

Covid-19 risk assessments

Guidelines for risk assessing your group's activities or your community venue during the Covid-19 pandemic

Government regulations allow charities and community groups to organise some activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, as long as certain requirements are met. Doing a risk assessment for your activity or community space is one of these requirements, and is a really useful way for your group to think through how you are going to run your activity in a safe way.

See our information on *Covid-19 regulations for community groups* for details of activities you are allowed to organise and the guidelines you must follow to do so. This information sheet includes:

- What is a Covid-19 risk assessment?
- How could the virus be spread in our group activity or community space?
 - Direct contact between people
 - Shared air
 - Shared equipment and facilities
 - Failure to take part in NHS Test and Trace
- Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for an activity
- Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for a community venue

What is a Covid-19 risk assessment?

A risk assessment lists the hazards that people might face when engaging in a particular activity or event, and the measures you are taking to mitigate the risk from those hazards. See our *Risk assessments* information sheet for a general guide.

A Covid-19 risk assessment specifically addresses the hazard of spreading or catching the Covid-19 virus. During the current pandemic, if your group organises any activity that brings people together in a physical space, indoors or outdoors, the group is legally required to complete a Covid-19 risk assessment. Your group needs to consider how the virus might be spread during any activity that you organise, and what you will do to reduce the likelihood of it being spread.

Doing a risk assessment is a useful tool to help your group plan how you will run the activity to make sure you are meeting current legal requirements and keeping everyone in your group as safe as possible.

How could the virus be spread in our group activity or community space?

The Covid-19 virus is transmitted from one person to another through: 1) airborne particles (droplets and aerosols); and 2) particles on surfaces (fomites). This means that, in basic terms, the virus is spread when people are close together and breathing the same air and/or touching the same things. Some people who are infected with the virus do not have any symptoms and do not know they are infected. They can still transmit the virus to others, however, through talking, breathing, coughing, sneezing, and sharing of equipment and facilities.

Regulations and guidelines that the government has developed – like social distancing, mask wearing, increased cleaning of hands and equipment – are all designed to reduce the risk of virus transmission. When planning your activity and doing your risk assessment, your group should think about how you will ensure that all the regulations are followed during your activity. See our information on *Covid-19 regulations for community groups* for further details. You will also need to consider what happens before your activity begins e.g. as people are arriving at the venue, and afterwards, when everybody is leaving.

Key ways in which the virus could be spread in any group activity are listed below. Your risk assessment should include consideration of all these risks, and outline what your group will do to reduce the likelihood of them happening. You should also include any other risks that might be specific to your group members or activity e.g. if your group includes people who are clinically vulnerable, are there extra measures you need to put in place to minimise risk to them?

Direct contact between people

Staying away if you have symptoms

If you are running a community space or organising an activity, you should ask anyone who has symptoms not to come to the venue or event. The three main symptoms of Covid-19 originally identified were: cough, high temperature, and loss of smell (anosmia). Other key symptoms have since been identified, including fatigue, sore throat, headache and diarrhoea¹. A full list of identified Covid-19 symptoms can be found on the Zoe Covid Study website².

Symptoms can vary depending on a number of factors, such as the individual, whether they have been vaccinated, and which variant of the virus they have. Your group might decide to ask anyone who is feeling unwell, with any set of symptoms, not to attend your venue or activity. Or you might ask them to stay away unless they have taken a PCR test³ and had a negative result since they started having the symptoms.

¹ <https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/feeling-unwell-it-could-be-covid-19-so-get-a-test>

² <https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/the-20-symptoms-of-covid-19-to-watch-out-for>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Social distancing

'Social distancing' means that people who do not live together, or who are not in a support bubble together, should keep 2 metres apart from one another. If it is not possible for people to stay 2 metres apart, they should stay 1 metre apart and wear a face covering.

If you are running a community space, you should think about:

- ♦ The size of each room and how many people can fit into it safely. You can find online space calculators⁴ to help you with this, although they can be quite complicated.
- ♦ 'Pinch points' (where people would be forced to move closer together e.g. through doorways). Is it possible to set up a one-way system so that people come in one door and leave through another? Do you need signs to make this clear? If you are in Brighton & Hove, you can get signs printed at the Resource Centre.

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- ♦ The maximum number of people you can safely allow at your event. Check the current regulations and ask the venue for their maximum capacity. Plan how you will limit numbers – will people have to book in advance? You could use an online ticketing service such as Eventbrite⁵ for advance bookings (there's no cost if you are not charging for your tickets).
- ♦ Whether your event or meeting would work as a hybrid event, where some people join via Zoom. If you are in Brighton & Hove, the Resource Centre has equipment and information⁶ that can help you to organise events like this.
- ♦ How you will set up the space and mark distances. It is a good idea to have someone from the committee set up the space before other people arrive e.g. by setting out chairs or marker cones that are appropriately distanced for your activity. You can hire freestanding signs from the Resource Centre and print your own information to display in them.
- ♦ How to minimise the need for people to be too close together as they are arriving and leaving. You might decide to have staggered arrival times so people do not end up queuing to get in, or a one-way system so that people are not going in and out of the same door.

Face coverings

The current government guidelines⁷ say that face coverings must be worn indoors, including in community centres, youth centres and social clubs. There are exceptions, including:

- ♦ children under the age of 11 (Public Health England does not recommend face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
- ♦ people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability

⁴ <https://venuesearch.ie/capacity-calculator/> is a simple online space calculator

⁵ <https://eventbrite.co.uk/>

⁶ <https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/hybrid-meetings-in-person-and-online/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

- ♦ where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- ♦ if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate
- ♦ to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others – including if it would negatively impact on your ability to exercise or participate in a strenuous activity
- ♦ if you are undertaking exercise or an activity and it would negatively impact your ability to do so
- ♦ when seated to eat or drink in a hospitality premise such as a pub, bar, restaurant or cafe. You must put a face covering back on once you finish eating or drinking

If you are running a community venue, you should think about:

- ♦ Whether your staff need to wear face coverings at work, and whether you can use screens instead. There is no specific government guidance for community centres, but the guidance on face coverings for staff working in shops and retail settings⁸ says “By law, staff and customers in retail settings are required to wear a face covering, unless they have an exemption.” However, it also says “If you have taken steps to create a physical barrier or screen between workers and members of the public, then staff behind the barrier or screen will not be required to wear a face covering.”

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- ♦ Whether your activity (or the people attending your activity) will be covered by one of the exemptions listed above
- ♦ How you will let people know in advance about the rules on wearing masks during your activity
- ♦ You may want to supply masks at the door, for people who don’t remember to bring their own mask with them

Hand washing

Making sure people wash or sanitise their hands frequently can help reduce the risk of passing on the virus through direct contact or shared surfaces.

If you are running a community venue, you should think about:

- ♦ Providing information about good handwashing technique in the toilets or other places where people can wash their hands
- ♦ Providing hand sanitiser at the entrance and asking people to sanitise their hands as soon as they arrive in the building

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- ♦ Providing hand sanitiser for people arriving at your event. But be careful about where you place this, so that people are not bunched up together at the door.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches#shops-6-2>

Shared air

There is now evidence⁹ that the virus can spread between people who are not close together, if they are in an enclosed space and breathing the same air. The main way to reduce this risk is to improve ventilation. This app¹⁰ can help you think through the measures you can take to decrease risk of indoor transmission of the virus.

If you are running a community venue, you should think about:

- ♦ Advising users of your venue to open windows and doors during their activities
- ♦ Monitoring the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) inside your venue, to give you an indication of how well the space is ventilated. According to this article¹¹, “Outdoors, CO₂ levels are just above 400 parts per million (ppm). A well ventilated room will have around 800 ppm of CO₂. Any higher than that and it is a sign the room might need more ventilation.” You can buy a CO₂ monitor for between £30 and £60.
- ♦ Installing a mechanical ventilation system (eg extractor fans) in rooms where it is not possible to open the windows.
- ♦ Purchasing an air purifier, which filters the air and can remove particles the size of those that typically contain the virus. Look for one which has a HEPA filter. You can buy an air purifier powerful enough to cover a typical 70m² room for around £300. Be aware that an air purifier will not reduce the level of CO₂ in the air.

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- ♦ Is it possible to organise your activity outdoors?
- ♦ If you need to be indoors, ask your venue about ventilation
- ♦ Make sure you have windows and doors open during the activity

Shared equipment and facilities

The main mitigation for the risk of passing on the virus after touching shared surfaces is frequent handwashing. This is covered above, in the Direct contact between people section.

The most recent scientific consensus¹² is that measures to prevent airborne infection are more important than cleaning surfaces.

Nevertheless, you may want to introduce additional cleaning measures, and minimise shared equipment.

If you are running a community venue, you could think about:

- ♦ Using paper towels or a hand dryer instead of shared hand towels
- ♦ Setting up a routine to clean equipment between hires of your venue – you could ask hirers to do this, or use your own staff or volunteers.

If you are organising an activity, you could think about:

⁹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-how-is-it-transmitted>

¹⁰ <https://airborne.cam/>

¹¹ <https://theconversation.com/how-to-use-ventilation-and-air-filtration-to-prevent-the-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-143732>

¹² <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/how-important-are-surfaces-transmission-covid-19>

- ♦ Propping open doors so that people don't all touch the same door handle during your activity (this could help with ventilation too)
- ♦ If you use equipment during your activity, asking each participant to clean their own equipment before putting it away (you could provide disinfectant wipes to make this easier)

Failure to take part in NHS Test and Trace

The current government guidance for community centres¹³ says:

“Community centres and village halls must collect contact information for all activities and events taking place within the venue. This should be collected by the person who hires the space. The venue must display an official NHS QR code poster which can be used for every activity that takes place there. They must also offer a system which does not require individuals to own an electronic device.”

If you are running a community venue, you should:

- ♦ Read through the government guidance about NHS Test and Trace¹⁴
- ♦ Get a QR code poster¹⁵ and display it at the entrance to your building. If you are in Brighton & Hove, the Resource Centre can print and laminate your signs.
- ♦ Let your hirers know that they need to collect contact details from everyone who attends their events and keep these for 21 days (there's no need to collect contact details if someone uses the NHS Covid app to scan the QR poster).
- ♦ Keep records of which staff members and volunteers were in the building on which days, or ask them to check in using the app
- ♦ Make sure you know who has hired your venue on which days, for the last 21 days, in case you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace

If you are organising an activity, you should:

- ♦ Collect contact details for everyone who attends your activity, if it is held at an indoor venue. You may have already collected the details if you asked people to book in advance. Make sure you have some way of recording whether a person actually turned up. You don't need to collect contact details if people use the NHS app to check in with a QR code poster at the venue.
- ♦ Keep the contact details for 21 days, then destroy them (unless you have some other lawful reason for keeping them – see our information sheet on *Data Protection for Community Groups* for more information)

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster>

Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for an activity

Hazard Getting or spreading the Covid-19 virus by:	Who could be harmed?	Actions taken to minimise risk	Who is responsible for taking these actions?
People coming to the activity who have symptoms of Covid-19	Group participants Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ People will be asked not to come to the activity if they are feeling unwell ♦ Signs will be up at the door asking people not to come in if they have specific symptoms 	Group member setting up All participants
Direct contact between people	Facilitator Group participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Participant numbers will be limited to 10 – everyone will book their place in advance ♦ Chairs will be set out before participants arrive, with at least 1m between chairs ♦ Participants will be 1m apart throughout the session, wearing masks ♦ We will have a greeter at the door to remind people to keep a distance and to put on their masks on as they arrive ♦ We will supply masks for anyone who arrives without one ♦ Participants will be asked to sanitise their hands on arrival, and after leaving the 	Greeter Group member setting up All participants

		<p>room for any reason during the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will provide hand sanitiser ♦ After the group is finished, 3 people will leave at a time to prevent queues to get out of the door ♦ Signs will be up around the venue reminding people to keep a 2m distance (1m with mask) 	
Shared air	<p>Facilitator Group participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Group is being held in a venue with adequate ventilation ♦ Extractor fans will be turned on before participants arrive and kept on for the duration of the session 	Group member setting up
Shared equipment and facilities	<p>Facilitator Group participants Greeter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Participants will be asked to stay in the same chair throughout the session ♦ We will not use the kitchen - participants have been asked to bring their own refreshments ♦ Participants will be reminded to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet 	Facilitator
Failure to take part in NHS Test and Trace	<p>Facilitator Group participants Greeter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will check people in on arrival, using our advance booking list 	<p>Greeter Facilitator</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will keep the record of who attended each session for 21 days and supply it to the venue manager if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace 	
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Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for a community venue

Hazard	Who could be harmed?	Actions taken to minimise risk	Who is responsible for taking these actions?
Getting or spreading the Covid-19 virus by:			
People coming into the venue who have Covid-19 symptoms	Staff Volunteers Centre users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Signs will be up at the front entrance asking people not to enter the venue if they are feeling unwell ♦ We will advise hirers to ask people not to participate in their groups if they are feeling unwell 	All staff and volunteers
Direct contact between people	Staff Volunteers Centre users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will allow a maximum of 30 people at a time in the large hall and 15 people at a time in the small hall ♦ We will advise hirers to use the car park door as an exit, to avoid crowding in the lobby ♦ We will provide hand sanitiser at the entrance 	Centre manager All staff and volunteers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will ensure that there is plenty of soap and paper towels in the toilet in advance of each hire ♦ We will put up notices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the entrance, asking people to disinfect their hands and wear a mask ○ In the toilets, reminding people how to wash hands properly ♦ We will install a screen at the reception desk ♦ All staff and volunteers to wear face coverings inside the Centre unless working behind the screen or alone in a room 	
Shared air	<p>Staff Volunteers Centre users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will install CO2 monitors in both halls and provide instructions for hirers on how to read them ♦ We will advise hirers to keep at least 3 windows or doors open during their activities 	Centre manager
Shared equipment and facilities	<p>Staff Volunteers Centre users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ End of day cleaning routine to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disinfect all door handles and light switches ○ Clean toilets, flush lever, taps, hand soap dispensers in both toilets 	Cleaner

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wash all cutlery 	
Failure to take part in NHS Test and Trace	Staff Volunteers Centre users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ We will display a NHS Test and Trace QR code poster at the entrance to the building and in both halls ◆ We will ask hirers to collect contact details for everyone attending their activities ◆ All staff and volunteers to check in using the NHS app on arrival, or sign in and out ◆ Sign-in sheet to be kept for at least 21 days 	Centre manager All staff and volunteers