

Guidelines for Speakers

Background

As a charity, Chess Valley u3a (CVu3a) has an obligation not to promote views that may be contrary to the law or the requirements of the Charity Commission. These obligations are laid out in guidance from the Charity Commission and, along with the values of u3a, are the foundation of these guidelines. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and other relevant policies and the Constitution of CVu3a.

Definitions

The following definitions apply in these guidelines:

Beliefs: political and religious beliefs or systems of belief.

Controversial: the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010 together with u3a values. These include, but are not limited to:

- age
- disability, both physical and mental
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- politics and political beliefs
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or religious belief
- sex and gender
- sexual orientation.

Extremist: views and actions identified in the most recent Terrorism Act and other related legislation.

Events and meetings: any activity such as events, meetings, interest groups, informal or social gatherings, trips, holidays, tours etc., that are open to members or conducted within or organised by u3a.

Members: u3a members, including Trustees, advisers, helpers, and representatives who may not be paid-up members but act on behalf of u3a.

Politics: actions or activities of government and law-making organisations concerned with achieving and using power in a country or society, and, beliefs and actions of individuals about how a country ought to be governed.

Religion: systems of belief in god or gods, and activities connected with these systems or beliefs.

Speakers and session leaders: speakers, session leaders, presenters, facilitators and similar.

Duty of moderation and inclusion

As a charity, CVu3a is required and encouraged to foster good relations between different people when carrying out its activities, including being careful not to be divisive or denigrate faiths, racial or other groups. Additionally, CVu3a is non-political and non-religious, and does not support or promote any political or religious position. Extremist and discriminatory views are not permitted under law. However, controversial views are permitted if consistent with Charity Commission guidance and expressed in such a way that is not offensive or discriminatory; controversial issues must be presented in a way that allows members to make up their own minds.

Guidance for Trustees

Any view that supports extremism, is discriminatory of any of the protected characteristics, is religious or political, shall not be permitted. The Trustees shall not:

- support such views by association or endorsement
- organise or participate in events and meetings at which such views are expressed
- promote such views through written material or presentations
- permit any event or meeting at which such views are expressed to take place in facilities provided by u3a
- provide or allow the use of equipment for use in promoting or broadcasting such views, for example sound systems, photocopiers and printers, etc.

Nothing in these guidelines should be taken to preclude the use of public facilities provided by political or religious organisations, such as meeting rooms, provided that no endorsement is given, nor association implied by the provider of the facility or u3a.

Guidance for Organisers and Convenors

Trustees, Organisers and Group Convenors are required to ensure that speakers, session leaders and members meet the required legal and charitable standards and to foster good social relations. This means promoting an atmosphere of inclusion and preventing the expression of extreme, exclusionary or offensive views or behaviours. In deciding whether a controversial view may be explored, the intended contribution should meet the educational and public benefit obligations of u3a. Views that do not meet this threshold are not permitted. Speakers and session leaders are required to present views in a balanced way that allows members to make up their own mind on a controversial issue. Partisan speakers or session leaders should not normally be considered. However, should there be a partisan speaker or session leader, those views must be balanced, for example, with speakers who hold opposing views, or, by enabling the right to reply.

Prior to an event or meeting and as a matter of routine, the Organiser or Convenor should consider:

- a) sending a written briefing to the speaker or session leader well in advance of the event or meeting informing them of the required standards of balance and inclusivity; In the case of a controversial issue, consider requesting an advance copy of the presentation for approval prior to confirming the speaker or session leader.
- b) have in place a contingency plan should a speaker or session leader decline to accept the conditions of an invitation or the text of a presentation is found to be or likely to be in breach of these guidelines. Give consideration as to how to facilitate the right to reply to various points or views raised by presenters or members during the event.

At an event, Organisers and Convenors are required to ensure that:

- a) speakers and session leaders follow an agreed text (if applicable)
- b) inflammatory or derisory comments made by the speaker, session leader or members are moderated
- c) unrelated controversial topics are not introduced by the speaker, session leader or members
- d) participants attending an event or meeting respect the values, beliefs and characteristics of individuals and groups whether or not present or represented.

Organisers and Convenors should consider curtailing an event or meeting where unacceptable views are being expressed or in the case of other unacceptable behaviour.

Review and Approval

These Guidelines were reviewed by the Committee of Chess Valley u3a and approved on 11th March 2025.

The Guidelines will be kept under continuous review and will be formally reviewed on 11th April 2028.