

Shepway and District U3A Safeguarding Policy

It is a legal requirement of the Charity Commission that **all u3as (and other charities) must have a safeguarding policy in place to protect their members.**

The main legislation is the Care Act 2014. This is supported by six principles defining modern safeguarding which impact on the U3A as follows: 1. *Empowerment* (whereby the approach is focused on members making their own decisions); 2. *Prevention* (preventing issues from arising or escalating); 3. *Proportionality* (responding in a proportionate way); 4. *Protection* (seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk); 5. *Partnership* (reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies and liaising with the Third Age Trust); 6. *Accountability* (accurate recording incidents, and reporting them as required).

The legislation applies to adults at risk – ie those with care and support needs who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, and cannot protect themselves because of those needs

Members must also refer to the Third Age Trust guidance: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/edocman-downloads/safeguarding-guidance-policy-and-procedure-may2023>

1. Purpose

This policy explains how our U3A protects members from harm, abuse, or neglect, and what volunteers should do if they are worried about someone's safety or wellbeing.

2. Principles

- We are a self-help learning organisation, not a care provider.
- Members take part **at their own risk** and are responsible for their own decisions.
- Safeguarding concerns are rare, but when they arise, they must be taken seriously.
- Members are not expected to investigate — only to **notice, record, and report**.

3. Who is covered

- All members, and visitors or prospective members attending activities.

4. What counts as a safeguarding concern

Any situation where a member may be:

- At risk of **abuse** (physical, emotional, financial, sexual).
- Experiencing **neglect** or exploitation.
- Showing signs of **confusion, distress, or vulnerability** that put them at risk.
- Behaving in a way that puts **others** at risk.

This includes concerns raised **during activities, online, or outside meetings** if it relates to U3A involvement.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- **Committee (Trustees):** overall responsibility for safeguarding and appoints the **Safeguarding Lead** from among its members.
- **Safeguarding Lead:** first point of contact for concerns; keeps simple records; liaises with external agencies if needed. Reports all situations to the Committee.
- **Members:** treat others with respect and report concerns.

6. What members should do if they are worried

Step 1 — Notice

If something feels “not right”, trust your instincts.

Step 2 — Record

Write down, keeping it factual and brief

- What you saw or heard
- When and where it happened
- Who was involved
- Exact words used, if relevant

Step 3 — Report

Pass the concern as soon as possible to the **Safeguarding Lead**, or if unavailable, the **Chair**. Members must not investigate or promise confidentiality.

Step 4 — Refer

The Safeguarding Lead must report all ongoing situations on a strict confidential basis to the Committee. The **Safeguarding Lead** and the Committee (or if necessary, because of time constraints, its executive officers) decide whether to:

- Monitor the situation
- Speak with the member (if appropriate)
- Contact adult social care, the police, or other agencies

The u3a does not hold any statutory authority. Matters of concern will be reported to the relevant safeguarding authorities and charity regulatory authorities, as appropriate. Before doing so, the u3a committee will complete a safeguarding risk assessment, and seek advice and support from the Third Age Trust where necessary.

7. Confidentiality

- Information is shared only with those who need to know.
- Records are stored securely and kept only as long as appropriate or required by law.

8. Behaviour expectations of members

- Treat others with respect
- Avoid intrusive personal questions
- Maintain appropriate boundaries
- Not give personal care or medical assistance beyond basic first aid
- Not handle members' money except for group fees or agreed expenses

9. Emergencies

If someone is in immediate danger, call **999**.
Afterwards, inform the **Safeguarding Lead**.

10. Review

This policy is reviewed every **two years** or sooner if needed.