

## Reopening safely

### Can community centres re-open?

That's a good question, and one we've been asked several times.

The quick answer would appear to be 'yes they can', but then of course the devil is in the detail. Any activity that takes place within the centre needs to be Covid compliant; your trustees or governing body needs to have completed a suitable risk assessment for re-opening and satisfied itself that it is safe to do so – remember you have to consider your staff and volunteers as well as the public and service users that will be entering the building.

Secondly, you need to consider whether or not the activities planned for the centre are subject to any government edicts or separate controls or restrictions, including any local restrictions that apply to where you live and work:

- Organised indoor and outdoor sports are allowed for example, so long as they are from the list of approved activities
- People are also allowed to meet in numbers greater than 6 for formally organised support groups where they are providing mutual aid or therapy for example
- You can also have numbers greater than 6 at other activities, so long as people stay within their bubbles, and there is limited interaction between the bubbles, and people maintain social distancing between bubbles
- Where there is a possibility of greater social interaction either within or associated with the activity it could be deemed illegal

**So, in a nutshell, yes centres can open BUT, consider whether or not your centre can be adapted for safe operation.** Consider also whether or not the planned activities fall under any additional government restrictions – bear in mind the rule of six; limitations on mingling and social interaction within and beyond the activity; who has organised the activity. And if you do decide to open, don't forget to adhere to the regulations regarding Test and Trace, and make sure you record contact details of those using your centre.

Below are links to some of the relevant government documents and extracts from them to help you through the maze. Information accurate as of 25.09.20, but subsequent guidance may alter this interpretation. **Always check for the latest government guidance at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

**Selected government guidance as published at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

***Please be aware that government guidelines change frequently so do ensure you are using the latest guidelines when making opening or other operational decisions. Written summaries such as this are accurate only on the date of publication.***

### **Closing certain businesses and venues in England (24.09.20)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

#### **Extract**

From 28 September, businesses and organisations will face stricter rules to make their premises COVID-19 secure:

- A wider range of leisure and entertainment venues, services provided in community centres, and close contact services will be subject to COVID-19 Secure requirements in law and fines of £1000, and rising up to £10,000 for repeated breaches
- Employers must not knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work
- Businesses must remind people to wear face coverings where mandated, as set out in section 10 below

### **Safe use of multi-purpose community facilities 24.09.20**

[Read the guidance here](#)

#### **Selected extracts:**

Managers of community facilities will have discretion over when they consider it safe to open for any activity permitted by legislation and may decide to remain closed if they are not able to safely follow the advice in the relevant guidance, to make the space COVID-19 secure.

Each community facility should apply relevant guidance listed here, locally, depending on circumstances, including its size and type of activities it hosts, its users, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.

## **2. Core principles for safely re-opening community facilities**

Community facilities are used for a range of purposes, and relevant guidance on specific activities is signposted below (section 3). However, there are general principles that managers of community spaces should follow in making their space COVID-19 secure, and safely re-opening for permitted activity.

Any reopening plans should be consistent with:

- [core public health guidance](#) regarding health, hygiene, and [social distancing](#)
- [safe workplace guidelines](#), 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) has legal responsibilities under health and safety law, and must

take reasonable measures to ensure the premises, access to it, and any equipment or substances provided are safe for people using it, so far as is reasonably practicable.

To help 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 guidance on social distancing and the points set out below. This will be in addition to any risk assessment which is already in place for the community facility. See guidance on [completing a risk assessment](#).

Users and hirers of a community facility have responsibility for managing risks arising from their own activities when they have control of premises and should take account of any guidance relevant to their specific activity or sector.

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

### **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 local activities and services – from childcare provision to hosting social and recreational clubs. In line with the government’s recovery roadmap, different activities are subject to specific reviews and guidance on when and how they are permitted to resume. Where a premise delivers a mix of services, only those services that are permitted to be open should be available.

Covid-19 Secure community facilities are permitted to run the following activities in adherence to restrictions on gathering, closing times, social distancing and the wearing of face coverings:

- Providers, organisers and managers of leisure, entertainment and close contact services operating in a community facility must ensure customers observe the rule of 6, and ensure appropriate social distancing, through signage, layout, and managing customer entry
- Those operating close contact services in a community facility, which includes, hairdressing, any treatments on the face such as eyebrow threading or make-up application – will be required by law to wear face masks and visors when providing these services
- Businesses operating in a community facility that sells food or drink (including cafes, bars, pubs and restaurants) must close services between 10pm - 5am

As of 28 September:

- Indoor performances to socially distanced audiences can take place presently if in line with the [performing arts guidance](#). However, as of 28 September

community facilities must not allow singing in groups of more than 6, dancing, or music over certain volumes

- Wedding receptions must only take place in the form of a sit down meal up to a maximum of 15 guests. See guidance on weddings, restaurants and other hospitality industries guidance for further information
- Community facilities managers and providers must remind users to wear face coverings
- Mandated services provided in community centres, and close contact services will be subject to the COVID-19 secure requirements in law and fines of up to £10,000 for repeated breaches

Those managing community facilities, and those using community facilities for the following activities, should take account of the relevant guidance below:  
(go to link above for more details of restrictions on various types of activity)

### **Meeting others safely 22.9.20**

[Read the guidance here](#)

#### **Selected extracts:**

#### **2. Seeing friends and family**

When seeing friends and family you do not live with you should:

- meet in groups of 6 or less
- follow social distancing rules when you meet up
- limit how many different people you see socially over a short period of time
- meet people outdoors where practical: meeting people outdoors is safer than meeting people indoors because fresh air provides better ventilation

Limits on the number of people you can see socially have changed. When meeting friends and family you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) you must not meet in a group of more than 6, indoors or outdoors. [This is against the law](#) and the police will have the powers to enforce these legal limits, including to issue fines (fixed penalty notices) of £200, doubling for further breaches up to a maximum of £6,400.

Government has announced an initial £60 million to support additional enforcement activity undertaken by local authorities and the police, in addition to funding that has already been awarded.

There are exceptions where groups can be larger than 6 people. These include:

- for work, or the provision of voluntary or charitable services
- registered childcare, education or training
- supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups
- providing support to a vulnerable person

- providing emergency assistance, and to avoid injury or illness or to escape risk of harm
- for arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents
- fulfilling a legal obligation, such as attending court or jury service
- elite sporting competition and training
- wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions – up to 15 people
- funerals – up to 30 people. This does not include wakes, other than for religious ceremonial purposes
- exercise classes, organised outdoor sport or licensed outdoor physical activity, and supervised sporting activity (indoors or outdoors) for under-18s
- indoor organised team sports for disabled people
- support groups of up to 15 participants – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support. This includes support to victims of crime, recovering addicts, new parents, people with long-term illnesses, those facing issues relating to their sexuality or gender, and those who have suffered bereavement
- protests – if organised in compliance with COVID-19 Secure guidance. All individuals must be socially distanced

Where a group includes someone covered by such an exception (for example, someone who is working), they are not counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means, for example, a tradesperson can go into a household of six without breaching the limit, if they are there for work.

More information can be found on a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

### **3. Rules in other venues and activities**

As well as the exemptions above, venues following [COVID-19 secure guidelines](#) will be able to continue to host more people in total – such as religious services in places of worship – but no one should mix in a group of greater than 6. This includes places like a pub, shop, leisure venue, restaurant or place of worship. When you visit one of these places you should:

- follow the limits on the number of other people you should meet with as a group – no more than six people unless you all live together (or are in the same support bubble)
- avoid social interaction with anyone outside the group you are with, even if you see other people you know
- provide your contact details to the organiser so that you can be contacted if needed by the [NHS Test and Trace programme](#)

**[Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do 22.09.20](#)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

On 22 September, [the government announced new measures to suppress the virus](#).

Some of these new restrictions will be [set out in the law](#) and guidance. The police and other enforcement officers are able to issue penalties to those that don't comply with law.

Further information on these changes can be found in the relevant section below. [Detailed guidance on the new rules on how to meet people safely, including our changes to gatherings rules, can be found here](#).

**Selected extracts:**

3.15 Can I still participate in sport and physical activity in groups of more than 6?  
Adults can continue to take part in outdoor organised sport and licensed physical outdoor activity in groups of more than six, provided it is organised by a national governing body, club, registered instructor/coach, business or charity; and/or involve someone who has received an official license to use equipment relevant to the activity. In all cases, the organiser must conduct a risk assessment and ensure compliance with COVID-19 Secure guidance.

You should only be playing outdoor team sports and partaking in outdoor physical activity where the relevant governing body has published guidance on how to do so safely, and you can play outdoors. See [a list of team sports governing bodies which have developed guidance](#). Other outdoor sports or licensed outdoor physical activities may also be permitted if this is formally organised by a sports club or similar organisation and following sports-governing body guidance.

For adults, outdoor organised exercise classes can still take place in groups larger than six. When participating in any exempted activity like this, you must not mingle in groups of more than 6 before and after the activity. You should always ensure you socially distance from people you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) wherever possible.

From 24 September, organised indoor sport and indoor exercise classes can continue to take place with larger numbers present, provided groups of more than six do not mix. If groups of six are likely to mix, these indoor activities must not go ahead. There is an exemption or organised indoor team sports for disabled people.

The relevant [indoor sport facilities guidance](#) or [outdoor guidance](#) must be followed for these activities. Organised Sport and Physical Activity events are allowed provided they follow [guidance for the public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation in England](#). All supervised activities for under 18s, including sports and exercise groups, indoors and out, are permitted where a risk assessment has been carried out. This should follow [guidance on out of school settings](#).



Other forms of exercise must only take place in groups of six unless everyone is from the same household or support bubble.

When playing sports informally (where not organised in line with the rules above) with people you don't live with, you must limit the size of your group to 6. It is illegal to do so in a larger group and you may be fined.

### **3.17 Can I go to my support group?**

Some types of support group are exempt from the legal gatherings limit of 6. A maximum number of 15 people can attend such groups.

Support groups can take place in groups of up to 15 in a public place, if the support group 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 those who attend its meetings. This includes, but is not limited to, providing support:

- to victims of crime (including domestic abuse)
- to those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, narcotics or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour
- to new and expectant parents
- to those with, or caring for persons with, any long-term illness, disability or terminal condition or who are vulnerable
- to those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- to those who have suffered bereavement

This is an exemption to the legal gatherings limit of 6 people.

Support groups not covered by this exemption can still take place if they do not breach the new gatherings limit of six people. This means that for these other groups, in a COVID-19 Secure venue or public outdoor place, there can be more than 6 people in total present, but social interaction and shared activity must be limited to groups of 6. Where this is unlikely to be possible, no more than 6 people should attend. Anybody who is working in facilitating the group or attending for work purposes is not included.

### **3.18 Can I go to my hobby club / amateur musical group / other leisure activity?**

It is [against the law](#) to gather in groups of more than 6, where people are from different households or support bubbles. Some activities – such as those organised for under-18s – are exempt. In a COVID-19 Secure venue or public outdoor place, non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than 6 at any time.

If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than 6 (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.

**Performing arts guidance (18.09.20)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

**Guidance for the public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation in England (18.09.20)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

**Safer public spaces – urban centres and green spaces (22.09.20)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

**Guidance on the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic (24.9.20)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

**Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS test and trace (18.09.20)**

[Read the guidance here](#)

Full list of venues this applies to is in Annex A, but includes the following:

Local authority run services:

- community centres
- youth and community centres
- village halls

**NHS Test and Trace**

Which venues in England should display the official NHS QR code poster?

[Read the guidance here](#)

Other resources for test and trace

[Read the guidance here](#)