



National Lockdown Restrictions – January 2021 Guidance for Community Buildings

From 5th January the whole of England was placed into another national lockdown to help control the spread of COVID-19 as cases of the virus are rapidly rising.

With the main message in the new restrictions being ‘stay at home’ and the instruction that community buildings must close except for a limited number of exempt activities, will undoubtedly mean even more uncertainty and confusion for those operating community buildings.

Understanding how the restrictions will impact on the support they offer to those who need it, in addition to the financial pressure with little to no income being generated will leave many with even tougher decisions make.

Further information from the Government about the new lockdown restrictions can be found [here](#).

The updated guidance on the safe use of community buildings including details of the few exempt activities can be found [here](#).

The ACRE information sheet for community buildings, updated on 16th December 2020, can be found on our website [here](#). As we work alongside our ACRE colleagues reviewing the legislation we will continue to share subsequent updated versions on our website.

Alongside the operation of Foodbanks, support groups are one of the few permitted activities within the new restrictions although at this time of tighter restrictions, it is advisable to consider whether it is essential for support groups to meet in person or whether they can be paused or done virtually.

To ensure clarity in what is determined as a formal support group, Durham County Council advised that they take “formally organised” to mean groups that allocate a number of official roles and run structured activities and are affiliated with an overarching official organisation or are commissioned or funded by Durham County Council or a statutory partner.

Support groups that must be delivered in person can continue providing:

- No more than **15 participants** take part
- They are **formally organised** to provide mutual aid, therapy, or any other form of support
- The organiser or manager has carried out a COVID risk assessment and taken all reasonable measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus

Support groups include, but are not limited to:

- support to victims of crime,
- people in drug and alcohol recovery,
- new parents and guardians,
- people caring for those with long-term or terminal illnesses, or who are vulnerable (please note those who are clinically extremely vulnerable have been advised to take additional precautions under the new restrictions),
- people facing issues relating to their sexuality or gender,
- those who have suffered bereavement, and
- vulnerable young people, including for them to meet youth workers.

Community facilities are public venues and therefore managers of these facilities, and organisers of activities within community venues must take reasonable steps to ensure that people using their facilities do not socialise/mix with people who they do not live with; and that they are able to make the space COVID-secure.

Being COVID secure means:

- Strict adherence to social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation (i.e., face coverings) (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 facility 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 test 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

As always, those operating community facilities will have discretion over when they consider it safe to open for any activity permitted by the legislation and may decide to remain closed if they are not able to safely follow the advice in the relevant guidance, to make the space COVID-19 secure.

However, it is very clear that Community Buildings that do decide to remain open to provide permitted activities must make sure that the venue is COVID secure as detailed above.

When deciding what activity can and should continue considering 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? Are there any adaptations we can make to continue support remotely?
- 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-19 Security' measures are being maintained?
- If we have staff, do we need to consider furloughing/continue to furlough them? The Coronavirus Job retention scheme has been extended and more information can be found [here](#)
- Have we accessed all grants we are eligible for? The government has announced a new round of grants for the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality sector. The grants will be administered by DCC and further details of how to apply can be found [here](#).

Further Support Available

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.

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

