

New Restrictions – Guide for Community Buildings

The tighter COVID restrictions in England from 5th November until 2nd December have affected what activities can take place in Community Buildings.

These new nationwide restrictions mean that all Community Buildings and Village Halls are required to ‘close their doors’, although there are a number of permitted activities that can take place to support the delivery of essential services within community buildings.

We know that the Trustees and staff of volunteer led organisations have been trying to understand what these new restrictions mean for their communities and how they can continue to support the people that need their help.

The new restrictions allow for essential services to continue which includes foodbank provision, organised support groups and pre-schools, education, and childcare and a fuller explanation and information about permitted activities can be found in our most recent ACRE guidance [here](#)

Community Buildings that do decide to remain open to provide permitted activities must make sure that the venue is COVID secure as per previous guidance.

When deciding what activity can and should continue in light of the new restrictions, trustees may want to think about the following:

- Do we understand the new restrictions and do the activities fall within them?
More information can be found [here](#)
- Are the activities we are running essential to those we support?
- What is the detailed rationale behind why we believe our activities fall within the permitted activities should we be asked to provide it in any discussion about compliance with or enforcement of the new restrictions?
- Have we looked again at our risk assessment? What steps are we taking to mitigate risk and ensure ‘COVID Security’ measures are being maintained?
The ACRE information sheet for community buildings is currently being updated to reflect the new guidelines but the risk assessment templates for community buildings and user groups can still be found on our website [here](#)
- If we have staff, do we need to consider furloughing them? The Coronavirus Job retention scheme has been extended and more information can be found [here](#)

Trustees or committee members are responsible for running community buildings and must make sure that the building is closed except where it is used for permitted activity outlined in the guidance.

Further financial support has been announced by the government in form of a series of Local Restriction Support Grants. The grants will provide some funding for community buildings due to the effect of the lockdown restrictions. Further information about the grants and how to apply can be found [here](#)

The Government guidance for the safe use of multipurpose community facilities has also been updated (17th November) [here](#) providing further information and reinforcing the message that community buildings should be closed except for the limited number of permitted activities or services.

Having looked at the new restrictions guidance and considered the permitted activities, Trustees may have made the decision that they must close the building.

If so, Trustees should contact their insurance company to make sure any specific policy measures are noted and adhered to. Building managers may also want to look at our [Energy Efficiency Top Tips for Community Buildings](#)

Some community buildings may have decided that although they have had to close the hall for activities, they can continue to provide support to their communities in different ways. They may be able to provide some activities virtually, provide takeaway services or in some cases offer doorstep drops of activity packs or food provision.

When making decisions about adapting their services, Trustees should consider how doing things differently may affect current policies and procedures and consider how they are keeping staff/volunteers and beneficiaries safe.

Our current training offer includes workshops on Risk Management, Safeguarding and Using Social Media to Stay Connected. More information on these fully funded training workshops can be found [here](#).

There are always more questions that come to light through any decision-making process and we know this is the case when wading through the complexities of Government guidance; we are here to chat things through should you need to.

Further Support Available

We recognise that the guidance is complicated, confusing and can change quickly.

As Community Buildings work through the many questions they face at this time, Durham Community Action is here to offer information, advice and support.

Our friendly staff at Durham Community Action are currently remotely working from home but we are still here to provide information, advice and guidance so don't hesitate to get in touch

Email: info@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

Website: www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk

