

Covid-19: Re-opening of Community Facilities

Community Facilities have received permission to re-open from 4th July 2020 following implementation of Phase 3 of the Government's plan to re-build after Covid-19. However, the Government have confirmed that managers of Community Facilities have the discretion over when they consider it safe to open for the activities permitted by legislation, and that they may decide to remain closed if they are not able to safely follow the advice and guidance to make spaces Covid-19 secure.

The Council recommends facilities are not re-opened until you have identified the necessary safety, compliance, management, and operational issues required and established a plan to address and mitigate them.

You are not obliged to re-open immediately and it would be unwise to do so if you have not been through that process.

If a decision is made to re-open facilities, bookings should only be accepted where social distancing can be maintained, the number of people each person has contact with is reduced to a small group and/or contacts below 2m are minimised and transitory, but crowded events **cannot** yet be held.

At the end of this document we have provided an example Health and Safety Checklist and Risk Assessments from ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) to assist facilities in undertaking the relevant checks to safely open.

Considerations when opening a Community Facility

Risk Assessments

Risk Assessments will be key to the reopening of any facility. Committee Members/Managers/Trustees must consider the Government's COVID-19 Secure [guidance](#) and should undertake their own COVID-19 Risk Assessment for the building to ensure that their staff members and volunteers are safe. If this cannot be done i.e. because volunteers or staff are shielding or otherwise not available, the responsibility for risk assessments and implementation of actions can be delegated to a competent individual or company engaged to carry this out. Owners/Managers need to consider communal areas, such as, entrances, exits, toilets, kitchen etc.

Going through a Risk Assessment process and working out the areas of greater and lower risk will hopefully enable a "common sense" approach which hirers can adapt to.

The Building Risk Assessment will allow Management to decide the maximum number of users that will be able to use the building. The size and layout of the premises will determine the maximum number of people that can be accommodated while also facilitating social distancing. In order to achieve social distancing requirements, as far as possible, facilities will need to work out the capacity of rooms and set limits on the number of people permitted to use a particular hall or room at any one time.

Users of any facility will also need to be requested to undertake a Risk Assessment for their activities, they need to consider the use of the building so will need to see the Building Risk Assessment but will also need to consider their activity specifically and their attendees.

Safe Access and Egress

Implementing a one-way flow in and out of the premises should help avoid congestion, particularly where multiple activities are held at the same time. Usually entry would be via the main entrance, with people leaving via fire exits. For security, fire exits would need to be closed after each use and checked by the last person to leave the building, who then leaves via the main entrance.

Appropriate directional signage will be needed. Any changes to entrances, exits and queues should however, consider the needs of those with physical disabilities. It may not be possible to implement one-way flow internally, as people may have to cross an entrance hall to reach the toilets or kitchen, so it may be necessary to stagger access to such facilities e.g. a longer break between users or planned kitchen usage. It's worth noting that some lapse in social distancing may be difficult to avoid, e.g. where people pass in internal corridors, but this should be minimal.

Arrangements will need to be made to manage people at "pinch points" e.g. arriving for an activity and exiting afterwards, in toilets, kitchens and corridors. There is a risk entrances could become congested owing to multiple user groups, or people lingering to read notices or chat; so, a socially distanced queueing system is required, e.g. tape on the ground outside and inside the entrance, with signage. Staggered arrival and departure times may also help. Government guidance indicates that such transitory contacts are lower risk and it will be for hirers to try and arrange their activities to avoid these risks if possible, particularly for older or medically vulnerable people.

The latest Government advice is that if you can, you should wear a face covering if in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. However, face coverings should not be taken on and off frequently, so while this is most relevant for crowded areas such as public transport it is preferable that in community facilities social distancing and good hygiene habits are maintained.

It is worth considering, however, if hirers are working with older and medically vulnerable people, a face covering would be advisable. Examples include preparing food or drink and serving older or vulnerable people e.g. at a coffee morning or lunch club.

Use of Kitchens and Toilets

All spaces such as kitchens and toilets would be recommended to be 1 person at a time. Signage will be required, and users will need to be notified of this to allow for their planning and risk assessment.

Kitchens should no longer have any shared cutlery or crockery and hirers need to be aware that they will need to provide their own.

Test and Trace – Booking Systems

All users should formally book the space they intend to use and provide the relevant contact details for the leader of the group. Groups will then be expected to keep a register of all who attend their sessions as this will assist the Government's Test and Trace programme if there is an outbreak of Covid 19. Groups will only be required to retain this information for 21 days and its essential users are aware why this information is being requested.

If an outbreak does occur, it would be the responsibility of the Manager/Committee to ensure all relevant groups are informed (i.e. on the site at the same time) and Group Leaders would need to then inform their users.

Hirers will need to be provided with additional time at the beginning and end of their session to allow for additional cleaning of equipment and areas.

Hirers will need to be given instructions, guidance and responsibility via special hiring conditions which should be attached to their usual hire agreement. These should be issued in writing and signed or accepted by the hirer in all cases.

Hirers will be provided with a copy of the Building Risk Assessment. You may wish to ask to see a copy of their own COVID-19 Risk Assessment.

Hirers should be encouraged to bring their own Food and Drink e.g. water bottles for the time being, rather than making food and drink on the premises, to reduce work cleaning the kitchen. Users should also be encouraged to bring their own equipment where possible, e.g. crafts, keep fit, and can be encouraged to bring their own personal hand sanitiser, wipes, and tissues.

Cleaning and Hygiene

A decision will need to be made on how frequently cleaning should take place within the facility, based on an assessment of risk and use of the building. Some facilities have the resources (staff and finance) to increase their cleaning schedule to clean regularly used surfaces (handles, wash basins etc) and equipment before hirers arrive, which is ideal, however, many smaller facilities i.e. village and community facilities have volunteers and no set schedule, this can mean that hirers let themselves in, are often responsible for putting out and stowing away the equipment they use and for cleaning the spaces after use.

Experience is that not all hirers clean up after themselves satisfactorily, however this will now have to be part of the Hiring Conditions and Hirers will need to be informed of their additional responsibilities. In addition to this the Management of the Facility can assist by:

- Providing sanitiser stations at every entrance/exit and in high traffic areas.
- Notices at every entrance/exit and communal spaces showing what is expected of users, erect the "Catch It, Bin It, Kill It" poster and posters encouraging frequent handwashing.
- Ensuring there is a constant supply of sanitiser, soap, hand towels and materials on site for hirers to wipe down equipment and door handles etc.
- Ensuring their Cleaner / Caretaker is fully aware of the additional cleaning regime and what to do if someone is taken unwell on the premises with a suspected case of COVID-19 as this requires disposable PPE and double bagging of PPE and cleaning materials afterwards, which must be stored for 72 hours securely prior to collection: helpful guidance can be found on the Government Website - [decontamination in a non-healthcare setting](#).
- Advise hirers bringing or using their own equipment, which is stored at the facility that they will need to clean this for each session and before stowing it away or ask their group members to bring their own clean equipment and avoid sharing items.

Communication and Information Sharing

An essential part of running any Community Facility is communication and information sharing, hirers will need some reassurance when returning to using shared facilities that it is safe to do so, therefore its essential a Building User Group Meeting takes place – virtually or socially distant – before a facility is opened. This will ensure all hirers are receiving the same message, can share concerns or ask questions.

Its essential at this meeting hirers are advised of:

- The risk assessment for the building and the need for them to undertake their own risk assessment
- The possibility that they may need to use different space in the building, may need to change their operating times or use their space differently.
- Different use of toilet and kitchen facilities
- Change in entrances, exits and the flow through the facility
- Cleaning regimes and responsibilities, including where they can safely access any equipment they may need.

- Test and Trace – Information Sharing
- Information on what the procedure will be if a Covid outbreak does occur within the facility.
- Any other relevant building information

Health and Safety Checklist:

Before re-opening the facility, you may find it helpful to work through the following checklist:

Task	Complete
<p>General health and safety risk assessment of the whole premises.</p> <p>Check general condition of the building – i.e. leaks/broken windows etc</p> <p>Check the electrical inspection (required every 5 years) and PAT testing are up to date and visually check leads to appliance</p> <p>Check Gas system is within testing date</p> <p>Ensure any fridge/freezer is working at correct temperature</p> <p>Check the heating and hot water system is operational.</p> <p>Ensure internet is working</p> <p>Check alarm system is operation</p> <p>Identify and address any items requiring attention e.g. light bulbs failed, trip hazards.</p>	
<p>Ensure the Fire Safety Risk Assessment and routine fire safety checks are up to date</p> <p>Fire Alarm has been tested</p> <p>Fire exit routes and doors are clear, not sticking</p> <p>Fire extinguishers within service date</p> <p>Emergency lighting system tested</p>	
<p>Water Quality / Legionella ensure adequate water quality checks have been maintained and carried out. If these have not been carried out throughout closure – obtain a full disinfect of the system</p>	
<p>Carry out a COVID-19 Building Risk Assessment in consultation with any employees, if you have any.</p>	
<p>Consider whether additional cleaning is required, where and when. Consider arrangements for moving, stowing and cleaning equipment. A thorough clean of all areas should be undertaken before it reopens and the subsequent cleaning regime to follow will need to be identified.</p>	
<p>Discuss with your staff / volunteers any changes in work patterns required</p>	
<p>Ensure an adequate stock of hand sanitisation / hand wash facilities and paper towels: You will need to ensure your supply chain will be able to provide regular deliveries to ensure you have a consistent stock on site</p>	
<p>Consider “Engaged/Vacant” signage at the entrance to male and female toilets to limit the number of people within these areas at any one time and similar signage at other “pinch points”.</p>	
<p>Provide signage: Provide adequate signage around the facility providing clear and concise information for all hirers.</p>	
<p>Consideration provided to social distancing arrangements in corridors and at entrance and exits: Consider using tape to mark out a 2m distance outside and inside the entrance, and outside fire exits, to encourage people to wait their turn to enter and exit the facility</p>	
<p>Amend Bookings Terms and Conditions to ensure all hirers are aware of any changes in their Hire Agreement</p>	
<p>Set up a Building User Group either virtual or physically to work through all of the changes happening with your facility.</p>	

COVID-19 Risk Assessment examples from ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) helpful:

Links:

<https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Appendix-F-COVID-19-Risk-Assessment-for-Community-Halls-1.docx>

<https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Appendix-G-COVID-19-Risk-Assessment-for-hirers-1-1.docx>

Sample COVID-19 Building Risk Assessment for re-opening Village and Community Halls – June 2020

This sample document can be used as a guide to help produce your own COVID-19 risk assessment for your hall. You should consider adapting it to suit your own premises as appropriate. You should also look at your hall's usual risk assessment and check whether Covid-19 has changed any part of it.

The COVID-19 Risk Assessment should be carried out in consultation with any employees (HSE guidance). It is advised that any self-employed or volunteer cleaners or caretakers are also consulted, and that your draft is provided to key voluntary organisations which regularly use the hall so that any points they raise can be taken on board before it is issued to them as a document to be observed as part of the Special Conditions of Hire.

A key part of the risk assessment will be identifying "pinch points" where people cannot maintain social distancing of 2 metres. Transient passing at a closer distance is less of a risk than remaining in a more confined space so, for example, a narrow corridor is less of a risk than a galley style kitchenette or a toilet area with limited circulation space between cubicles, basins and door, where people remain for longer. For areas which present a problem people may need to be asked to arrange a waiting system or adjust signage e.g. engaged/vacant.

Important Notes:

1. The COVID-19 Risk Assessment may need to be updated in the light of any new government advice that may be forthcoming.
2. This document should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and guidance issued by government and local authorities. (Links to some key documents are provided in the reference section)
3. This document is not intended to be comprehensive and ACRE cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions, factual or otherwise, arising from reliance on it. It is not a substitute for independent professional and/or legal advice.

The potential mitigations are in three categories colour coded as follows:

Red – **Actions based on Government advice (i.e. should be considered mandatory)**

Orange – **Actions that are strongly recommended**

Green – **Actions that you might like to consider**

Area or People at Risk	Risk identified	Actions to take to mitigate risk	Notes
Staff, contractors and volunteers – Identify what work activity or situations	Cleaning surfaces infected by people carrying the virus.	Stay at home guidance if unwell at entrance and in Main Hall. Staff/volunteers provided	<i>Staff/volunteers may need guidance as to cleaning. For example, cloths should be used on light switches and</i>

<p>might cause transmission of the virus and likelihood staff could be exposed</p>	<p>Disposing of rubbish containing tissues and cleaning cloths. Deep cleaning premises if someone falls ill with CV-19 on the premises. Occasional Maintenance workers.</p>	<p>with correct PPE. Contractors provide their own. Staff/volunteers advised to wash outer clothes after cleaning duties. Staff given PHE guidance and PPE for use in the event deep cleaning is required.</p>	<p><i>electrical appliances rather than spray disinfectants, rubberised and glued surfaces can become damaged by use of spray disinfectant too frequently.</i></p>
<p>Staff, contractors and volunteers– think about who could be at risk and likelihood staff/volunteers could be exposed.</p>	<p>Staff/volunteers who are either extremely vulnerable or over 70. Staff or volunteers carrying out cleaning, caretaking or some internal maintenance tasks could be exposed if a person carrying the virus has entered the premises or falls ill.</p> <p>Mental stress from handling the new situation.</p>	<p>Staff/Volunteers in the vulnerable category are advised not to attend work for the time being. Discuss situation with staff/volunteers over 70 to identify whether provision of PPE and cleaning surfaces before they work is sufficient to mitigate their risks, or whether they should cease such work for the time being – individual RA should be undertaken. Provide screen for any reception spaces Talk with staff, trustees and volunteers regularly to see if arrangements are working.</p>	<p><i>Staff and volunteers will need to be warned immediately if someone is tested positive for COVID-19 who has been on the premises. Details of a person’s medical condition must be kept confidential, unless the employee/volunteer agrees it can be shared.</i></p> <p><i>It is important people know they can raise concerns.</i></p>
<p>Car Park/paths/ patio/exterior areas</p>	<p>Social distancing is not observed as people congregate before entering premises. Parking area is too congested to allow social distancing. People drop tissues.</p>	<p>Mark out 2metre waiting area outside all potential entrances with tape to encourage care when queueing to enter. Cleaner/Caretaker asked to check area outside doors for rubbish which might be contaminated, e.g. tissues. Wear plastic gloves and remove.</p>	<p><i>Transitory lapses in social distancing in outside areas are less risky, the main risk is likely to be where people congregate or for vulnerable people. Ordinary litter collection arrangements can remain in place. Provide plastic gloves.</i></p>

Entrance hall/lobby/corridors	Possible “pinch points” and busy areas where risk is social distancing is not observed in a confined area. Door handles, light switches in frequent use.	<p>Identify “pinch points” and busy areas. Consider marking out 2 metre spacing in entrance area. Create one-way system and provide signage.</p> <p>Door handles and light switches to be cleaned regularly.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser to be provided at all entrances and exits</p>	<p><i>Hand sanitiser needs to be checked daily.</i></p> <p><i>Provide more bins, in entrance hall, each meeting room. Empty regularly.</i></p>
Main Hall	<p>Door handles, light switches, window catches, tables, chair backs and arms.</p> <p>Soft furnishings which cannot be readily cleaned between use.</p> <p>Projection equipment. Screen.</p> <p>Window curtains or blinds</p> <p>Commemorative photos, displays.</p> <p>Social distancing to be observed</p>	<p>Door handles, light switches, window catches, tables, chairs and other equipment used to be cleaned by hirers before use or by hall cleaning staff.</p> <p>Cushioned chairs with arms are reserved only for those who need them by reason of infirmity and who have been socially isolating themselves.</p> <p>Social distancing guidance to be observed by hirers in arranging their activities.</p> <p>Hirers to be encouraged to wash hands regularly.</p>	<p><i>Cushioned chairs with arms are important for older, infirm people. Avoid anyone else touching them unless wearing plastic gloves.</i></p> <p><i>Consider removing window curtains and any other items which are more difficult to clean and likely to be touched by the public.</i></p> <p><i>Provide hand sanitiser.</i></p>
Small meeting rooms and offices	<p>Social distancing more difficult in smaller areas</p> <p>Door and window handles</p> <p>Light switches</p> <p>Tables, chair backs and arms.</p> <p>Copier, laminator, shredder.</p> <p>Floors with carpet tiles less easily cleaned.</p>	<p>Recommend hirers hire larger meeting spaces and avoid use of small rooms, other than as offices.</p> <p>Surfaces and equipment to be cleaned by hirers before use or by hall cleaner.</p> <p>Rooms with carpeted floors not hired for keep fit type classes.</p> <p>Wipe shared copier etc.</p> <p>Reduction in number of users</p>	<p><i>Consider closing, only hiring when main hall is not in use or as possible overflow for activities when more attend than expected.</i></p> <p><i>May provide a “kettle point” to avoid two groups using the same kitchen.</i></p>

Kitchen	Social distancing more difficult Door and window handles Light switches Working surfaces, sinks Cupboard/drawer handles. Fridge/freezer Crockery/cutlery Kettle/hot water boiler Cooker/Microwave	Hirers are asked to control numbers using kitchen to ensure social distancing, especially for those over 70 – dependant on size – Kitchens may best be reduced to 1 person at a time Hirers to clean all areas likely to be used before use Removal of shared crockery and cutlery Hirers to bring own tea towels. Hand soap and paper towel to be provided Consider encouraging hirers to bring their own Food and Drink for the time being.	<i>Cleaning materials to be made available in clearly identified location, e.g. a box on one of the kitchen surfaces, regularly checked and re-stocked as necessary.</i> <i>Consider closing kitchen if not required or restricting access.</i>
Store cupboards (cleaner etc.)	Social distancing not possible Door handles, light switch	Public access unlikely to be required. Management to decide frequency of cleaning.	
Storage Rooms (furniture/equipment)	Social distancing more difficult Door handles in use. Equipment needing to be moved not normally in use	Decide whether hall cleaner cleans or hirer to clean equipment required before use. Hirer to control accessing and stowing equipment to encourage social distancing.	<i>Consider whether re-arrangement or additional trolleys will facilitate social distancing.</i>
Toilets	Social distancing difficult. Surfaces in frequent use - door handles, light switches, basins, toilet handles, seats etc. Baby changing and vanity surfaces, mirrors.	Hirer to control numbers accessing toilets at one time, with attention to more vulnerable users. Hirer to clean all surfaces etc. before public arrive unless staff have pre-cleaned out of hours. Consider engaged/vacant signage and posters to encourage 20 second hand washing.	<i>Ensure soap, paper towels, tissues and toilet paper are regularly replenished, and hirer knows where to access for re-stocking if needed.</i>

Boiler Room	Door handle, light switch Social distancing not possible	Public access unlikely. Cleaner to decide frequency of cleaning.	
Stage	Curtains Social distancing Lighting and sound controls	Consider removal of stage curtains or tying back out of reach. Hirer to control access and clean as required.	
Events	Handling cash and tickets Too many people arrive	Organisers arrange online systems and cashless payments as far as possible. For performances seats to be limited, booked in advance, 2 seats between individuals or households.	<i>See National Rural Touring Forum guidance, Section 2.6</i>

Sample COVID-19 Risk Assessment for hirers of Village and Community Halls

This sample document can be used as a guide to help your hirers produce their own COVID-19 risk assessment for use of your hall. Please be prepared to help them complete it in the light of your own premises. It is intended as a supplement to a group's ordinary Risk Assessment.

Area of Risk	Risk identified	Actions to take to mitigate risk	Notes
Cleanliness of hall and equipment, especially after other hires	Other hirers or hall cleaner have not cleaned hall or equipment used to standard required. Our group leaves hall or equipment without cleaning.	Group to check with facility when hall is cleaned and to make sure regularly used surfaces are cleaned before, during and after hire e.g. tables, sinks, door and toilet handles.	Can we bring our own equipment?
Managing Social distancing and especially people attending who may be vulnerable	People do not maintain 2 m social distancing	Advise group they must comply with social distancing as far as possible and use one-way system. Adopt layout advised. Limit numbers using toilets at once.	Should we avoid use of kitchen – ask people to BYO food and drink? Allow older people time to use toilets without others present.
Respiratory hygiene	Transmission to other members of group	Catch It, Bin It, Kill It. Encourage group to avoid touching mouth, eyes, and nose. Provide	Remember to bring tissues and hand sanitiser.

		tissues ask all to dispose into a bin or disposable rubbish bag, then wash or sanitise hands.	Remember to empty any bins used into kitchen bin at end of hire.
Hand cleanliness	Transmission to other members of group and premises	Advise group to use sanitiser on entering and exiting the hall, to wash hands regularly using soap and paper towels.	
Someone falls ill with COVID-19 symptoms	Transmission to other members of group and premises	Follow facilities instructions. Move person to safe area, obtain contacts, inform cleaner.	