Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

# Statement

Downe 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). Downe U3A recognise that some people are particularly likely to experience discrimination and harassment and are committed to making sure that the U3A is as inclusive and welcoming as possible.

# Aims of this policy

Charities in Northern Ireland are regulated by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. Equality legislation requires charities (and other organisations) not to discriminate on certain grounds when they provide services to the public.

This policy has been drafted to comply with current equalities legislation in Northern Ireland, which identifies nine equality categories (also called equality or protected characteristics). These are:

* gender, including gender reassignment
* disability
* race
* age
* sexual orientation
* marital status
* persons with and without dependants
* religious belief
* political opinion.

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of any of these nine equality characteristics.

There are seven major pieces of legislation in Northern Ireland which contain provisions to do with equality and these are:

* Age: Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
* Disability: Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended and the Special Educational Needs & Disability (NI) Order 2005
* Sex (including pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment and marital/civil partnership status): Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 as amended
* Race: Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 as amended
* Religious belief and political opinion: Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998 as amended
* Sexual orientation: Employment Equality (Sexual orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003 and the Equality Act (Sexual orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006

Downe 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 Downe U3A Committee Members and group leaders. The equalities legislation in Northern Ireland highlights that organisations havea duty to make reasonable adjustments for a person with a disability in order to ensure they can enjoy the U3A in the same, or as close a way as possible to members without a disability. Downe U3A Committee will review the reasonable adjustments needed for all members and individual members with particular needs related to their disability, on an ongoing basis. Where necessary, the Committee will seek guidance and additional support from the U3A Plus sub-committee and/or National Office.

# Practical approaches to inclusion

Downe U3A will make sure all new members are aware of our policies and procedures in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion and accessibility as well as the Member Code of Conduct. Downe U3A will make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure a wide range of people can participate in our activities and meetings. This may include:

* Consideration given to the time of day of meetings and their location.
* Consideration of venues for meetings including:
  + Accessible to wheelchair users
  + Access to PA system and a hearing loop
  + Parking and disabled parking available
  + Disabled toilet facilities available
* Publicity:
  + Using a variety of methods and platforms to communicate externally and raise the profile of the U3A.
  + Make communications available to those who don’t have access to the internet
  + Use a range of images that reflect the local community
* Recruiting new members:
  + Doing outreach sessions and contacting agencies working with community groups who may be harder to reach
  + Encouraging members who are representative of the groups who are under represented within the U3A i.e. men or younger members to assist with the recruitment process
  + Managing growth so that we ensure that new members can be accommodated
* Monitoring:
  + Downe U3A will monitor member numbers i.e. the numbers of members who join, rejoin and leave each year in order to identify any trends in membership.
  + Downe U3A committee will review the diversity of the membership on an ongoing basis and will seek to ensure 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 leading groups.
  + The U3A will 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.
  + The Groups Coordinator will ensure 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.
  + DowneU3A will offer induction and training around equality, diversity and inclusion to Committee Members and Group Leaders on an ongoing basis.

# Code of Conduct

Downe U3A has a member code of conduct. The code of conduct outlines that members should abide by the U3As policies and procedures as well as treating each other with dignity and respect. This would include not acting in a way that would be deemed discriminatory or offensive.

# Dealing with discrimination and harassment

Where Downe U3A Committee become aware of any discriminatory practice or harassment, the committee will seek to address this through consultation with all parties concerned and, where necessary, through invoking formal procedures.

If any member of Downe 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 the U3As constitution and formal procedures, as to what steps will be taken to address the issue.

# 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** occurswhen 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.

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