

Reopening your community centre following the COVID-19 lockdowns



Basingstoke
and Deane

Reopening your community centre

We have put together these guidelines based on government recommendations for safe working practices and our knowledge of the community organisations and buildings across the Basingstoke and Deane area. See [here](#) for government guidelines and support.

The main steps you'll need to take as a community association are:

1. Hold a committee/trustee meeting to discuss your plans for reopening (in line with government guidelines)
2. Review finances and current position
3. Complete risk assessments of both building and activities, considering the risks associated with COVID-19
4. Take necessary steps to manage risks
5. Communicate with staff, volunteers and stakeholders about opening plans and risk management.

These guidelines go into more detail about each of these steps, including key points to consider, reopening checklists and useful links to resources and guidance.

The national recovery following this pandemic is a fluid situation and the national guidance may change frequently for at least the next few months. Therefore, it is important that community organisations review the government guidance regularly and adapt their opening plans and activities as necessary. We recognise that each community organisation will need to consider a unique range of activities and groups, and that this will impact their reopening schedule.

The government has published the [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#) detailing the current roadmap for the easing of restrictions.

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1. The organisation

1.1 Developing a plan

Ahead of reopening, you will need to get together (online or similar) as a committee and create a plan for reopening. This document outlines key points for community groups when considering how best to reopen, looking at:

- **the building (risk management and maintaining social distancing)**
- **the people (working with and protecting your staff and volunteers)**
- **the organisation (meetings and finances).**

[Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) guidance for the charity sector](#)

[Coronavirus and governance: what charity trustees need to think about](#)

See Appendix 1 for a further list of considerations.

1.2 Meetings and AGMs

If your charity is hosting a formal meeting, such as an AGM required by your charity's constitution, you should refer to your charity's governing document regarding remote participation and quorum. Please refer to the [Coronavirus guidance for the charity sector](#) for more information about holding meetings online or in person, and for current restrictions.

[Charity meetings: making decisions and voting](#)

Be mindful that some people may feel anxious about returning to face-to-face activities. You might consider continuing to offer virtual access to meetings over the coming months.

1.3 Immediate actions to manage your finances

The guidance below outlines steps you can take to manage your finances, including focusing on your cash flow, minimising costs, protecting income and frequent monitoring.

[Managing financial difficulties in your charity caused by coronavirus](#)

1.4 Loans and funding available to charities and community organisations:

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council: [COVID-19 support grants for businesses](#)
- [Charity funding from the government](#)

1.5 What to expect from funders

We hope that funders will take a supportive approach to helping organisations that they fund through this difficult period. We would suggest that you speak to your funders about the impact of cancelling or delaying project activities which are part of funding agreements.

2. The building

2.1 UK government: 5 key steps to working safely

The five key steps for working safely are listed below. For further details about each point, please refer to the government guidelines which can be found [here](#). These guidelines are likely to change so please refer to the latest guidance from the government on specific rules.

- Carry out a [coronavirus risk assessment](#) (see section below).
- Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures.
- Help people to work from home.
- Maintain the national distancing measures where possible.
- Where people cannot maintain the national distancing measures, manage transmission risk.

2.2 Completing a risk assessment

You will likely be familiar with completing risk assessments as standard. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is important to complete a risk assessment considering the risk of transmitting infection in your community centre, so that actions can be taken to reduce the risks for staff, volunteers, groups and customers as far as possible.

See the guide below for information on undertaking a risk assessment and **see Appendix 2 for a sample coronavirus risk assessment**.

[Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)

2.3 Maintaining social distancing

Where staff are able to work from home, they must continue to do so. Where this is not possible, we have gathered a series of questions to be considered when making the working environment as safe as possible for your staff, volunteers and other users of the building:

- Do you need to review layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart?
- Could you establish a maximum number of people in the centre/each room at any one time to help ensure social distancing is possible?
- Could you implement staggered arrival/departure times to reduce crowding? Could you allow more time between activities to allow for cleaning?
- Could you have a phased reopening of different rooms? For example, limiting the use of rooms where social distancing is difficult to maintain, or initially only opening some rooms to limit people passing each other in corridors/shared spaces.
- Have you considered using a different approach to delivering services (such as detached, outreach or virtual sessions) to re-engage with young people?

To note:

- People must maintain the national distancing measures where possible. This includes entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings.
- Hot-desking must be avoided.

- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, consider if this activity is necessary. If it is, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.
- The [latest government advice](#) is that you should wear a face covering if in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible.
- Make sure to communicate any changes in working practices clearly and consistently to employees and users of the facilities.
- It is unlikely that many community centre activities will require full personal protective equipment. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, you must supply this free of charge to staff and volunteers who need it.

See Appendix 3 for a checklist for reopening your community centre.

3. The people

3.1 Protecting staff and volunteers

It may not be possible for higher-risk individuals to return to the workplace, or those who live with them. Please see the guidance below for protecting vulnerable people and how to volunteer safely:

[Guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from Covid-19](#)

[Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)

[How to volunteer safely](#)

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are recent onset of a new continuous cough or high temperature or a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia). If any of your staff/volunteers have these symptoms, however mild, they should stay at home and not leave their house for at least 7 days from when the symptoms started (if they live alone), or 10 days (if they live with someone who has symptoms).

In the case of someone becoming unwell with possible coronavirus in the community centre, separate the individual from others in a designated space until transport home or to hospital becomes available. Anyone who has been in contact with the unwell individual should self-isolate. See the Gov UK guidance on [Decontamination in non-healthcare settings](#) for guidance on cleaning procedures.

You may want to consider how you will record attendees' contact details in case someone tests positive to support the national [Test and Trace](#) system. For more information about Test and Trace requirements in community buildings, please see section 2f of the [Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities](#).

3.2 Availability of staff and volunteers

Will you be able to resource your centre when it is able to open? It is possible that your staff and volunteers may need to self-isolate. If so, have you got the capacity to reopen? This may impact your decision regarding a phased reopening as it may be safest, or most feasible, to reopen with a limited service initially.

If you have made connections with new or potential volunteers during lockdown, ask if they would like to continue and, if yes, refer to your volunteering policy to proceed (making allowances for social distancing and remote communication where possible). For more information about recruiting volunteers, go to [Basingstoke Voluntary Action](#).

3.3 Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

You may have furloughed member(s) of staff as part of the government's [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#). See the government pages for the latest updates to this scheme.

ACAS' guidance on [Returning to the Workplace](#) may be useful.

3.4 Re-engaging with volunteers and staff

It is vital to keep your staff and volunteers informed about the community organisation, and to support and encourage their input. To consider:

- **Video calls ahead of reopening**
- **Sharing your risk assessment and reopening plans**
- **Thanking volunteers for their support during lockdown and for their commitment to your organisation**
- **Supporting the morale and mental health of your staff and volunteers. Are there local services you could connect with and recommend (for example, bereavement services)?**
- **The government is encouraging regular testing so that those who test positive can self-isolate and help reduce the spread of the virus. You may want to consider lateral flow tests for your staff and volunteers.**
- **Some volunteers may be nervous about returning whilst there is still risk of transmission. Take this into consideration when planning activities.**

See Appendix 4 for a checklist for managing staff and volunteers when reopening.

4. The activities

Each centre hosts a unique combination of activities varying from bingo to exercise classes, and children's nurseries. For many activities, there will not be specific government guidelines available. In these cases, please consider the social distancing guidelines and the associated risks of infection involved with each activity. It may be decided that some of these activities should not go ahead initially. In all cases, a risk assessment should be completed and every care taken to ensure the safety of the staff, volunteers and participants.

It is vital to communicate with your hirers early in the planning process about their reopening plans and risk assessments.

4.1 Hirers

You will need to contact our hirers to find out their plans. You should share your risk assessment with them and you could request to see their risk assessment for the activity. Hiring considerations:

- **How do they plan to deal with any excess (more people wanting to join the activity than is possible with social distancing measures in place)?**
- **Will hirers be given responsibility to clean after their booking? Ensure they are aware of your cleaning procedure and the hygiene standard expected.**
- **Hirers need to be informed if you have plans to introduce more time between bookings.**
- **Community Centres should give priority to essential services and pre-schools.**
- **It may be useful to provide instructions, guidance and responsibilities to hirers in addition to their hire agreement. Please see [ACRE guidance](#) for sample special hire conditions.**
- **Encourage hirers to keep the building ventilated when in use.**

Please see the [Useful Links](#) page for links to government guidance for specific activities.

4.2 Education and Childcare

If your facility is hired for educational or childcare purposes, familiarise yourself with the reopening of Education and Childcare Settings guidelines. The early years setting will be responsible for ensuring their activities adhere to the guidelines. However, the community centre is responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk assessments have been completed and necessary actions taken to ensure the building is as safe as possible for users.

[Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening](#)

4.3 Transport

Your community centre may provide transport for local residents (for example, a minibus for transport to and from activities at the centre). The government has set out guidelines to promote the safety of the driver and passengers in this circumstance.

[Coronavirus \(Covid 19\): Safer transfer guidance for operators](#)

4.4 Supporting beneficiaries/service users

Your community centre may have been open during lockdown providing vital services to those shielding and self-isolating, such as prescription collections, food shopping, or friendly calls to those feeling anxious and/or lonely. In your planning you will need to consider if you will continue with this service when reopened.

If you are aware of members of your community who need support, direct them to either:

Coronavirus Hampshire Helpline

0333 370 4000

OR NHS volunteers

0808 196 3646

For more information see the [NHS volunteers' responders portal](#).

5. Marketing

Once you have your plans in place, make sure to communicate them to members and local residents, including which activities will be operating and what support is available for local people. This can be done through a variety of mediums. For example, social media, your website, a local newspaper or posters/leaflets.

Important notes

1. This document should be read in conjunction with legislation, guidance and advice issued by the government, local authorities and other relevant bodies.
2. This document is intended to provide ideas for community organisations in conducting their own risk assessments and creating their own contingency plans.
3. This document is not intended to be legally or technically comprehensive and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions, factual or otherwise, arising from reliance on it.
4. This document is not a substitute for independent professional and/or legal advice.
5. This document will be subject to regular change as the situation develops.

Get in touch

If you need further guidance around any of the topics discussed in this information pack, please contact the Connected Communities Team (details below) and we will be happy to talk through the information with you or point you to the relevant resources and government guidance.

Connected Communities Team

Email: community.development@basingstoke.gov.uk

Telephone: 01256 844844

Useful links

General

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE): [Coronavirus](#)

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE): [Opening your hall after lockdown](#)

Crowe: [Non Profits: Managing in uncertain times](#)

Gov UK: [Coronavirus](#)

Gov UK: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for the charity sector](#)

Gov UK: [Guide for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities](#)

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): [Collecting customer and visitor details for contact tracing](#)

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): [Contact tracing – protecting customer and visitor details](#)

National Association of Voluntary Community Action (NAVCA): [VSCE Resources Hub](#)

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO): [Coronavirus](#)

New Philanthropy Centre (NPC): [Coronavirus Toolkit](#)

National Youth Agency (NYA): [Reacting to COVID-19](#)

Planning

Gov UK: [Charity meetings: making decisions and voting](#)

Gov UK: [Help and support if your business is affected by Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

NCVO: [Governing during a pandemic: what are the key things trustees need to be focussed on?](#)

Zurich Municipal: [Organisational Resilience: Guidance on Pandemic Planning](#)

Finances

Gov UK: [Financial support for voluntary, community and social enterprise \(VCSE\) organisations to respond to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Gov UK: [Business Coronavirus Support Finder](#)

Gov UK: [Manage financial difficulties in your charity caused by coronavirus](#)

Risk management

Gov UK: [Charities and risk management \(CC26\)](#)

Gov UK: [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Health and Safety Executive: [Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)

HR

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS): [Returning to the workplace](#)

Gov UK: [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#)

Guidance for specific activities

Food Standards Agency (FSA): [Reopening checklist for food businesses during COVID-19](#)

Gov UK: [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Gov UK: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer transport guidance for operators](#)

Gov UK: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)

Gov UK: [Guidance for officers and contact centres](#)

Gov UK: [Guidance for people who work in grassroots sport and sport facilities](#)

Gov UK: [Guidance for people who work in or run restaurants, pubs, bars, cafes or takeaways](#)

Gov UK: [Guidance for people who work in or run shops, branches, stores or similar environments](#)

Gov UK: [Guidance on for small marriages and civil partnerships](#)

Locality: [Catch up on the latest guidance](#)

Gov UK: [Protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Gov UK: [Working safely during Coronavirus: Performing Arts](#)

Gov: UK: [guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings during the pandemic](#)

National Youth Agency: [Managing youth sector activities and spaces during COVID-19](#)

Sport England: [Return to Play](#)

UK Active: [COVID-19 – A Framework for the re-opening of gym, leisure centre and wider fitness industry during social distancing](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Reopening considerations

Where are we now?

Consider your current position in terms of finances, staff/volunteers, resources to establish a realistic starting position.

What are our options?

Identify possible scenarios for the future (for example, activities, hiring income, staff illness).

What will we do?

Determine actions and procedures for the scenarios.

Key considerations and guidance informed by Zurich Municipal, [Organisational Resilience: Guidance on Pandemic Planning](#)

Key consideration	Guidance	Yes/No	Action required
Have you identified who in your organisation will lead on developing response plans? For example, Chair of the committee/ Centre manager	Where possible involve a team of people and a range of stakeholders in the planning process (for example, organisation members, health & safety specialists, landlords, local government)		
Have you identified your most essential operations and services?	Consider the employees required to carry out these activities, along with other key elements such as equipment, materials, suppliers and logistics. Do internal resources need to be re-allocated to ensure these activities can restart/ continue?		
Have you contacted users of the centre (for example, dance teachers, nurseries, support groups) about their reopening plans? Have they completed a risk assessment for their activity?	It will help to identify key users of the centre to determine the feasibility of opening and the hiring financials associated with centre use. You may ask to see the group's risk assessment for your reference.		

Key consideration	Guidance	Yes/No	Action required
Have you identified your key person dependencies and minimum staffing requirements?	Key person dependencies occur when the delivery of a critical activity relies on one or a small group of individuals. Consider if more people need to be trained if key persons may be unavailable. You need to plan for how your organisation will run if a significant proportion of staff or volunteers were unavailable.		
Have you got a clear communication strategy?	Your strategy should identify arrangements for communicating consistently with all staff/ volunteers, stakeholders, and customers/centre users, particularly in regards to changes in working practices.		
Is it possible to utilise technology to reduce the need for face-to-face interactions?			
Are there arrangements in place for the regular review of current advice from the government on the specific health impacts associated with the pandemic?	Use the current advice to forecast and plan for employee absence. Consider other impacting factors such as school closures, caring for family members and bereavement.		
Have you revised your sickness absence policy to reflect current government advice in relation to the pandemic?	Review the current advice and establish specific policies, including consideration of the timescale after which affected persons are no longer infectious.		
Has the current advice from the government on reducing the spread of infection been disseminated by the organisation?	Establish policies for reducing the spread of infection, based on current advice. Promote advice on infection transmission and respiratory hygiene and request that persons displaying symptoms remain at home.		
Do cleaning activities need to be increased and are the necessary materials and resources available?	Ensure that there are the necessary cleaning materials available and sufficient resources to support the increased frequency, along with a clear procedure for cleaning activities.		

Appendix 2: Sample coronavirus risk assessment

Organisation:

Assessment carried out by:

Date assessment was carried out:

Date this document will be reviewed:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed, and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	List additional actions to be taken	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is action needed by?	Done
Identify hazards by walking around the workplace, talking to stakeholders, looking at all the tasks/activities	Consider: some workers have specific needs, those not present when the assessment is taking place, the public	List precautions already in place (and details)	List additional actions that will be taken to further reduce any risk	Named individual – ensure they are aware of their responsibility and that they are able to complete this task	Set a time frame for the action/s to be completed – prior to any event or activity relating to this risk – is carried out	Indicate that each action has been completed
Consider: some workers have specific needs, those not present when the assessment is taking place, the public	List precautions already in place (and details)	List additional actions that will be taken to further reduce any risk	Named individual – ensure they are aware of their responsibility and that they are able to complete this task		Set a time frame for the action/s to be completed – prior to any event or activity relating to this risk – is carried out	Indicate that each action has been completed

Appendix 3: Checklist for reopening your community building

General	If your centre has been closed for a period of time, ensure that legionella testing has been completed and seek the relevant professional advice from your normal service provider.	
	Check for break-ins, leaks and other property-related issues	
	Inspect the property carefully for pests and mould and take any necessary corrective action	
	Check for a smell of gas before turning on electrics. If you are concerned, turn the gas off at the meter – unless it is in a confined space – and call 0800 111 999 from outside the premises at a safe distance. Thereafter open all windows and DO NOT use naked flames, mobiles or turn on any electrical switches.	
	Ensure you immediately photograph any problems you encounter	
	Update any emergency contacts as necessary	
	Adjust any answering machine message on your phones as appropriate	
	Adjust any email out-of-office messages as appropriate	
	Ensure your key log is brought up-to-date	
	Reset any passwords as necessary	
	Read meters	
	Reset your safe	
	Recreate your float (if applicable)	
	Complete any outstanding bankings	
	Clean hall/rooms thoroughly – floor, fixtures and fittings, toilets, kitchens, storage, vehicles, stock, etc	
	Unseal the letterbox	
	Consider removing curtains from staff areas to reduce the risk of contamination	
	Consider allocating cleaning tasks on a rotational basis to staff/ volunteers so that it gets done continuously	
Communication	Inform landlord/council that you have reoccupied the premises and will now be carrying out checks as normal	
	Contact staff and volunteers (see later section)	
	Inform local partners that you are open (if applicable)	
	Inform any local services (for example, window cleaners) that you are open	
	Let your insurers know that you are reopening and check that your cover (Public Liability, Employer's Liability and/or Professional Indemnity cover) is still valid and meeting your insurance requirements.	
	Make contact with neighbouring shops/businesses to inform them that you have reopened	

	Provide signage around the building with information about handwashing, hygiene procedures and any specific guidance for your building, for example a one-way system or 'Room not in use'.	
Fire	Ensure all fire extinguishers have not missed their service date	
	Test fire alarms and ensure any connections to fire brigade, police, etc, are working. Inform the services beforehand that you will be undertaking a test.	
	Ensure all exit routes are clear and unobstructed	
	Ensure all exit doors are unlocked and available without the use of a key	
	Carry out a fire alarm test as soon as possible when the premises are open to staff and public. Ensure any faults on the system are rectified by a qualified fire alarm engineer as soon as possible.	
	Ensure fire doors remain closed at all times	
	Ensure the emergency lighting system is operating correctly	
	Ensure all staff/volunteers are aware of the fire safety procedures	
	Carry out a fire drill	
Electrical	Take appropriate professional advice on the order with which to restart your electricity network – this will depend on whether it was turned off at the mains or not. Be aware that turning everything on at once might cause a power surge which will cause disruption or damage.	
	Undertake a visual inspection of portable electric equipment before use to ensure there are no signs of damage to the appliance, plug or cables.	
	Ensure that intruder alarms (if fitted) are still working and advise the alarm monitoring station of any reopening	
	Ensure that any CCTV cameras fitted are still working and appropriately positioned	
	Check the latest PAT dates on equipment as they may have missed a scheduled check	
Electronic EPOS, PDQ, tablets	Take appropriate professional advice on the order with which to restart your electronics network. Be aware that any electronic appliances such as tills and tablets may require a substantial period of updating before they can be used again. Many EPOS providers have produced reopening guides specific to their systems.	
	If switched off during lockdown, turn your broadband router or Wireless Access points back on 1-3 days before officially reopening so you can check there are no issues with the connection.	
	Update any devices and install any patches to help ensure they are secure. Many updates and patches are created to fix flaws that security researchers have found in the software. If left unpatched, it can leave your devices vulnerable to hackers, malware and other malicious adversaries.	

	If you have turned off all your PoS tills during this lockdown, once you start the tills again, subject to your IT policy to patch updates, it may slow down your tills and require multiple reboots to get to the most recent patch build before your tills start to perform optimally again and be secure.	
	Update the Antivirus software on your devices if necessary	

Where Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Property Services is responsible for compliance checks, the team is catching up with services due to the impact that COVID-19 has had on providing some of these services. If anyone is concerned, please contact Property Services via propertyservices@basingstoke.gov.uk

Appendix 4: Checklist for managing staff and volunteers when reopening

General	Produce recall letters/emails for staff and volunteers and send out	
	Confirm which staff and volunteers will be available for reopening	
	If people can't return to work due to schools/nurseries not being open, what is charity policy on this?	
	Create a wellbeing information pack for staff, including where to find support for practical, emotional and financial matters	
	Openly discuss any risks and concerns about social distancing – e.g. the potential for dissent or aggression from customers	
	Once open – visit centre within the first week or two to see how staff/volunteers are coping and if new measures are working	
	Consider using the COVID-19 app if that comes in to play	
	Ensure that bereavement counselling is included in any return to work training that is provided	
Paid staff	Organise national minimum wage increase for furloughed staff (if you didn't apply increase in April pay already)	
	Create a recall from furlough schedule	
	Prepare guidelines for supporting staff returning from furlough	
	Identify staff who need extra support during first weeks back and put this support in place	
Volunteers	Volunteer return newsletter prepared (if applicable)	
	Return to volunteer letters/emails sent out	
	Speak to volunteers to understand who is available to return	
	Volunteers contacted by phone to check on wellbeing and maintain contact	
	Prepare a mini refresher induction for volunteers, including a wellbeing check	
	After first couple of weeks – understand and review the changes	

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