

# Information Sheet

## Re-opening Village and Community Halls post COVID-19 closure Issue 1 – Week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

This Information Sheet has been issued in anticipation that the coronavirus regulations will be amended by 4<sup>th</sup> July, ready for halls to re-open on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July. An announcement is expected on 15<sup>th</sup> June. ACRE is working as far as possible with relevant Government departments so that hall managers have confidence they are working to “joined up” guidance and this version reflects current information. This Information Sheet may be updated in accordance with Government guidance issued between 15<sup>th</sup> June and the first week of July, and any subsequent Government guidance. It is therefore based on a 2 metre social distancing requirement.

Those responsible for managing halls are advised to make sure they are on their local ACRE Network member’s mailing list. Also, to keep monitoring their ACRE Network member website and social media channels for any updates or check the gov.uk coronavirus website. This will ensure they are alerted to changes in guidance. Links to key Government guidance are given in Section 6.

The term “managers” is used here to describe those responsible for managing a village hall, community centre, church hall, parish hall or similar multi-purpose community facility, whether volunteer trustees, committee members or paid staff. Please note that any advice or information provided here should not be taken as a substitute for professional legal or other advice.

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## 1. The Step by Step approach

The Government has laid out its recovery plans in 'Our Plans to Rebuild' (see link at end). These plans are contingent on the "R" rate of COVID-19 infection not increasing. They may be adjusted or rescinded either nationally or, possibly, in certain parts of the country in the light of the situation. The re-opening of public buildings is scheduled to take place as part of Step 3, hopefully on 6<sup>th</sup> July.

In order for Step 3 to be implemented the Public Health Regulations need to be amended, which currently stipulate that a Community Centre must remain closed except where it is used to provide essential voluntary activities or urgent public support services or for early years childcare by a registered provider. That amendment is due to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

**Step 1:** From 13<sup>th</sup> May certain outdoor facilities were able to be used by members of the same household and one other person, e.g. tennis courts and bowling greens. Public play equipment remains closed. Guidance has been published by DCMS – see Section 6.

**Step 2:** The Government allowed nurseries and Pre-schools to open to a wider group of children from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.

**Step 3: The aim is that public buildings can open from, at the earliest, 4<sup>th</sup> July but it is unlikely crowded events e.g. parties, wedding receptions will be permitted until later. Step 3 is the subject of this guidance.** Until then village and community halls may only be used as a public building for essential services e.g. food or medicine distribution, postal services, Pre-schools and, from 15<sup>th</sup> June, indoor markets. A hall may be used for work not involving the public where the hall is a person's normal workplace and that work cannot be carried out at home e.g. a parish clerk needing access to files held in the parish office, or the work is maintenance or construction work to the hall premises.

## 2. Planning for re-opening

**2.1 The COVID-19 Secure Guidelines:** Trustees, managers and any staff need to be aware that the following 5 key points apply. These underpin this Information Sheet and arrangements should reflect them:

- **Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell: Nobody** should attend the premises if they have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household.
- **Clean your hands often:** Sanitiser should be provided at entry and exit points, sanitiser and/or running water, soap and paper towels in toilets and kitchens. Hot air hand dryers are not recommended as they distribute droplets.
- **Respiratory hygiene:** Everyone needs to be encouraged to avoid touching their mouth, eyes, and nose. Tissues need to be disposed of into a bin, then hands cleaned. A "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it" poster is available (see end for link).
- **Regular cleaning of surfaces that are touched frequently:** including door handles, handrails, tabletops, sinks, toilet areas, kitchen surfaces. Ordinary domestic products can be used.
- **Maintain social distancing where possible:** Social distancing guidelines currently require at least 2 metres (3 steps) to be maintained between individuals and households. Bookings can be accepted for events 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. See 2.2 below.

Do not re-open until you have identified the necessary safety, compliance, management, and operational issues 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. Appendix A provides a checklist of tasks likely to be needed prior to re-opening, of which compliance with COVID-19 secure guidelines is just part.

Hall managers will need to engage with their regular hirers to ensure that the 5 COVID-19 Secure Guidelines requirements above are clearly understood. Trustees appointed by organisations which use the premises have an important role to play in communicating these requirements to their members and in ensuring the special hire conditions which will need to be introduced are followed. See 2.5 below and Appendix E.

As part of opening after lockdown, self-certification should be displayed that halls are complying with COVID-19 Secure Guidelines. This will also help users feel confident about using the premises. See **Appendix C** for a sample certificate/poster.

## **2.2. Social Distancing at Village and Community Halls**

**a)** 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, managers 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. A rule of thumb might be one quarter of the seating or (for non-seated activities, dancing) capacity set for fire safety purposes or the size of the room in sq. metres divided by 4. The figure would increase if social distancing is reduced e.g. to 1m.

**b)** User groups may not know at the outset how many people are likely to attend activities and a booking system is not required for small scale activities. A booking system would also be inappropriate for community activities which are important for mental and physical health, as attendance is often dependent on last minute factors. It would be preferable to ask groups to think about how they will deal with any excess, which may depend on the nature of their activity and the facilities at the hall e.g. first come, first served, using other space to increase capacity e.g. garden, kitchen, entrance hall, committee room, re-running an activity later or on another day, some people joining in online either at home or via laptop in another room.

**c)** 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 hall, with signage. Staggered arrival and departure times may help.

**d)** 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 by the last person to leave the building, who then leaves via the main entrance. Appropriate signposting 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 interval.

**e)** Some lapse in social distancing may be difficult to avoid, e.g. where people pass in internal corridors. 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.

**f)** 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 halls social distancing and good hygiene are maintained. Where, however, people will be working in proximity, and with older and medically vulnerable people, a face covering is advisable to protect those people. Examples include preparing food or drink in a small kitchen and serving older or vulnerable people e.g. at a coffee morning or lunch club, in a community shop or cafe.

**g)** Consultation with regular user groups will be important as some reorganisation may be inevitable. Some groups may not return for some time but want to retain their usual "slots" while it may be necessary to hire the premises in different ways. For example, groups may need to use the main hall rather than a committee room to achieve social distancing, which may mean substantially re-arranging timings for main hall use. A committee room may need to become a "kettle point" for any offices so that staff do not need to use the kitchen when a hire is in progress. Some groups may be able to continue running activities online to make way for others. Appendix B is a sample questionnaire for users, kindly shared by Wincham Village Hall, Essex.

**h)** In case of emergency it is important to prioritise safety: In the event of fire or accident people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe to do so.

### **2.3 Risk Assessment for COVID-19**

Village hall trustees must consider the COVID-19 Secure guidelines (see above) and should undertake their own COVID-19 Risk Assessment to ensure that their staff (cleaner, caretaker) and trustees are safe. See **Appendix F** for an example.

If this cannot be done i.e. because hall officers or staff are shielding or otherwise not available, the responsibility for risk assessment and implementation of actions can be delegated to a competent individual or company engaged to carry this out.

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

### **2.4 Cleaning and encouraging good hygiene**

A decision will need to be made on how frequently cleaning should take place, based on an assessment of risk, and use of the building. Some halls have the resources (staff, finance) to clean regularly used surfaces and equipment before hirers arrive which is ideal. Many village and community halls have part time or self-employed staff e.g. with other cleaning jobs working only a few hours per week, particularly halls serving rural areas which are used less frequently. 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 hall after use. Experience is that not all hirers clean up after themselves satisfactorily and trustees have expressed concern that not all hirers will comply with carrying out a higher level of cleaning on leaving.

a) All halls should:

- Provide sanitiser at every entrance/exit and in meeting rooms.
- Post notices at every entrance/exit showing what is expected of users, erect the "Catch It, Bin It, Kill It" poster and posters encouraging frequent handwashing, see Section 6. If the poster at **Appendix C** is laminated, the time can be given when the hall was last cleaned, but this is not compulsory.

b) If a hall does not have the staff or finances to arrange additional cleaning before every hire, in these circumstances, the appropriate way of discharging the trustees' responsibility and encouraging compliance is likely to be to:

- Require each hiring group to clean surfaces that their group might use before their own users arrive, and to clean regularly used surfaces such as tabletops and sinks during the hire and to clean before they leave.
- For the hall to ensure the hall's usual cleaning routine is followed e.g. for floors, with particular attention to keeping hand wash basins, door and toilet handles clean and provide cleaning supplies for use by hirers. This means the cleaner/caretaker (or volunteers or another contractor) will need to provide and check/replenish hand sanitiser, cleaning materials (including cleanser, spray disinfectant, washing up liquid and cloths) and tissues and remove waste to outside bins before use on each day the hall will be used (or the night before). Supplies of soap and paper towels must be provided at toilet and kitchen sinks.
- Limit cleaning of some areas to staff and/or provide instructions to hirers, e.g. where there is a risk of damage or electrical apparatus is involved. For example, switches should be cleaned by cloth, not sprayed with disinfectant, rubberised or glued surfaces can be damaged by frequent sprays or vigorous rubbing.
- Advise the cleaner/caretaker as to the extra cleaning required if someone is taken unwell on the premises with a suspected case of COVID-19. This requires disposable PPE and double bagging of PPE and cleaning materials afterwards, which must be stored for 72 hours securely prior to collection: See the link in Section 6 for decontamination in non-healthcare settings.
- Advise hirers bringing or using their own equipment which is stored at the hall 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 it.

## 2.5 Hiring Arrangements

a) Halls should give priority to essential services and Pre-schools during the initial re-opening period and endeavor to arrange other hires around these. If that is not feasible without compromising COVID-19 secure guidelines the hall may have to remain closed for other hirers.

b) Instruct booking secretaries to allow longer between hires, to allow either the cleaner/caretaker to clean before their arrival or hirers to arrive up to half an hour earlier in order to pre-clean for their own use.

c) The cleaner/caretaker will need to be given expected arrival times for each hirer or other arrangements made to check sufficient supplies of sanitiser, soap, paper towels and cleaning materials.

d) During Step 3 social distancing will need to be maintained and vulnerable people protected. It is therefore unlikely that the full range of normal use will be possible. The committee will need to decide which hirers can begin to use the hall pending Government guidance that Steps 4 and 5 can be implemented, when venues can re-open for larger events e.g. theatres, cinemas, bingo halls. This will demand a risk-based approach and points to help you work out which hires are likely to be more or less of a risk are given in **Appendix D**.

e) 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. An electronic signature or email confirmation of the conditions is acceptable. See **Appendix E** for sample special hire conditions.

- f) Hirers should be encouraged to seat or stand people side-to-side, rather than face-to-face, whenever possible with two empty seats (a distance of at least 1m and preferably 2m) between each person if seated. If face-to-face placing is unavoidable a distance of at least 2 metres is required. Where possible hirers should encourage people to stay in groups, of say 6 to 8, to reduce transmission. Sedbergh People's Hall, Cumbria, have issued photos to help their hirers work out how to arrange their meeting rooms. Drawings could be posted on noticeboards.
- g) Hirers should be encouraged to keep the hall well ventilated, opening doors and windows as far as possible, and will need to remember to close them all for security on leaving. It may therefore be necessary for the caretaker or a volunteer to check the premises at night for the first few weeks, to ensure everyone is remembering. Fresh air is preferable to mechanical ventilation.
- h) Hirers should be encouraged to have regard as to whether people attending their activity are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and how they will address the need to keep them safe. At Step 3 it is expected that those over 70, who are more vulnerable and have been required to self-isolate for 12 weeks, but not in the shielding category, will wish to attend their usual community activities, so particular attention should be paid to the need to maintain social distancing with them. This is reflected in the Special Hiring Conditions at **Appendix E**.
- i) Hirers should be provided with a copy of the hall's COVID-19 Risk Assessment. You may wish to ask to see a copy of their own COVID-19 Risk Assessment. The sample at **Appendix G** can be shared with user groups.
- j) You and your hirers may wish to encourage those attending 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.

## 2.6 Employees

- a) Where a hall has employees, guidance can be found in the BEIS guidance on workplaces for offices and contact centres and 5 steps to working safely. In addition to carrying out the hall's ordinary risk assessment before re-opening, the hall should follow HSE advice for an employer's Risk Assessment for COVID-19, which involves:
- Identifying what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus.
  - Thinking about who could be at risk.
  - Deciding how likely it is that someone could be exposed.
  - Acting to remove the activity or situation, or if this is not possible, control the risk.

These points are addressed in the Sample COVID-19 Risk Assessment at **Appendix F**.

- b) HSE guidance is that no one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment and that in the risk assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. If that is the case with your hall cleaner/caretaker you may need to make alternative arrangements for the time being.

- c) BEIS guidance and other references in Section 6 may help you address questions or concerns from employees or self-employed contractors about COVID-19.



## 2.7 Performances

The arts industry has been badly affected by COVID-19 and will welcome efforts to accommodate performances. Guidance will be issued by DCMS and it is anticipated that some forms of performance may be permitted because side-to-side seating is less risky than seating face-to-face. Rows can be spaced further apart than usual. However, the audience is likely to be reduced for the time being to maintain social distancing, with individuals and household groups separated by two seats.

Attendants should help ensure social distancing, e.g. ask people to occupy seats from the furthest point first and evacuate from the point closest to the exit first. A longer interval is likely to be required and an attendant present to invite people to use the toilets row by row.

Performances of singing by choirs are considered more risky owing to the projection of droplets over a further distance than in ordinary speech and should currently be avoided.

In order to avoid cash payments and facilitate booking and ticket distribution the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF) has suggested halls might try using <https://www.izettle.com/gb> or <https://sumup.co.uk/>.

## 2.8 Procedures if someone becomes unwell with COVID-19

a) A space should be designated into which anyone will be moved who becomes unwell at the hall with suspected COVID-19 symptoms until transport home or to hospital is available. Tissues and a bowl of warm soapy water for handwashing and paper towels should be provided. Tissues and paper towels should be disposed of into a plastic bag, which is sealed and placed in a secure place for 72 hours before being disposed of into the general rubbish collection.

b) Other people whom they have been in contact with should be asked for contact details and then to leave the premises. The Test, Track and Trace service should be informed.

Those parts of the premises which they have used should be closed for 72 hours. A decontamination clean should be carried out in accordance with PHE guidance (see reference section). Disposable PPE equipment including gloves should be disposed of into a sealed plastic bag and secured for 72 hours before rubbish is collected. The cleaner should launder all personal clothing worn on arrival home.

## 3. The re-opening of Pre-schools – Step 2

**From 1<sup>st</sup> June – Pre-schools and nurseries were able to re-open and begin welcoming back all children below statutory school age.** Separate guidance about this has been issued by ACRE.

For hall committees who hire to Pre-schools and nurseries within the building, this will mean a more careful re-opening of the hall to other hirers or members of the public in order to address the anxiety of pre-school staff, parents and other hall users.

Points which need to be borne in mind when opening halls used by Pre-schools to other activities, are set out here:

Government guidance on wider opening of childcare settings advises them to avoid other people attending the premises unless essential: Within Pre-schools children are encouraged only to mix with a group of up to 8 other children and one or two staff members, to minimise spread in the event of a COVID-19 case.

"Limit external visitors to the setting and ensure they only come into the building when strictly necessary, for example if providing an essential service or essential support for a child's health and wellbeing." The usual safeguarding procedures also apply.

While the extent of the premises which are used by a Pre-school vary from hall to hall and cleaning or attending to safety issues in that part of the premises used by Pre-school could be regarded as an essential service, it's best if such tasks are carried out when Pre-school are not on site, though that may not always be possible.

Where common areas serve other parts of a hall which are used by other hirers or the public at the same time as Pre-school is in place (such as entrance lobbies, corridors, kitchens, toilets), timing of arrangements will clearly need to be discussed with the Pre-school. For example, cleaning and servicing of these areas might be carried out when Pre-school staff and children are elsewhere on the premises. Hirers' arrival and departure times will either have to be changed so that they do not coincide with the staggered arrival and departure times implemented by Pre-schools, or a separate entrance/exit used e.g. fire exit or a separate waiting/queueing arrangement created outside.

Responsibility for cleaning door handles, basins and working surfaces by organisations or individuals not connected with the Pre-school will have to be established if common areas are used.

Where the space used by Pre-school during the day is normally used by another organisation later in the afternoon or evening, arrangements for cleaning within that area will have to be established. The Pre-school may prefer to undertake cleaning before children arrive, and other hirers may also prefer to do so themselves, if the hall's cleaner cannot attend before they do so.

## 4. Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Will our hall have to re-open when the Government says it can?**

**A:** No – see Section 2.1 above. Some are only opening parts of their premises. Some halls with Pre-Schools have taken the view that wider re-opening in July would be too difficult, others the view that it would not be economic, others are using the closure period to complete maintenance works. In such cases your trustees would need to meet (online or by phone) to take a decision that it would not be in the best interests of the charity to re-open when allowed to do so. Minute the reasons why, so that you can show that the matter has been carefully considered in the event of challenge e.g. by a local community group. In taking such a decision you should take into account the effect on vulnerable residents whom the hall is there to serve, their mental and physical wellbeing, your ability to provide safe premises and the financial implications for the charity.

**Q: If an outbreak of COVID-19 is traced to our hall, will we, trustees, or staff, be held liable?**

**A:** If those responsible for managing the hall use reasonable endeavours to ensure the hall is cleaned and maintained in accordance with the COVID-19 Secure Guidelines, have prepared a COVID-19 Risk Assessment, **see Appendix F**, and have written records of the action taken this should reduce very substantially the risk of being held liable. Providing this is the case, and any insurer requirements met, any liability should be addressed in the usual way by the hall's public liability cover and legal expenses cover. Not only would a claimant have to prove the committee had been negligent and that they caught the disease at the premises, they may be held to bear responsibility themselves by putting themselves in harm's way.

**Q: Hirers want to use the hall but pay a reduced fee because their numbers will be lower, and they will be doing more cleaning. We can't afford this, because we have fixed costs to pay and are having to arrange more cleaning too. Do we have to allow it to open at a reduced fee if it's going to cost us more than the income?**

**A:** It is up to trustees or committees responsible for managing charitable halls to determine what is in the best interests of their hall charity in the light of these exceptional circumstances and predicted financial situation. See also Section 5 as to grants and funding.



**Q: What do we do if someone wants to hire the hall for an event at which we think social distancing might not be observed, such as a birthday party?**

**A:** You will be entitled to refuse the booking. You might accept a booking for a future date with the caveat that it is subject to cancellation if Government guidance at the time would not permit it or if appeared requirements then in force would not be met.

**Q: Where can we obtain a disposable apron and quantities of cleaning materials at low cost?**

**A:** If your usual suppliers, supermarkets or DIY stores cannot provide these try asking your local authority or ACRE Network member for the contact details for the local authority bulk purchasing arrangements for your area, which should be available to charitable, voluntary and community organisations.

**Q: We are confused. When should sanitiser, soap and water or antibacterial wipes be used?**

**A:** Provide what is most appropriate. Sanitiser tends to be more easily dispensed at entrances and exits, whereas soap and water easily used in kitchens and toilets. For general cleaning disposable cloths used with and warm, soapy water or spray disinfectant are adequate. People can be encouraged to bring their own sanitiser, antibacterial wipes and tissues, because everyone is encouraged to wash their hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing their nose. Wipes must not be flushed down toilets, bins should be provided.

## 5. Finances

- a) Additional cleaning, provision of sanitiser etc will incur costs and income may be reduced for a considerable period as the usual pattern of hire may not be resumed until 2021. The Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grant (RHL Grant) of £10,000 (£25,000 for premises with a rateable value over £15,000) is available to charitable village halls and sports buildings from your Local Authority. This can be used to meet such costs and any costs incurred in re-opening, as well as fixed costs incurred during closure. Under the Extended Retail Discount (ERD) charitable halls should also receive 100% rate relief for 2020/21. Please contact your ACRE Network member if you have any queries about accessing such support.
- b) A hall which is ineligible for the RHL Grant or ERD e.g. a church hall or parish council run hall may seek Discretionary Grant support from their local authority.
- c) In view of the long term effect on hire income it will be particularly important that managers revise budgetary projections to the end of the 2020/21 financial year in order to identify whether the RHL Grant will be sufficient to cover any deficit. This needs to be done at an early stage because, if its own free reserves are insufficient, the hall will need to allow time for approaches to be made for financial support. Note that any restricted funds held by a charity are unlikely to be available for this purpose, such as donations or grants received for capital works. Financial support may be available from parish and town councils or from local charitable or National Lottery funds where a charity is facing financial hardship and risk of closure because of COVID-19. A crowdfunding campaign might be launched.

## 6. Government Guidance and other references

**The Government roadmap and COVID-19 Secure Guidelines:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

**Guidance from the Dept for Education:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-early-years-and-childcare-settings-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-early-years-and-childcare-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

### **Guidance for employers:**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/assets/docs/working-safely-guide.pdf>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/assets/docs/talking-with-your-workers.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

### **Guidance for cleaning premises contaminated by suspected COVID-19:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

### **Poster certifying an employer has taken steps to ensure premises are COVID-19 secure:**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb963fcd3bf7f5d39550303/staying-covid-19-secure-accessible.pdf>

### **“Catch it, Bin it, Kill it” Poster:**

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf>

### **Legionella risk:**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/>

<https://legionellacontrol.com/guidance/regular-flushing-control-legionella/>

### **Face Coverings:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home#face-coverings>

### **Outdoor sport and recreation:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-providers-of-outdoor-facilities-on-the-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>

### **Guidance for social distancing and vulnerable people:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Thank you to Louise Beaton, ACRE Board member and Community Halls Consultant for producing this Information Sheet for ACRE.

We are grateful to ACRE Network members and hall committees who have kindly shared their own documents for contribution to this Guidance. Also, to all members of the ACRE team for their support.

All comments regarding this Information Sheet are welcome.

[Deborah Clarke](#), ACRE

## Appendix A

**Before re-opening the hall, go through the following checklist:**

	<b>Task</b>	<b>Done</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Advise the hall's insurers</b> when the premises will be re-opening and check any requirements.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Check the security code or key logs are up to date.</b>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>If a Pre-school is using the premises, check</b> any adjustments to hire arrangements needed for other hirers e.g. arrival/departure times, access to kitchen or toilets. (See Section 3 above)	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Carry out a COVID-19 Risk Assessment in consultation with any employees, if you have any.</b> (See <b>Appendix F</b> )	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Consider whether additional cleaning is required, where and when.</b> Consider arrangements for moving, stowing and cleaning equipment. A thorough clean of the hall should be undertaken before it re-opens and the subsequent cleaning regime to follow will need to be identified. Ordinary household products can be used.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Discuss with your caretaker/cleaner/contractor any changes in work patterns</b> required to ensure the hall meets the COVID-19 Secure guidelines. HSE provides a leaflet of things to discuss with an employee. Agree any changes in writing with cleaners/employees.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Ensure the caretaker/cleaner has appropriate PPE:</b> Ordinary overalls and plastic gloves are usually sufficient. The overalls should be taken off when leaving and washed. A set of disposable PPE is also needed in case decontamination is required. Contractors should use their own equipment, but an employee should be provided with the necessary equipment.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Flush through the water system, five minutes for each tap or shower head,</b> to remove any risk of legionella or other bacterial build up and ensure U bends are full. Keep clear of spray and wipe up afterwards with household disinfectant.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Carry out the routine health and safety risk assessment</b> of the whole premises. Check the electrical inspection (required every 5 years) and PAT testing are up to date and visually check leads. Ensure any fridge/freezer is working at correct temperature, the heating and hot water system operational. Ensure internet is working. Cut grass. Identify and address any items requiring attention e.g. light bulbs failed, trip hazards. (For more information see ACRE Village Hall Information Sheet 15: Health and Safety legislation and Village Halls)	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Ensure the Fire Safety Risk Assessment and routine fire safety checks are up to date</b> e.g. fire exit doors are clear, not sticking, fire extinguishers serviced, emergency lighting system and any alarm system are working. (For more information see ACRE Village Hall Information Sheet 37: Fire Safety in Village Halls)	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Provide hand wash facilities and paper towels:</b> Hand dryers are not recommended for use at the present time as they could disperse droplets containing the virus into the air and should be taped off. Hand sanitiser needs to be provided at entrance and exit routes. Tissues, soap, toilet rolls and cleaning products, including disposable cloths, should be provided.	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Consider "Engaged/Vacant" signage</b> 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".	

13.	<b>Provide signage:</b> The certificate that the premises comply with COVID-19 secure guidelines should be displayed at entrances (see <b>Appendix C</b> ). The PHE posters encouraging good handwashing techniques and hygiene "Catch It, Bin It, Kill It" available on the HSE and PHE websites should be displayed. (See Section 6)	
14.	<b>Think about social distancing arrangements in corridors and at entrance and exits:</b> 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 hall.	
15.	<b>Prepare special hire conditions and instruct booking secretary</b> as to any changes in the Hall's hire policy during re-opening, i.e. which bookings can be accepted, and to provide hirers with a copy of the COVID-19 secure poster. (See <b>Appendices C, D and E</b> )	
16.	<b>Consider Marketing and Communications:</b> Ensure the website has up to date information, including special conditions of hire. Advertise availability as appropriate. Ensure answerphone message is up to date.	

## Appendix B

### COVID-19 Re-opening Questionnaire

#### Adaptation of document shared by Witcham Village Hall, Cambridgeshire

In order for Trustees to make a robust plan of action in readiness for any proposed opening of Village Halls by the Government, it would be extremely helpful if you could complete and return the following questionnaire by .....2020. This can either be via email or paper versions can be left at:

Name of Group

Name of person completing form:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Home Tel:

Mobile Tel:

Please tick appropriate answer		
1	How likely are you to return to use the hall?	Yes No Maybe
2	If you wish to return when would you consider returning?	July Aug Sept Oct Later
3	When you return would you wish to hire the hall for normal sessions or would you like something different?	Normal Different
4	Which day of the week do you prefer to hire the hall?	
5	What is your preferred time for hire? <b>Must include time for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>set up</b></li><li>• <b>pack away time</b></li><li>• <b>sanitisation of groups personal equipment stored at hall</b></li></ul>	From  To
6	Can you be flexible with hire times?	Yes No
7	If only a morning, afternoon, or evening slot available which would you prefer?	Morning Afternoon Evening
8	Which rooms are required? Please note – rooms not required will be secured from entry	Main hall Small room Kitchen Toilets Store

9	Premises equipment needed. Specific numbers will enable efficient use of cleaner's time.	Number of Chairs Number of Tables List specific kitchen equipment  Use of dishwasher
10	All equipment stored at hall will need to be sanitised before and after use and will be the responsibility of the hirer to ensure this takes place after every session.	Name of person taking responsibility  .....
11	Will Group require use of Car Park/ garden or field? Please state which area(s)	Yes  No
12	Any further comments: -	

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- a) The hall will be: [thoroughly sanitised between hires by cleaner] [cleaned once per day by the hall cleaner]. The hiring group will be responsible for cleaning surfaces used regularly during and at the end of hire. Sanitiser or soap and water will be available on entry and exit to the hall
- b) The hall will have a weekly deep clean.
- c) Access will only be allowed during the specific time of hire.
- d) Persons waiting to collect hall users should adhere to social distancing at front of building or remain in vehicle.
- e) A group risk assessment will be required for hall usage.
- f) All groups will need their own insurance cover for hire in case of a coronavirus outbreak.
- g) Isolation facilities will be available in [the changing room area] at back of hall.
- h) The hire charge of the hall will remain the same as before the outbreak for a period of [ weeks]. All organisations and groups will be given due warning of any increase.

To comply with Government advice, the Village Hall Trustees wish to ensure all users can be guaranteed a safe and sanitised environment in which to return and access our facilities. A risk assessment will be available but may be subject to change at any time in line with Government and Village Hall Guidelines.

The Village Hall uses personal data for the purposes of managing hall bookings, finances, events, and publicity.

Please tick box to indicate that you agree to us holding your data for booking purposes



## Appendix C

### Poster

# HELP KEEP THIS HALL COVID-19 SECURE

- 1. You must not enter if you or anyone in your household has COVID-19 symptoms.**
- 2. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms within 7 days** of visiting these premises alert Test, Track and Trace. Alert the hall cleaner on [insert a contact number] and alert the organiser of the activity you attended.
- 3. Maintain 2 metres social distancing as far as possible:** Wait behind the marked lines as you go through the entrance hall to your activity and observe the one-way system marked.
- 4. Use the hand sanitiser provided** on entering the premises. Clean your hands often. Soap and paper towels are provided.
- 5. Avoid touching your face, nose, or eyes.** Clean your hands if you do.
- 6. "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it".** Tissues should be disposed of into one of the rubbish bags provided. Then wash your hands.
- 7. Check the organisers of your activity have cleaned door handles, tables, other equipment, sinks and surfaces before you arrived.** Keep them clean. We [do our best to/cannot] clean all surfaces at the hall between each hire.
- 8. Take turns to use confined spaces such as corridors, kitchen and toilet areas.** Standing or sitting next to someone is lower risk than opposite them. Briefly passing another person in a confined space is low risk.
- 9. Keep the hall well ventilated. Close doors and windows on leaving.**

**This hall was last cleaned at [insert time]**

**am/pm/eve on [insert date]**

## Appendix D

### Management of Social Distancing at Community Facilities and Activities A Risk Based approach

Following the end of lockdown community groups need to know whether or not they can once again use community facilities to hold their usual – or a version of their usual – activities and, if so, what conditions may be appropriate so as to reduce the risk of spreading infection and address fear.

The following takes a risk-based approach to a complex situation, bearing in mind: the hundreds of different kinds of organised activities which take place in or around village and community halls and playing fields; the important need to address isolation, loneliness and mental health issues and take advantage of the warmer summer months; the needs of families with young people; the need to enable people to remain fit and healthy; and the need for people who normally earn a living around community facilities to do so.

This note cannot cover every situation and is intended only as a guide to help halls draw up their own policy towards accepting bookings, so that the Booking Secretary knows how to respond to requests. The following points should be considered in risk assessing each potential hirer:

- Can attendance at indoor activities be limited to the capacity figures the hall sets to comply with social distancing? (E.g. a maximum of one quarter of the usual seating or standing capacity set for fire evacuation purposes). Will either numbers be limited, people seated in small groups, or side to side or contacts available, to limit spread and enable tracing in the event of an outbreak? What arrangements would be made if more people attend than the room has capacity for? (For example: A Pilates teacher will have a register and able to arrange a rota if needed. A seated activity might place seniors in groups of say 6. A meeting which usually takes place in a committee room may be moved to a larger space to allow social distancing).
- The likely age of those attending. If 70 or over, can arrangements be made to ensure social distancing **throughout** their use of the premises, including when using toilets.
- Are the organisers willing to clean regularly used surfaces before the event, while it takes place and before leaving?
- Will very young children be attending, who would find social distancing difficult, or babies who would remain in buggies or with their parents?
- It may be possible to hold some activities outdoors over summer. If so, what arrangements will be made in the event of rain or a cold snap?
- Will other organisations be using the premises at the same time? If so, what arrangements will be made to avoid contact between the different groups e.g. staggered start/finish times, Occupied/vacant signage for toilets?
- Guidance is likely to be issued by other organisations e.g. by DCMS for indoor exercise. The older age profile and difficulty 2m social distancing at tables may lead the English Bridge Union to advise Bridge Clubs against re-opening for a period.

#### Low Risk

- **Activities which provide essential services, already permitted:** e.g. Pre-schools, food and medicine distribution, community shops, making PPE, Pop-Up COVID-19 testing.
- **Maintenance and other forms of employment:** e.g. Fire Safety and Risk Assessments, maintenance and caretaking, Building work, Parish Council, or other office.
- **Activities which can be held outdoors and where social distancing can be readily achieved among small numbers:** e.g. tennis, football training, keep fit type classes, dog training classes. Equipment should be cleaned regularly e.g. gate latches, handles, balls etc. See link to DCMS guidance in Section 6.

- **Activities held indoors where smaller numbers of people attend:** For example: yoga or Pilates classes where clients are well spaced, seated activities and meetings held in a large hall such as ordinary Parish Council meetings (when small numbers of the public are expected), art classes, history group. Band practice for small bands. Indoor sports where participants are well spaced badminton, table tennis, and indoor bowls.

### **Medium Risk (requiring more careful management)**

- **Small events providing catering:** e.g. funeral teas, coffee mornings or pop-up café where seating can be out of doors and/or well-spaced. Occasional lunches for limited numbers of older people who can be seated well apart. NB Special arrangements should be made for vulnerable people in the shielding category who wish to attend, to enable participation and avoid their continued isolation.
- **Events for children and young people:** e.g. small organised activities where equipment can easily be cleaned, participants can be well spaced and/or children largely attend the same school, e.g. cubs, parent and toddler activities, small youth clubs, railway modelling club, Sunday school, summer holiday playschemes, picnics or BBQs in outdoor areas.
- **Medium sized indoor activities and those involving active movement:** e.g. larger band practice (with wind instruments positioned away from other players); events with a seated but separated audience such as bingo, film or performances; dog training, dancing classes, Zumba.
- **Public consultation events:** A one-way system can be created, handouts provided at the end rather than at the beginning, someone should take names (for test, track and trace) so attendees do not share a pen and limit numbers.

### **High Risk:**

#### **Only permitted in accordance with Government advice, when issued:**

Events with closely seated audiences, parties (including indoor children's birthday parties), wedding receptions, large numbers, sports involving bodily contact (e.g. football matches), choirs (where dispersal of droplets may occur), use of play equipment, cafes, bars, dining areas.

## Appendix E

### Sample Special Conditions of Hire during COVID-19

**Note: These conditions are supplemental to, not a replacement for, the hall's ordinary conditions of hire. (See also ACRE's Model Hiring Agreement)**

#### **SC1:**

You, the hirer, will be responsible for ensuring those attending your activity or event comply with the COVID-19 Secure Guidelines while entering and occupying the hall, as shown on the attached poster which is also displayed at the hall entrance, in particular using the hand sanitiser supplied when entering the hall and after using tissues.

#### **SC2:**

You undertake to comply with the actions identified in the hall's risk assessment, of which you have been provided with a copy.

#### **SC3:**

**EITHER:** You will be responsible for cleaning door handles, light switches, window catches, equipment, toilet handles and seats, wash basins and all surfaces likely to be used during your period of hire **before** other members of your group or organisation arrive and to keep the premises clean through regular cleaning of surfaces during your hire, paying particular attention to wash hand basins and kitchen sinks (if used), using either the products supplied (which will be in a clearly accessible location) or your own ordinary domestic products. You will be required to clean again on leaving.

#### **OR**

The hall will be cleaned before your arrive and you will be responsible for cleaning all regularly used surfaces during your period of hire (including tables, wash hand basins, door handles) using either the products supplied or your own ordinary domestic products.

Please take care cleaning electrical equipment. Use cloths - do not spray!

#### **SC4:**

You will make sure that everyone likely to attend your activity or event understands that they **MUST NOT DO SO** if they or anyone in their household has had COVID-19 symptoms in the last 7 days, and that if they develop symptoms within 7 days of visiting the premises they **MUST** use the Test, Track and Trace system to alert others with whom they have been in contact.

#### **SC5:**

You will keep the premises well ventilated throughout your hire, with windows and doors open as far as convenient. You will be responsible for ensuring they are all securely closed on leaving.

#### **SC6:**

You will ensure that no more than [insert number] people attend your activity/event, in order that social distancing can be maintained. You will ensure that everyone attending maintains social distancing while waiting to enter the premises, observes the one-way system within the premises, and as far as possible

when using more confined areas e.g. moving and stowing equipment, which should be kept as brief as possible. You will make sure that no more than [e.g. two] people use each suite of toilets at one time.

**SC7:**

You will take particular care to ensure that social distancing is maintained for any persons aged 70 or over or likely to be clinically more vulnerable to COVID-19, including for example keeping a 2m distance around them when going in and out of rooms and ensuring they can access the toilets, kitchen or other confined areas without others being present. For some people, passing another person in a confined space is less risky, but for older people that should be avoided.

**SC8:**

You will position furniture or the arrangement of the room as far as possible to facilitate people seating side by side, with at least one empty chair between each person, rather than face to face. If tables are being used, you will place them so as to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres across the table between people who are face to face e.g. using a wide U-shape [insert or attach drawing or photo].

**SC9:**

You will be responsible for the disposal of all rubbish created during your hire, including tissues and cleaning cloths, in the rubbish bags provided [insert location] before you leave the hall.

**SC10:**

[You will encourage users to bring their own drinks and food] or [You will be responsible, if drinks or food are made, for ensuring that all crockery and cutlery is washed in hot soapy water, dried and stowed away. You will bring your own clean tea towels, so as to reduce risk of contamination between hirers, and take them away. We will provide washing up liquid and washing up cloths.]

**SC11:**

We will have the right to close the hall if there are safety concerns relating to COVID-19, for example, if someone who has attended the hall develops symptoms and thorough cleansing is required or if it is reported that the Special Hiring Conditions above are not being complied with, whether by you or by other hirers, or in the event that public buildings are asked or required to close again. If this is necessary, we will do our best to inform you promptly and you will not be charged for this hire.

**SC12:**

In the event of someone becoming unwell with suspected Covid-19 symptoms while at the hall you should remove them to the designated safe area which is [ ]. Provide tissues and a bin or plastic bag, and a bowl of warm soapy water for handwashing. Ask others in your group to provide contact details if you do not have them and then leave the premises, observing the usual hand sanitising and social distancing precautions, and advise them to launder their clothes when they arrive home. Inform the hall cleaner on [insert tel no: ].

**SC13:**

Other special points as appropriate.

E.g. For performances and other events with seated audiences: [You will provide attendants who will ask people to seat themselves furthest from the entrance on arrival, to exit closest to the exits first and invite people to use toilets in the interval row by row].

E.g. Where a group uses their own equipment:

[You will ask those attending to bring their own equipment and not share it with other members] or [You will avoid using equipment, which is difficult to clean, as far as possible. You will ensure that any equipment you provide is cleaned before use and before being stored in the hall's cupboards].

E.g. [The hall is equipped with passive infra-red detectors which means that lights and taps come on automatically in the following areas:                      Please remind people not to touch these switches or taps.]

E.g. [You will not attempt to clean the following items, which will be the responsibility of the hall cleaner]