

Appendix D The Re-opening of Community Facilities: the practicalities

This Appendix has been revised and updated to reflect Step 4 of the Roadmap to Unlocking.

Community groups need to know when they can safely hold their usual – or a version of their usual – activities and, if so, what conditions will apply, so as to reduce the risk of spreading infection and overcome concerns by more vulnerable people about re-engaging with the community.

The Government's intention is that the nation learns to live with the virus and asks people "to make informed decisions and act carefully and proportionally to manage risks to themselves and others". While legal restrictions no longer apply, Government Guidance will continue to be issued so it is advisable to check the latest versions when issued. The Primary legislation remains in place until September 2021, so it needs to be borne in mind that were a variant of the virus that is resistant to vaccine to spread, further restrictions might be possible.

Step Four: Learning to live with the virus

All legal limits on social contact will be removed, dancing and singing permitted. Restrictions on numbers at events abolished. All activities can now take place.

For village and community halls it has been indicated that all community events and activities and private hires will be able to take place, with risks managed by hirers e.g., through ventilation, encouraging social distancing, hand washing and use of hand sanitiser.

It remains important to respect and be considerate of those who are more vulnerable and who may wish to take a more cautious approach so it will be appropriate at some activities or events that measures (including wearing face masks and social distancing) are taken so that people who are clinically more vulnerable or not yet fully vaccinated can attend. Good ventilation (or holding activities outdoors) is the best means of reducing risk of transmission so it will be important to take advantage of the better weather in order to enable more vulnerable people to enjoy activities with minimal anxiety.

While all use can resume, and smaller events where social distancing can continue to be achieved will be less risky, the questions now likely to arise are around whether, or when, to continue applying reduced capacity limits and whether to require other mitigation measures for larger or more "crowded" bookings eg to charge for additional cleaning afterwards. Reviewing the Covid - 19 Risk Assessment should help arrive at decisions.

Pending issuing of more detailed guidance it makes sense for halls to retain the physical measures already in place (e.g., QR poster, hand sanitiser stations, posters requiring face coverings on entry) and more frequent cleaning of regularly touched surfaces, so that people feel comfortable returning to the hall.

The Covid-secure capacity can be relaxed at Step 4 to a level which feels appropriate for

different types of larger event, bearing in mind for example whether it's an audience seated for a performance (less risky), a wedding reception with people dancing and singing (more risky) and whether provision can be made for the more vulnerable and non-double vaccinated.

At step 4 :

- **All limits on social contact will be removed** (previously groups of 6 people or 2 households indoors, or 30 people outdoors).
- **Music concerts, sporting events, singing and dancing can resume** without any limits on attendance or social distancing requirements.
- **All restrictions on life events will be removed** such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms. There will be no requirement for table service or restrictions on singing or dancing.
- **The legal requirements to wear a face covering will be lifted** in all settings. Guidance will advise that wearing a face covering will reduce your risk and the risk to others, where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces, so **use of face coverings will remain advisable in confined spaces such as toilets, kitchens and corridors and at more crowded events.**
- **Social distancing rules will be lifted** (2 metres or 1 metre with additional mitigations). However, the risks of close contact with others should be considered, particularly if clinically extremely vulnerable or not yet fully vaccinated.
- **Table service restrictions, and distancing between tables, will be lifted** for hospitality venues. Government Guidance will be updated to provide examples of sensible precautions to be taken in risk assessing the situation.
- **Test and Trace will be retained and continued display of QR codes will be advised.** The advice for individuals to get a test if advised to do so and self-isolate if tested positive remains key to reducing transmission.
- People no longer need to work from home.
- Controls for early years, schools, colleges and higher education institutions will be adjusted. **The intention is that children will no longer need to be in consistent groups ('bubbles').**

Government guidance will set out how people can manage the risks to themselves and to others:

1. Meeting in well-ventilated areas where possible, such as outdoors or indoors with windows open.
2. Wearing a face covering where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces.
3. Washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.

4. Covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.
5. Staying at home if unwell, to reduce the risk of passing on other illnesses onto friends, family, colleagues, and others in your community.
6. Considering individual risks, such as clinical vulnerabilities and vaccination status.

Application of the unlocking to hall bookings

A risk-based approach needs to be taken, bearing in mind:

- the important need to address isolation, loneliness and mental health issues;
- the need to respect and be considerate of those who are more vulnerable and who may wish to take a more cautious approach;
- the need for people who normally earn a living around community facilities to do so.
- While vaccination reduces risk of hospitalization, the virus can still be transmitted and new variants are a cause for concern.

The information below is designed to help people work out **how to arrange activities safely**. It cannot cover every situation and is intended only as a guide to help halls draw up their own policy towards bookings, so that the Booking Secretary knows how to respond to requests and can discuss the appropriate measures. It is not necessary for a hall to accept a booking when permitted if it has doubts as to whether the organizer will supervise the event so that it is conducted safely.

The following should be considered:

- The expected numbers attending and the capacity the hall feels safe for the event?
- Will the organiser be able or willing to ensure people maintain social distancing with vulnerable people?
- What arrangements would be made if more people attend than expected and the event becomes crowded, when ventilation may be lacking and social distancing not possible?
- The likely age of those attending. While most people will have been vaccinated, arrangements should nevertheless be made to provide for a degree of social distancing, especially in more confined areas such as kitchen and toilets. The clinically vulnerable are likely to be particularly cautious.
- Are the organisers willing to clean regularly used surfaces before the event, while it takes place and before leaving?
- Will other organisations be using the premises at the same time, which might create contacts with people other than those who are attending are usually in contact with?
- Organisers may be following guidance issued by their own governing bodies (eg for sports), which may be more specific to their activity and should provide reassurance.
- **Public meetings, Performances and other large, seated events:** It may be helpful that for some meetings they are held as a hybrid event, ie which can also be attended online and hosted/run from the hall by a small number of people.. For large meetings and performances attendees can be asked to use the furthest seat from the entrance first unless hard of hearing, leaving a seat between groups of people on

either side. Handouts can be provided at the end rather than at the beginning.

- **Community markets, an art exhibition, public consultation**, bring and buy sale, fete, produce show: A one-way system could be operated
- **Libraries, book lending schemes and Wifi access:** Users should be asked to clean hands on arrival, regularly if browsing and when leaving.
- **Small events and facilities providing catering:** e.g. coffee mornings, pop-up cafés, luncheon clubs, community cafes. The requirement for a distance of 2m between tables and table service only no longer apply but it may be helpful to set aside an area where this remains in place so that more vulnerable people feel safe. Government Guidance for pubs, cafes and restaurants should be consulted to work out how to run these safely.
- **Playing games at tables:** Slightly larger tables, hand sanitizer, face coverings, new cards, cleaning cards and tiles touched by other players may assist in making older players feel comfortable.
- **Weddings, wedding receptions, birthday parties and other life cycle events:** It is advisable to discuss arrangements with the family : With older or vulnerable guests attending the organizer will need to make provision to reduce risk of virus transmission to them, so the hall's usual capacity not possible unless there is space for a gazebo outside. Children's entertainers can assist with managing arrangements for children. While music and dancing is permitted, organizers should be encouraged to avoid very loud music and a "crowded" dance floor. See government guidance on Places of Worship and on Weddings, and for cafes and restaurants in relation to catering.
- **Social Clubs, bars:** Government guidance for pubs, cafes and restaurants (the hospitality sector) should be followed.
- **Indoor sport and exercise and dancing classes:** Government Guidance for the sector should be followed.
 - **Indoor Performances, Rehearsals, broadcasts:** Government Guidance should be followed.

C. There has been some concern by trustees about responsibilities and confusion about the way different Government Guidance applies.

The following may help:

1. **Trustees** of Village Halls are unlikely to be at risk if they have undertaken and followed a COVID-19 Risk Assessment before re-opening their Halls, unless the activity is on a specific 'banned' list (either regionally or nationally).
2. Risk under the 'crisis regulations' falls to the **event organiser**. If a **hirer, the event organiser**, does not feel the Hall is in a condition that enables them to comply, they should not make the booking.

3. **Trustees and managers of Village Halls** will, of course, want to ensure that their premises make it as easy as possible for both hirers and individuals to comply with relevant Guidance through the provision of adequate handwashing, signage, spacing/capacity guidelines, multiple small tables etc. specific to their Hall. The manner or extent to which managers choose to do this is unlikely to alter the risk for them under the regulations.
4. **Hirers** should commit themselves to operating in a COVID-19 Secure way by following the Government's Guidance in force for their activity. The Government guidance says: "if organising an activity, you should carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment to identify actions which could minimise the risk of transmission".
5. **Trustees and managers** of Halls should follow good practice themselves and avoid creating the conditions for the spread of COVID-19 in their community. For this reason, they will want to avoid letting to any **hirer** where there may be an obvious risk of Guidance being hard to comply with.
6. In order to assure themselves on 4, above, trustees of Halls should ensure **hirers** inform all participating **individuals** that they need co-operate with social distancing and face covering requirements. *The responsibility rests with the **individual** to comply and with the **hirer** (the event organiser) to have carried out a risk assessment and operated the event under COVID-19 Secure guidelines to make it possible*
7. The Government guidance for **individuals** should be followed.
8. **Space requirements may be difficult to determine** in advance of occasional events, whereas for small regular activities this is likely to be less of a problem: Vulnerable people may still require sufficient space for social distancing within their group. Organisers can therefore **ask** whether social distancing is needed, so that when an activity is being booked or people are being seated, sufficient space is made available.
9. Common sense can be applied.

Managing social interactions at Step 4– examples

Activity or Event	How to Manage groups?	Can Face Coverings be removed?
Indoor market:	A steward at the entrance checks whether space is available before allowing entry. One way system.	Yes, but they remain advisable.
Sewing group:	Place tables 1 -2m apart if possible or encourage users to sit at either end of a large table if not with someone with whom they have regular contact.	Yes. Advisable in confined spaces.
Quiz:	Most people attend in family or friendship groups so can be seated at separate tables, 1- 2 m apart. People can be asked to book in advance, and people could join online. At the interval invite people from each table to use toilets one by one.	Yes. Advisable in confined spaces or if working on an item with another person.
Art class:	12 people. The instructor moves round the room, paying attention to social distancing. Attendees	Yes, advisable in confined spaces

	can chat and move within their group during the class and coffee break, but should aim to respect social distancing of 1m unless wearing a face covering.	
Bingo:	If people don't book in advance, someone should show them to a row of seats or table large enough for their group. A 1-2m separation from tables in front and behind is advisable.	Yes, advisable in confined spaces.
Public meeting	Seats placed in forward facing rows eg 8 on each side of a 2m gangway, each group or individual separated from the next group or individual by an empty seat in the row. Someone should be available to help seat people so as to ensure rows fill from the far end first.	Yes, but if closely packed remain advisable except when speaking. Advisable at arrival and on departure and in confined spaces.
Film show (Step 3)	Barns Green Village Hall, Sussex, held 2 shows, with advance bookings in 2020. They can continue separating groups who book by one or two seats, depending on vulnerability, and retaining the seats as the refreshment area would avoid people mixing so that others feel safe.	Yes, but advisable in confined spaces and when arriving and departing.
Wedding reception	The hirer should be asked how the tables should be set out so that vulnerable people socially distance from others. Capacity should be discussed with this in mind.	Yes, advisable in confined spaces
Coffee morning	People attend to socialise with others, and tend to include those who are vulnerable, therefore continuing to provide 2m social distancing between tables is advisable.	Yes,
WI meeting	The age profile may mean that members are particularly cautious so it would be best to assume they would prefer to sit 2m socially distanced from those they are not in regular contact with, and set the room out accordingly, allowing them to move their own chairs as appropriate.	Yes, but the vulnerability of those attending should be considered, so best only removed when seated.