFINITIONS

**Equality** is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, when or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics. Promoting equality is about behaving in a way that tackles inequalities, aiming to ensure that all members are treated fairly, and do not experience discrimination.

**Promoting diversity** is about recognising that everyone is different and creating an environment that values members and ensuring that the u3a Movement is as accessible as possible to different groups within the community.

**Inclusion** is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking practical steps to ensure members feel respected.

**Direct Discrimination** is when a person is treated less favourably because of their ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race, age, disability, religion or belief (including the absence of belief), marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender reassignment, political belief.

**Indirect Discrimination** occurs when a condition or requirement is applied equally to all groups of people but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group.

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to 'protected characteristics' that has the purpose or effect of violating a members dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment is also unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has that same purpose or effect.

**Victimisation** occurs when a member is treated less favourably than others in the same circumstances because he or she has made a complaint or an allegation of discrimination, harassment or bullying or given information regarding such a complaint or allegation.