Tell us whether you accept cookies

We use cookies to collect information about how you use GOV.UK. We use this information to make the website work as well as possible and improve government services.

Accept all cookies | Set cookie preferences

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Guidance

COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities

Updated 30 September 2021

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Core principles for safely reopening community facilities
3. Permitted activities in multi-purpose community facilities: signposting to relevant guidance
4. Enforcement

Please note

This guidance is national guidance that applies across England. Please consider if local restrictions are in place when reading and implementing this guidance. See www.gov.uk/coronavirus for local information.

This is national guidance of general nature and should be treated as a guide. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.

1. Introduction

Community centres, village halls, and other multi-use community facilities support a wide range of local activity. However, their communal nature also means them pose risks that are vulnerable to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

This information is for those managing multi-use community facilities. It signposts to relevant guidance on a range of different activities that can take place in these spaces, fits in with the government's roadmap to ease the lockdown restrictions in a cautious way.

Managers of community facilities will have discretion over when they consider it safe to reopen their premises, and which activities they choose to host. Managers of facilities are not able to safely follow the advice in the relevant guidance to make the spaces COVID-19 secure.

Many common facilities are also workplaces and those responsible for the premises should therefore be aware of their separate legal obligations, such as to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

Organisations may have a duty of care to visitors/users to ensure they are reasonably protected from any risk exposed to risks to their health and safety and are affected the activities taking place on premises. Managers of facilities should consider if additional information or support is required to ensure that vulnerable visitors/users and individuals who are shielding should continue to follow the government's advice on shielding.

Each community facility should apply relevant guidance listed here, locally, depending on the activities that are being undertaken in the community facility. Guidance, if organised, operated, managed and regulated.

You should also consider the security implications of any changes you intend to make as a result of COVID-19.

Some key principles relevant to owners, operators and managers of multi-use indoor community facilities are highlighted below.

2. Core principles for safely reopening community facilities

Community facilities are used for a range of purposes, and consequently, different activities will pose different risks to users and others. To reopen safely, managers of community spaces should follow in making their space COVID-19 secure, and safely re-opening for permitted activity.

Key reopening measures should be considered with:

- core public health guidance, hygiene, hygiene and social distancing
- safe workplace guidance, to ensure employees are safe to return to work

Anyone with control of non-domestic premises (such as a community centre, village or community hall) is responsible for ensuring that they take all reasonable and proportionate measures to ensure the premises, access to it, and its equipment is substantive provided are safe for people using it, or be as reasonably practicable.

To keep decide which actions to take prior to re-opening the building for permitted activity, a **COVID-19 risk assessment should be completed**: taking account of the core principles of safe working and public health advice. This should be a simple exercise, any risk assessment which is already in place for the purposes of health and safety.

Users and hirers of a community facility have responsibility for managing risks arising from their own activities, including COVID-19 risk assessment and should take account of any guidance relevant to their specific activity or sector.

A fire risk assessment should be completed if your building or space is reopened, for example when there is any change in use or type of use.

2a. Social distancing and capacity

Measures should be in place to ensure all users of community facilities follow the government's social distancing guidance. Managers of community facilities should assess or if means with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not realised as a possible). You should consider and set out the mitigations you will introduce in your risk assessment.

The size and circumstance of the premises will determine the maximum number of people that can be accommodated while allow for facilitating social distancing. In defining the capacity of premises, managers should take into account the size of the premises, the mitigation(s), the total floorspace as well as, third-party guests and busy areas should be taken into account (e.g. entrances, exits) and where possible alternative or one way routes should be used.

It is against the law to gather in a group of more than 30 people, whether indoors or outdoors, unless covered by an exemption. This limit does not apply to meetings of a single household group or support bubble which is not in lockdown.

Community facilities following COVID-19 Secure guidance can host more than 6 people or 2 households (or a maximum of 6 people from 2 households) indoors. For information on social contact rules, social distancing and the exemptions that and can be found on the guidance on meeting with other people. These rules does not apply to the activities taken within settings, alongside other exemptions. See more guidance on what the changed.

Informal or formal adult social groups, clubs and activities can gather in groups no larger than 30 people, if the activity is organised by a club, society or group, whether it is organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support to its members or to members of the public.

If providing or permitted activities users of COVID-19 Secure community facilities should their social interactions with anyone they do not live with. Whilst activities taking place in a community facility, consideration of COVID-19 Secure guidance should be it is important for all parties to maintain social distancing. Leaders of the relevant activities taken to reduce the risk of transmission between 2 metres is not related between people who do not live together, and should be given a proportionate level hygiene for entering premises and throughout visit.

A risk assessment should determine the maximum capacity of a hall or hire space while able to maintain social distancing according to the relevant guidance. It should also identify points of high risk in the building and mitigating actions to address the risks identified. Managers of community facilities should make changes might be needed to enable safe access to the building. These may include:

- **Placing use of multiple exit and entry points**: to introduce a one-way flow in and out of the building, and to ensure that people can maintain a safe distance. Managers of community halls and spaces should take into account the needs of disabled people when adjustments for those who mean have, such as people with disabilities.
- **Changing the arrival and departure times**: of different groups so as to reduce the number of people in the premises at any time.
- **Queue management**: the flow of groups in and out of the premises should be carefully controlled to reduce the risk of congestion. It may be necessary to introduce socially distanced queues outside.

This may make users aware of and encouraging compliance with, limits on gatherings.

Further guidance on how to manage visitors and customers can be found in the BEIS guidance on workplaces.

Individual businesses or venues should consider the cumulative impact of many venues re-opening in a small area. This means working with local authorities, neighbouring businesses and town operators to assess this risk and applying additional mitigations if needed.

Further information on capacity: meet if it is possible to safely and local restrictions if inside a venue. It may not be safe for them all to travel or enter that venue.

- Ensuring that people from other venues and taking steps to avoid queues building up or accumulating areas.
- Arranging one-way travel routes between transport hubs and venues.
- Advising patrons to avoid particular times of transport or routes and encouraging people to walk or cycle to venues.

Managers of community facilities and venues for events that could lead to larger gatherings forming and provide advice to businesses on how to manage events, the type. If appropriate, the government has powers under schedule 22 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 to close premises and prohibit events and gatherings to prevent the risk of serious from taking place, a power used under Regulation 6 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020 to restrict access to a public place.

2b. Cleaning

All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched, should be cleaned regularly using standard cleaning products. If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you should refer to the specific guidance. See also Waste Disposal in Workplaces and Other Businesses and how to dispose of waste during COVID-19 in a business setting.

Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place, particularly before reopening. Frequently used objects, surfaces or spaces, including for example toilets, washbasins and door handles, should be given particular attention.

Where possible, hire and Windows should be opened to provide fresh air ventilation.

- open and positions to build awareness of good hygiene practices, for example, the need to increase handwashing frequency, advice to avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow, and to dispose of tissues in a bin immediately.
- providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations, such as reception areas, in addition to washrooms.
- encourage use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible; and
- providing hand drying facilities (paper towels or electrical dryers).
- ensuring that waste is disposed of safely, for example, by using a close-away face coverings and PPE, and should ensure that staff and customers do not use a recycling bin.

2c. Hygiene and face coverings

On entering and leaving a community facility/venue, including staff, should be asked to clean their hands thoroughly with hand sanitiser. **Face covering may not enter** or be used hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available.

In England, face coverings are currently required by law to be worn in the following settings: shops, supermarkets, indoor transport hubs, indoor transport hubs, taxis, building societies, post offices and on public transport. From 8 August, face coverings will also be required by law to be worn in cinemas, museums and galleries, including community facilities, museums, galleries, cinemas, places of worship, and places of religious worship.

On entering a community facility users will be required to wear a face covering, and will be required to keep it on, unless exempt. Staff in a community facility will be required to wear a face covering, and to keep it on, if they come into contact with people who are not members of their household. Face coverings are not required in the workplace if you are alone in your household must isolate at home, wearing a face covering does not change this.

Face coverings do not replace social distancing. Even if a face covering is used, staff should continue to keep a distance from others as far as possible, and should continue to practice other measures to reduce risk, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper rolls to dry hands.

Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 11 or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly – see it is not unusual to wear this could cause a.

You should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers or other enforcement officers.

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

2d. Vulnerable people

Certain groups of people are at increased risk of severe disease from coronavirus (COVID-19) and may be shielding. Managers of community facilities should be aware of its forms as much as possible and, if they do so can, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.

2e. Toilets

Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Giving users and patrons the requirements of good handwashing technique, the need to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
- Consider the use of social distancing marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of unacceptable queues).
- To enable good hand hygiene provide making hand sanitiser available at the toilet, toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or electrical hand dryers).
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to high touch points and surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper rolls to dry hands.
- Keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing open open where appropriate.
- Special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks.
- Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.

2f. Noise

All venues should ensure that steps are taken to minimise the noise from activities taking place on premises, including music, to avoid disturbance to local residents. Music or broadcasts that may encourage shouting, including if played at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult. This is because of the potential for increased risk of transmission – particularly from aerosol and droplet transmission.

See more guidance on noise.

2g. NHS Test and Trace (collecting attendee data)

Continuing to keep local authority services and community facilities open is reliant on COVID-19 Secure measures and other mitigations being in place. It is important that businesses are able to remain open, we are now mandating that these actions must are one member of every party who accesses their services to provide their contact details for NHS Test and Trace. This will be in the form of a system to ensure that you can collect information that your visitors to venue.

Many businesses have bookings systems that can be used to effectively collect contact details for their customers, and if you do not already do so, you should do so where appropriate in order to ensure that you are compliant with the new regulations on NHS Test and Trace.

Many businesses will also be able to collect information from their customers on arrival, these regulations will be subject to financial penalties, and will be subject to enforcement action if they are not complied with.

Those responsible for ensuring adequate information is collected and kept for 21 days to assist NHS Test and Trace contact tracers as and when.

Find out more about how NHS Test and Trace works.

2h. Travel and parking

Car parks are permitted to be open and managers of premises and courts should ensure that they are safe for users to use, and that they are COVID-19 secure.

Face coverings are now mandatory on public transport, apart from those who meet the exemptions. Managers of community facilities should ensure that they are aware of these requirements and be subject to financial penalties, urban centres and green spaces.

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer public places – urban centres and green spaces
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers

3. Permitted activities in multi-use community facilities: signposting to relevant guidance

Community facilities such as community centres and village halls are used for a wide range of purposes, including for sports and exercise classes, as well as for social and recreational clubs. In line with the government's roadmap, different activities, different activities will pose different risks to users and others. To reopen safely, managers of community facilities need to ensure, where it is necessary, only those services that are permitted to be open should be available.

From 15 August, the following businesses can reopen and activities can resume provided they follow the Covid-19 Secure guidance:

- casinos
- bingo halls
- bowling alleys
- indoor play areas, including soft play areas
- indoor performance venues
- remaining close contact services, which includes any treatments on the face such as facials, massages and beauty treatments
- wedding receptions will be allowed for up to 30 guests, in the form of a sit down meal. See accessing wedding and other hospitality venues guidance for further information

Venues will be required to socially distanced attendees can take place. If in line with the relevant sector guidance.

Those managing community facilities, and those using community facilities for the following activities, should take account of the relevant guidance below:

3a. Early years and youth provision

Community facilities which are used as premises for early years provision and childcare have been allowed to open for this purpose from 1 July. Providers of early years provision should follow the relevant guidance. Providers of early years and childcare provision should follow the coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance. Providers operating in a community facility should also follow government guidance on maintaining educational provision and on attendance recording.

Community facilities can also open for activities and services for children and young people (between the ages of 5-19 and youth groups up to the age of 25) and should follow the relevant guidance. Community facilities can also open for the provision of youth services and activities should also refer to the National Youth Agency's guidance for managers youth sector leaders and activities during COVID-19 as well as their organisation's own risk assessment. Youth services should follow the Youth Sector Association, leisure and social gatherings to refer to and what provisions are permissible within a community facility.

Providers, of before or after school clubs, and after out of school activities operating within a community facility should also follow the protective measures for out of school settings (including for those providing childcare). Providers of before and after school provision should put in place a number of measures to minimise mixing between different groups of children, and to reduce the risk of infection and transmission of the virus for children, their families and those who work in the setting.

Where possible, those attending a community facility should, as far as is reasonable, do so in line with the government's current stance about and safe formal distanced guidance and should be kept to a minimum. Where possible, children should be kept in small groups. Parents and carers are encouraged to limit the number of settings their children attend as far as possible, and to ensure their children attend the same setting consistently.

3b. Voluntary sector and other service provision

Community facilities are currently able to open for essential voluntary activities and urgent public services, such as food banks, homeless services, and blood donation sessions. Any provision should be conducted in line with the core principles of social distancing and shielding the critically extremely people and vulnerable.

3c. Recreation, leisure and social gatherings

Passengers and providers in community facilities are not permitted to organise or host informal or formal social groups, clubs and activities unless limited to groups of up people following social distancing rules.

However, for activities and social groups where there is a significant (likelihood of groups mixing and socializing), and where it will be difficult to prevent mingling and ensure social distancing, these should not be held in a community facility. These may include but are not limited to:

- formal or informal clubs and hobby clubs (e.g. women's institute, veteran's association, Masonic lodge, Freemasons, book club, cycle club, reading groups)
- amateur choirs and rehearsals
- informal organised sport activities or facilities grounds (professionally organised sport activities are exempt)

Community facilities following COVID-19 secure guidance can run children groups and activities, including those for children under the age of 18 such as youth clubs, scouts and youth provision for hires to relevant guidance. It is important that for people to maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene when visiting these spaces.

People meeting in a club or group consent of a community centre or village hall are encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble.

Large wedding receptions in parlour mode (not in celebration) can take place and are celebration after the ceremony should follow the broader social distancing guidance set out above. See guidance on weddings.

Community facilities are now permitted to host socially distanced indoor and outdoor sports and exercise classes. Those using community facilities for these activities should consider and adopt the **mitigations set out in the guidance** to reduce the overall risk of the event. These include:

- limiting the number of participants as far as possible (with non-professionals being restricted by the rules on meeting people outside your bubble and following social distancing guidance and maintaining a distance of 2 metres)
- limiting the number of audience members, which the capacity should be maintained at a level that allows for social distancing
- ensuring that participants and instructors/facilitators (rehearsals or performances) as far as possible
- taking steps to improve ventilation as far as possible and wherever possible, both during and between sessions, for example by opening windows and doors
- taking steps to encourage audiences to support the overall safety of the event, including discouraging activities which can create transmission from aerosol and droplets such as singing, shouting and other loud communication and encouraging other than allowing them to stand (for example, encouraging audience members to

Both professionals and non-professionals can now engage in singing, wind and brass in line with the performing arts guidance.

Indoor sporting facilities, fitness centres and dance studios can now open. For venues hosting indoor sport activities, please follow the guidance on sports and physical activity.

Where activities relate to children and young people between the ages of 5-19, they should follow the DfE guidance on protective measures for out of school settings. This is relevant for providers running holiday clubs, after-school clubs, further or other out of school provision, including sports related activities.

3d. Meetings and civic functions

We continue to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally without the need for face-to-face contact, they should continue to do so. Where community facilities need to be used for physical meetings, these meetings should be managed in accordance with the relevant guidance and in line with local restrictions.

The principle set out in the Taylor review for planning policy, including but not limited to:

- meetings of civic, political or community groups (e.g. parish council meeting, ward meeting or political party, charity board of trustees)
- meetings of commercial organisations (e.g. shareholder meetings) (discouraging unnecessary physical attendance at meetings, these meetings to take place physically, participants should maintain 2 metres (or 1 metre with risk mitigation) and observe hygiene rules)
- public meetings and local consultations, (e.g. planning meetings)

Local authorities in England have some powers to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology.

Further information is available: Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Offices and other workplaces.

3e. Retail and shop facilities

See the guidance relevant to shops and retail settings, including indoor markets, which may also apply to some activities in community facilities.

3f. Places of worship

See the guidance for places of worship and faith activity.

3g. Office spaces

Where community facilities feature office space, see the relevant guidance for office spaces.

3h. Outdoor space

Where community centres feature outdoor space, see the guidance for safe use of outdoor public spaces.

4. Enforcement

Where the enforcing authority, such as the HSE or your local authority, identifies breaches of the law, it may take any of the actions it deems fit to comply with the public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they are expected to act in accordance with their enforcement policies. Such action, for example, may cover managers and employers operating their premises appropriate action to ensure social distancing, where possible.

Failure to complete a risk assessment taken into account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of coronavirus may be the subject of enforcement of health and safety law.

The actions the enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers and building operators to support them to achieve the required standard, through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Serious breaches and failure to comply with enforcement notices can constitute a criminal offence, with serious fines and even imprisonment for up to 2 years. There is also a wider system of enforcement, which includes specific obligations and conditions for licensed premises.

Employers and building operators are expected to respond to any advice or notices issued by enforcing authorities rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authorities. The vast majority of employers and building operators are responsible and will join with the UK's fight against COVID-19 by working with the government and their sector bodies to protect their workers and the public. However, inspectors are carrying out compliance checks nationwide to ensure that employers and building operators are taking the necessary steps.

Is this page useful? Yes No

Is there anything wrong with this page?

OGL All content is available under the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated

© Crown copyright