

Living and Working with Covid-19

A Guide for Community Buildings

As we are learning to live with Covid-19, those running community buildings are continuing to face a range of challenges, as they try to continue supporting people, whilst keeping them safe.

The local restrictions, imposed in September, were made in response to the rising number of cases across County Durham. They have generated a great deal of confusion, as people try to interpret the guidance for their own circumstances.

We have received many enquiries, including:

- Is our building allowed to remain open?
- Can the weekly bingo session still go ahead?
- Can we only have a maximum of 6 people in the building at one time?
- Are exercise classes still permitted?

In this guide we will address some of the confusion, to help trustees make informed decisions for the benefit of those they support.

As County Durham is now ranked in Tier 2 of the governments new scheme for reducing the spread of the virus, the official guidance from Durham County Council states that, *residents must not socialise with other people outside of their own households in all public venues unless they are part of a support bubble.*

Although the guidance does not state that community buildings should close, it does state that each venue must be Covid secure, have completed a robust risk assessment, and implemented a range of safety measures to help minimise the risk of the virus spreading.

Being Covid secure means:

- Strict adherence to social distancing of 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable)
- All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched, should be cleaned regularly, using standard cleaning products.
- On entering and leaving a community building everyone, including staff, should be asked to wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or to use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available.
- Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19.
- All venues should ensure that steps are taken to avoid people needing to unduly raise their voices to each other.
- Collect track and trace 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.

The local restrictions emphasise the need for everyone to *reduce their social interactions as much as possible* as evidence shows the virus is being spread through communities, and through household to household transition.

Community venues offer a wide range of activities and services; however, their communal nature also makes them places that are vulnerable to the spread of the virus.

It's important that everyone abides by the rules to help reduce the spread of the virus and those running community buildings have an important role to play.

For many buildings this will mean a reduction in activities and services they offer, in addition to reducing the capacity of people using the building, in order to comply with the Covid secure guidance.

Here are a few questions for trustees to consider when deciding what activities and services they can continue to offer:

- Which of our activities are essential for those we support?
- Do we have any activities or services that have restrictions e.g. team sports?
- Have we revisited our risk assessments following the introduction of local restrictions?
- Can we adapt any of our activities to online?
- Could we defend our decision to run an activity if challenged by the Local Authority?

Understanding how the Restrictions will have an impact on activities in your community building can be complex. We have provided some links below which will guide you through the detail.

Further information and guidance can be found here:

[Durham County Council Guide](#)

[Durham County Council Local Restrictions](#)

[Guidance for Safe Use of Multi-purpose Community Facilities](#)

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 our help, with 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

