A Guide for Community Buildings

Life after lockdown – reopening your community building

As we enter the next phase of the Coronavirus pandemic and start to reopen and deliver services once again, it is vital to adapt community buildings to work within the governments guidelines and help minimise the risk of the virus spreading.

The communal nature of community buildings could make it easy for the virus to spread if proper precautions are not taken.

In this guide we will look at what trustees need to do to make these spaces COVID secure and as safe as possible.

Risk Management

Trustees have legal responsibilities under health and safety law and must take reasonable measures to ensure the building, access to it and any equipment provided are safe for people to use.

A COVID-19 specific risk assessment should be carried out in addition to any other risk assessments which are already in place.

The risk assessment should take into account the keys themes (a few listed below) as set out in the governments guidance and identify what measures can be put in place to minimise the risk of the virus spreading.

Below are some questions to help get you started…

Social distancing and capacity

- Do you know how many people you can accommodate safely whilst adhering to the social distancing guidelines?
- Which activities can you operate safely?
- Have you thought about avoiding pinch points where groups overlap to avoid people passing each other?
- Can you implement a one-way system?
- How will you manage the use of communal areas such as toilets and kitchens?

Cleaning

- Have you considered how often you will need to deep clean the building?
- Who will clean the building?
- Will you need a cleaner or increase the hours of your existing cleaner?
- Will you ask group leaders to clean before and after each session?

Hygiene and Face Coverings

- How will you ask visitors to wash their hands as they enter the building?
- Do you have sufficient hand washing facilities to avoid a queue?
- Do you know the rules around face coverings?

NHS Test and Trace

This system helps to track the spread of the virus and for those who have been in contact with someone infected by the virus to be contacted easily. It is a requirement for community buildings to take part but is voluntary for people to provide their information, although they should be encouraged to do so.

A record of those who have visited your building, the dates they visited, and a contact number is all that is required. The information should be stored for 21 days and be accessible to the NHS if requested. It's important to let people know that their information will only be kept for this period of time and why you're collecting it, to ensure you comply with GDPR.

Users and Hirers

While trustees have overall responsibility to ensure the building is COVID secure, users and hirers of the building also have a responsibility to manage the risks arising from their own activities.

Adhering to the 2-metre social distancing rule, wearing a face covering and washing hands regularly, and not visiting the building if you are unwell all need to carried out by everyone who uses a community building.

Asking those who hire space in your building to provide a risk assessment is a good way to know that they understand the guidance and have taken measures to minimise risk.

An alternative is to add some additional terms and conditions to a hire agreement. This may include the need for additional cleaning of surfaces and equipment etc that you would like to be carried out before and after each session.

Connecting with your Community

Welcoming people back to your buildings is a huge step forward on the road to recovery, and in many cases, a welcome return to some sort of normality.

Offering reassurance to your users and telling them about the measures you've put in place, to help keep them safe, is an important step. It helps to build confidence so people will feel safe coming back, but also sends a clear message that you need them to follow the new rules to help keep everyone safe.

Clear signage or someone to greet them and explain how to navigate your building are a couple of ways to help your reopening run smoothly.

Further information and guidance can be found here:

[Government COVID-19 guidance for multi-purpose community facilities](#)

[ICO information on Track and Trace](#)

[ACRE COVID-19 Safer Community Centres](#)

Further Support Available

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