Community Matters

Ensuring your organisation is Covid Secure

There is a wide range of online information including guidelines and templates to assist you reopening. As each organisation and premises are unique all of the advice is generalised and will need to be personalised to your organisation and premises. This will require varying degrees of work to successfully adapt and fit.

Throughout this process it is important to hold in mind that, at the time of writing, no vaccine has been created and distributed to reduce the risk of Covid-19 so the potential impact remains as significant as ever regardless of the easing of lockdown and other measures.

Keeping apart (Social distancing) and keeping clean (increased and more regular hygiene) are key descriptors and should be evidenced in both in your written processes and in actuality when you reopen. This is not the time to be complacent and we would recommend highest standards that are practicable for your organisation.

With that in mind here are several steps to follow to explore the potential for you to reopen and subsequently how you can do this safely.

Should we reopen yet?

We can now reopen Community Centres, but this does not mean you have to reopen – There will be many reasons for you to reopen, so evaluate these to ensure there is a definite **need** to reopen and agree this as a management team/board – it would be worth noting why you are reopening to assist in any discussions by any negative responses within your community. Equally if you decide not to reopen yet try to outline the conditions that will need to be in place for you to reopen, use these to help you monitor changes at a National or local level so that you can react accordingly.

How to reopen your Community Centre

There are two things that you need to do to enable you to reopen and keep people safe, these new measures are likely to impact your organisation and premises in a number of ways.

- Follow the social distancing guidelines
- Follow the increased hygiene guidelines

Calculate new capacity levels

Given existing spaces were not created with the social distancing measures in mind this could present a logistical challenge is probably a good place to start. One of the reasons you've decided to reopen will probably be the financial benefit of reopening to your organisation and your hirers. As the social distancing guidelines are likely to impact the capacity of your premises and the separate rooms therein it is therefore important that before you progress you calculate your new capacity using an accurate floorplan (or by walking round your premises with a tape measure) and your knowledge of the existing use of each space.

The original 2m spacing has been reduced to 1m+ (with additional measures) so these limitations will need to be overlaid onto your spaces. For example a room laid out for a round the table committee meeting will potentially require less floor space than a session where everyone is physically active. Bear in mind access and egress to the space and how people are able to leave part way through a booking to visit the toilet or kitchen. What you are seeking to do here is to establish maximum capacities for your individual rooms/spaces so that you can share these with your hirers and manage their expectations. by all means include them in the discussion, but the outcome must fall within the social distancing guidelines.

Once you have established new capacities you will need to advise your existing hirers as these changes may impact their bookings to the point where it is not economically viable to use your space. It will be a balance as to when you involve your hirers in this conversation as you will also need to reassess the general use of the building and other factors such as parking. These may negatively impact your capacity if, for example, there is very limited parking. At the time of writing restrictions on sharing vehicles remain in place which, depending on how your visitors arrive, may impact on capacities.

Note: *If the capacity of your spaces, when utilising the current social distancing guidelines, exceeds 30 people, bear in mind there are currently legal limitations on meetings exceeding this number*

Social distancing, increased hygiene and people flow within your premises

In addition to recalculating individual room space capacities, you will need to consider the safe movement of people through your spaces again meeting the social distancing guidelines. There are a number of ways in which you can rearrange the use of your space to allow you to reopen safely. As these will need to be adapted to your specific premises here are some things to consider. The list is not definitive but will hopefully cover the main points and prompt some thought towards alternative measures you could adopt.

- One way systems (you may decide to utilise fire exit routes, if you do ensure you do not compromise their primary use).
- Staggering the times activities start and end to minimise the density of people at pinch points/communal areas
- Introduce a queuing system – that maintains the social distancing guidelines – consider how this may impact on other aspects such as car parking capacity
- marking out social distancing requirements in your space such as for queuing or in spaces to assist people with compliance

- Where you have adults accompanied by children remind them that they (or whoever is managing the group) are responsible for ensuring the children follow social distancing guidelines
- Have clearly designated areas from which staff can safely provide assistance whilst maintaining social distancing
- Work with your local authority, landlord, neighbouring businesses and other relevant partners to jointly consider the impact of your measures such as queuing and car parking and resolve any conflicts constructively to avoid overcrowding
- Bear in mind not all activity has returned to normalcy so be vigilant that you aren't hiring out spaces for activities that are still restricted
- Maintain reasonable adjustments for those people who need them
- Consider the particular needs of those people with protected characteristics such as those who are visually impaired
- Encourage people to use handwashing facilities or hand sanitiser as they enter the premises
- Set clear use instructions for any shared facilities such as changing/toilets/kitchen and ensure these spaces are cleaned frequently, kept free of personal belongings and well ventilated – again staggering times of use may be useful to assist with social distancing

Once new control measures have been agreed for your organisation/premises you will need to complete a risk assessment to capture this information. Here is a link to a template from the Health and Safety executive.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/risk-assessment.pdf

Alternatively there is a Covid-19 specific risk assessment template in the Community Matters helpsheets

Implementing change

Once you have a risk assessment in place you need to ensure that you implement all of the new control measures - and that they actually work in practise.

Make a checklist of things you need to completed and tick things off as you go along use headings such as;

- Physical changes
  - install screens
  - set up new configurations of furniture i.e. move tables and chairs
  - install hand sanitisers
- Signage
  - floormarkings
  - hygiene and social distancing information
  - directional signage
- train staff in any new processes
- communicate with
  - community
  - insurers
  - local authority

- ○ neighbouring businesses
- ○ neighbours
- ○ hirers
- ○ customers

Review

Bear in mind that this is not a one off project, you will need to continually monitor the national and local guidelines and then review and adapt your risk assessment and subsequent control measures - build in some time to do this regularly.

Links

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

https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk

https://www.alva.org.uk/index.cfm