

Hands, Face, Space, or the rule of 6

New Government guidance applying from 14 September to England

Did your heart sink at the Prime Minister's announcement on Wednesday 9th September? Often the headlines don't tell the whole story, but announcements are backed by reams of guidance. Please remember that your area may have local restrictions in place – these override the principles below, furthermore the ability for people from six households to meet in doors is not mirrored in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

First, the good news. From the document **Coronavirus outbreak FAQ s: What you can and can't do.**

Question: 2.1 Can I visit people indoors?

Answer: Yes. From 14 September there will be a legal limit on the number of people you don't live with you are able to meet. **When meeting with people you don't live with you can socialise in groups of up to 6.**

Why is this good news? Previously the guidance for meeting indoors, in your home was limited to members of two households or bubbles. Groups of 6 have been able to meet in someone's garden for a while but now they can meet indoors too ***provided that social distancing is maintained.*** This will enable you to meet as a small group for a committee meeting, craft group, book group, or simple chat in somebody's living room or in a pub, cafe, or something similar.

Social distancing means keeping two metres apart, or one metre if you are wearing a mask (or adopting other measures such as avoiding being directly face to face and having good ventilation). Meeting outdoors is still preferable but not always possible in the British climate.

Before inviting someone into your home think carefully about what people might touch like handrails, and toilets/bathrooms and wipe them down before visitors arrive and after they leave. Ask visitors to use hand sanitiser or wash their hands when they arrive. Think carefully about providing refreshments, (you could ask people to bring their own), clean hands before getting things ready and encourage visitors to use sanitiser before they start. It goes without saying no-one should take part in any meeting if they are even slightly suspicious of having an infection of any type.

Question 2.11 Does this mean that no more than six people can be in a pub or restaurant at once?

Answer: Venues following Covid-19 Secure Guidelines can host more than six people in total but no one should visit in a group of more than six people, and individuals should avoid social interaction with anyone outside their group even if they know other people in the venue (so smile and wave this time and change group for your next visit). Group organisers will need to give their details to the venue and make a note of who has been in their group.



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Can full Guilds meet again?

This is where things may vary greatly, depending on the size of your Guild and the meeting place.

First, community halls can reopen for specific types of group, and there is no change to the **Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities** section which states that *“We recognise the importance of social clubs for some individuals and recommend that these can proceed with caution in venues that have been made COVID-19 secure.*

Clubs or groups that use community facilities can begin to meet again and facility managers should follow these COVID-19 secure guidelines to facilitate that.

*Premises or locations following COVID-19 secure guidelines **will be able to hold more than 30 people, subject to their own capacity limits.** It is important for people to maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene when visiting these spaces.*

People meeting in a club or group context at a community centre should be encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble.

It goes on to say that:

Community facilities following Covid-19 secure guidelines can host more than 6 people in total, but no one should socialise in a group greater than 6.

So, if your venue is open, and it has a Covid-19 capacity of more than your Guild size you can go ahead and meet – subject to the points below. If your venue capacity is lower than the number of members, you could consider

- Asking members to book a place in advance (do think about how to make sure the same people are not left out next time)
- Repeating meetings for part of the Guild each time.

Car sharing.

We know that many members travel by car with other members. This is permitted provided that you try to:

- Share with the same people each time
- Keep to groups of less than six people and sit with the same group in the meeting.
- Open windows for ventilation
- Avoid facing one another
- Sit as far apart as possible
- Wear face masks in the vehicle
- Ensure that the car is cleaned between journeys paying attention to areas most likely to be touched.

(Coronavirus outbreak FAQ s: What you can and can't do. Question 2.4)



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Being Covid Secure

The onus is on the owner of the venue to take steps to ensure that the venue is Covid secure. This means ensuring thorough cleaning, having separate entrances and exits, and managing queues for things like the toilets. If your venue is reopening they should let you know what measures they have put in place to make the building covid-19 secure. They may have specific rules your Guild should follow.

Most venues will:

1. Have separate entrances and exits
2. Make hand sanitiser available at the entry
3. Have limitations on the use of toilets (one person at a time, perhaps) and socially distanced queues
4. Restrictions on the use of catering facilities.

Until you know what the venue is doing, you cannot plan what you need for meetings.

Your meeting

The venue may ask you to provide your own risk assessment, but even if they don't the committee should create one. It may sound difficult but it isn't really – it mainly needs logical thought and common sense. What you need to do is to think about how your meetings normally run and what needs to be done to avoid people getting too close or touching the same things.

Here are some points you need to consider:

1. Will you ask all members who feel below par to stay at home?
2. If you have any members with memory problems can someone be nominated to remind them of what they should do? (People with dementia have a higher risk of catching Covid 19. This may in part be due to forgetting rules.)
3. Will the venue provide hand sanitiser at the entrance? (If not you will need to provide it)
4. How will you make sure that everyone uses the sanitiser without causing a blockage in the entrance?
5. Has the venue established separate entrance and exit doors? Will they be marked clearly enough for members with vision problems?
6. How will your chairs be set out? Consider having mini horseshoes of six chairs so that groups of six maximum can talk to one another without being directly face to face, but see and hear any speaker.
7. Will the venue be cleaning chairs between hall users or will you need to do that?
8. Will the majority of your members be happy wearing masks? (If not chairs must be 2 metres apart or the room thoroughly ventilated) Speakers may insist that you wear masks.
9. How will you record who is present in case the information is needed to trace contacts?



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10. Will you ask members to bring their own pen in case they need to sign anything or make a note in their diary? (If not you may need to consider providing information on a slip of paper and have someone with a clip board to sign people up.)
11. How will you stop people wandering around talking to people in other groups? (my experience is that it will be most difficult stopping committee members!)
12. Will you be able to hold any raffle without issues handling money or tickets?
13. Ditto for any sales table? Could you offer a book or magazine swap instead of sales – but think about how leftovers can be dealt with safely.
14. How will you manage refreshments? Think about each stage and how you can avoid touching the same things (like milk jug, teaspoons, tap on urn). Would it be better to suggest members bring a thermos or cold drink?
15. How will you ensure that members can move around and keep their distance?
16. At the end of the meeting how will you ensure people remain distanced as they leave?

You may have other issues to address too. The questions and their answers form the basis of your risk assessment.

There is no need to go overboard with cleaning products or expensive hand sanitisers. Members could be asked to carry their own sanitiser. A white vinegar/water spritz and kitchen roll can be as effective as far more expensive items for wiping things down.



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