

Coronavirus Advice

ADVICE FOR VILLAGE HALLS & COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

As it stands at the moment, halls can remain open, however Village Hall Management Committees running charitable halls have a duty of care in providing a safe facility for the community to use.

Your committee must bear in mind that extra precautions need to be made as your hall provides activities for those groups who are most at risk from the virus.

PRECAUTIONS INCLUDE:

- Take notice of the Government and Public Health England websites and keep up to date with the ongoing situation
- Keep the Hall very clean and ensure that soap and/or hand sanitiser is available, paper towels are available and hand driers are working efficiently
- Avoid the use of hand towels for the time being
- Put up a notice about hand washing, particularly in toilets and kitchen areas. Poster available here: [Catch it bin it kill it](#)
- Advise hirers that they are expected to act responsibly and take notice of Government and Public Health England advice which includes who is and isn't allowed to be in public spaces
- Regarding cancellation of any bookings follow the steps in their hiring agreement and activities in the event of the hall having to close, we suggest that you contact your insurance company to discuss what may be covered under your insurance policy regarding cancellation of events

USEFUL RESOURCES

Public Health England have produced a range of sample posters and it would be wise to use one of these as the basis for putting on the front door a poster asking people who have possible Coronavirus symptoms not to come into the hall.

Resources can be found at: [PHE Resources](#).

NOTES FOR TRUSTEES;

The Charity Commission have useful information on their website; <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

The Charity commission helpline says it will be posting guidance for trustees shortly to the effect that in the best interests of their charity they may take such actions out with their governing documents as; postpone AGMs, Hold meetings electronically (even if not allowed in their governing doc) and co-opt new trustees.

Blanket guidance on closure is difficult;

- a) Many halls are used by pre-schools and government guidance is to keep schools/pre-schools open so parents may continue to work (especially those in NSH/Care Home & childcare settings)
- b) Some Village Halls host vital services such as Village Shops/Food banks/Post Offices etc.
- c) Some Village Halls are registered as emergency rest centres (and could be mobilised in this type of situation)

Business Continuity;

Committees might like to consider the following issues and how to mitigate them;

- Financial implications & projection for loss of bookings
- Ways to reduce outgoing costs (lower heating etc.)
- Ensuring the hall can remain functional if a trustee/s become ill by having named back-ups for roles; 2nd or more key holders/bank access/treasurer role/booking manager/social media/maintenance
- Insurance; talk to your provider so you are clear about your position
- Stock; ensure you have important items such as hand soap, hand gel, toilet rolls and paper towels for drying up.

Government assistance; keep looking at government guidance to see if they come under the bracket of hospitality and leisure and may receive assistance from the £25k grants (it is not clear at the moment if Halls will be covered) - We will update you when we know more.

ADVICE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Group members must advise the rest of the group if they are self-isolating
- The importance of hand hygiene - See general guidance above
- Cancellation of events:
- If your group is an planning event which will bring together large numbers of people, keep your plans under review. If your events depend on volunteers, be aware that some may prefer to stay home.
- If you are hosting a formal meeting, such as an AGM, plan for reduced attendance or the need to move locations and times meetings and refer to your organisation's governing document to see what it says about remote participation and quorum
- Check cancellation policies for venue bookings you've made or are about to make
- Hosting a group meeting: Some members may prefer not to attend a group meeting, therefore consider:
- Is the meeting is really essential or can it be cancelled or postponed?
- Consider electronic alternatives such as Skype, WhatsApp, FaceTime. **No one should be made to feel that they must attend**

PROTECTING THE ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE

Neighbourhood Watch has produced comprehensive guidance on protecting the isolated and vulnerable. Please click [here](#)

The following advice from Norris & Fisher and Allied Westminster (insurance provider) may be helpful – please read the details in your own provider's policy.

Norris & Fisher statement:

“Coronavirus Advice for Village Halls

We have received a number of enquiries as to whether Village Halls would be insured should they be forced to cancel activities or if hirers cancel their bookings owing to COVID-19. The Business Interruption cover under the policy **would not provide cover** for this type of loss so there is no insurance for loss of earnings. If there were to be a pandemic it would be beyond the capability of insurers to pay for such losses.

Some of our halls have asked their hirers to ensure that, if one of their members is ill, they should not attend the Hall. Should a visitor have been in contact with anyone suffering from the virus they should self-isolate. However, if an outbreak of COVID-19 were to be traced to the Hall it would not be possible for you to be held liable. In addition it may be best to ensure you have a good supply of soap, hand sanitisers and paper towels”.

Statement from Allied Westminster

Coronavirus and Village Halls:

- Loss of revenue cover comes into force only after damage to property caused by an insured peril. It is designed to cover loss of income when the hall is closed for a period of time in order for repairs to be carried out. Unfortunately, if the hall has to be closed due to a breakout of the virus, no property damage has occurred so there is no business interruption cover in place.
- Property insurers would not cover closure due to pandemic.

Protecting Your Village/Community Hall at this time:

- Halls may become unoccupied or operate on a significantly reduced level, and this increases the risk of losses.
- If your hall is running on a significantly reduced basis, and especially unoccupied due to the pandemic, letting your insurers know, and keeping them informed of any developments, is essential.
- It is essential that you let your insurer or policy administrator have a second and ideally third contact in the event of an insurable loss, allowing them to process the claim with an authorised and recognised person (GDPR!)
- This will help speed along any claims and avoid hold-ups. This is especially important right now when key contacts may suffer as a result of the illness.
- There are some considerations that should be kept in mind to protect their assets and people:
- Risk assessments must be carried out on the changing risk/lack of supervision in place
- Heating left 'ticking-over' but other critical services powered down if not required, unless to support protection or detection systems
- All external areas must be clear of waste and combustible materials
- Consider waste build-up and the controls needed if waste collection services are affected
- All fire protection, detection, and security systems to remain active and monitored remotely where possible
- Maintenance on all protection and/or detection systems (where in place) must be a priority to protect the property
- All physical security and locking devices are working and in place
- There are no leaking fluids or spills

Sources and Useful Links

- [Q&A on Coronaviruses – World Health Organization](#)
- [Managing Epidemics: Key facts about major deadly diseases – World Health Organization](#)
- [Pandemic Flu – Workplace Guidance – Health & Safety Executive](#)

18/03/2020 Community Buildings Advice Service



If you need further support, please email kate.meads@ccberks.org.uk or call 0118 9612000 (working days Wednesday & Thursday)