

Returning to Work Safely – Guidance and Useful Resources

The government's plans to ease the lockdown raises lots of questions for voluntary and community organisations. This document aims to highlight key issues that your organisation needs to think about and resources to help you do this, but it is guidance only and we recommend you obtain professional or legal advice where appropriate.

On 23 June the Prime Minister said that the 2 metres distancing rule could be reduced to '1 metre plus' from 4 July 2020. This means that, if necessary, people can be 1 metre apart providing precautionary measures are taken, eg. wearing a face mask or using a protective screen between people. This change will increase economic activity but it is important to remember that a distance of 2 metres is still advised whenever possible. The [government roadmap](#) sets out its Covid-19 recovery strategy. See the [main business support page here](#).

What should my organisation do?

Where possible your staff and volunteers should continue to work from home. If this isn't possible and your business is allowed to open you should follow the government's [5 steps to working safely](#). This includes [detailed guidance for specific workplaces](#) and an [interactive element](#) that provides tailored guidance based on your operations. There is more guidance planned so do continue to check <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for updates.

Many voluntary sector organisations operate in different workplaces, for example an office, a charity shop or frontline activity such as counselling rooms or community buildings. You may need to read more than one set of guidance in order to keep all staff, volunteers and clients safe. The following guidance may be of particular relevance for voluntary sector organisations:

- [Offices and contact centres](#) (if you have office space or clients visiting your premises)
- [The visitor economy](#) (for community centres, museums, art galleries or other community buildings)
- [Restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services](#) (if you prepare food, or run social activity)
- [Heritage locations](#)
- [Vehicles](#)
- [Other people's homes](#)

Each set of guidance is divided up into sections which cover topics such as who should go to work, cleaning the workplace and social distancing at work. Depending on what your charity does and if you plan to use outside spaces you may also find the following guidance useful:

[COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities](#)

[Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): safer public spaces, urban centres and green spaces](#)

It is worth noting that the government is requesting that businesses keep contact information for visitors or customers temporarily for 21 days after their visit. Like other businesses, some charities already collect this type of data and for others this will be a new requirement. Should there be a case of the virus, this data will be used by the [NHS Track & Trace service](#). The government have said they will work with industry and relevant bodies to design this system in line with data protection legislation and will set out details shortly.

Risk Assessment

Step 1 of the government's 5 steps to working safely is to carry out a Covid-19 risk assessment. They advise using the [HSE guidance](#). However, there are other templates available and we have listed some charity specific guidance and templates below.

If your business has less than 5 employees, you don't have to write down your risk assessment but it is good practice to record the risks you have identified and the actions or steps you are taking to mitigate those risks. It is good practice to consult with your staff and volunteers to find out their views as they are often in the best position to identify work place risks and how these can be reduced. The government is encouraging businesses to publish a summary of the actions they are taking to combat risk internally and, in some cases, externally.

HSENI - [Example COVID-19 risk assessment template](#)

BHIB Charity Insurance Resources

COVID-19 – Charity Recovery/Reopening Health, Safety & Fire Checklist/Risk Assessment

This checklist aims to list some of the key issues that charities and voluntary organisations should consider prior to reopening. It should facilitate charities in reviewing your internal policies, risk assessments and safe systems of work to make sure they are still relevant, as well as to ensure the charity has considered how staff and volunteers will return to work safely.

Download the checklist here:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – Business Recovery/Re-opening – Health, Safety & Fire Checklist/Risk Assessment](#)

COVID-19 – General Workplace Risk Assessment

This generic risk assessment aims to support charities getting back to their regular place of work. It is not likely to cover all scenarios and each charity should consider their own unique circumstances. Much more specific assessments may look quite different, although many of the principles will still be relevant.

Download the Risk Assessment here: [COVID-19 - General Workplace Risk Assessment](#)

The [NCVO KnowHow](#) site has further resources and information.

Some key points we have picked up from the experts:

- **Tailor your risk assessment to your business and its activities** - where possible take professional advice.
- **Consult with staff and volunteers about returning** - depending on your size you could do this via a survey or through one-to-one conversation. Share a summary of your risk assessment and ask for feedback, listen to the views of your workforce.
- **Keep records** - record staff/board decisions properly. If you shared a new policy or procedure with staff or volunteers, use a tick box and signature to record that they have been read and understood.
- **Provide appropriate training & support** - if staff or volunteers have to adapt to new ways of operating, make sure they are fully briefed and confident about the changes. If they will be required to use PPE, make sure they have training on how to use and maintain it.
- **Practice fire drills/emergency procedures** - if these have changed due to Covid-19, make sure staff and volunteers know what to do in case of any emergency.
- **Signage** - consider accessibility and the needs of people for whom English is not their first language or those who have disabilities.

There is increasing evidence that some communities are affected more by Covid-19 than others and you should consider this as part of your risk assessment. For further information,

Public Health England published a report this month - [Beyond the data: understanding the impact of Covid-19 on BAME groups](#).

Policies & Procedures

Age UK Richmond has developed a [COVID-19 Infection Control Policy](#) which they are happy to share as an example. They are reviewing this on an ongoing basis as guidance updates.

Webinars/Online training

- The Cranfield Trust [webinar series](#) which includes one titled 'A Practical Guide to Re-opening After Covid Closedown'
- NCVO/ Zurich webinar – [Assessing health & safety risks in uncertain times](#)
- NCVO/Trust Law webinar: [Easing of lockdown: Legal and practical considerations for returning to work](#)

Specific Resources & Support - if you employ staff

Anyone who can work from home should continue to do so. Where it is decided that workers should come into their place of work, this will need to be reflected in the risk assessment and actions taken to manage the risks of transmission in line with government guidance. As mentioned above, engagement is key to reassure employees and give them confidence to return to the work place.

The [Health & Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) have useful guidance on employer responsibilities for remote workers. Essentially nothing has changed and employers must take account of their responsibility for their employees' physical working conditions and mental wellbeing - see [Protect Home Workers](#). If you haven't done this already, now is the time to use work station checklists, etc. Richmond CVS have created a [resource to help you support the health and wellbeing of your employees](#).

If you need to talk through any HR-related issues, there is lots of support available:

- [ACAS free helpline](#) - 0300 123 1100
- [The Cranfield Trust](#) provides a free tailored HR service, HRNet (currently experiencing high demand)
- [NCVO/Croner helpline](#) - **0844 561 8133** - NCVO's trusted supplier, Croner, is offering a free helpline to all VCS organisations, regardless of whether you are an NCVO member or not. They are specialists in HR and employment law and handle over 270,000 advice calls a year. Call 0844 561 8133 and state the name of your organisation. Calls cost 7p a

minute plus your network access charge. Check charges with your provider, as calls from mobiles can be high, eg. Vodafone 55p per minute access charge.

Russell-Cooke

Through our partnership with Russell-Cooke, Richmond CVS members can access a free 15 minute session of pro bono legal advice which covers a range of topics, including HR, data protection and charity law. If you are interested in this service please email us at training@richmondcv.org.uk.

Specific Resources & Support - if you have volunteers

In terms of health and safety, you have a duty of care to your volunteers in similar ways to your employees, so it is best to consider them in the same way and risk assess different roles. Government guidance for returning to work in [heritage locations](#) does refer to volunteers. Volunteers and other individuals who are shielding should continue to follow the government's [advice on shielding](#).

Specific Resources & Support - if you run a charity shop

Charity Retail have published a [Reopening Pack](#) to help charity shops reopen.

Specific Resources & Support - if you operate community transport/ volunteer driver scheme

[CTA \(Community Transport Association\)](#) is a national charity that represents and supports charities that offer community transport and volunteer driver schemes. They have produced Covid-19 related guidance to support this sector. This includes [Guidance for Operating Essential Journeys during COVID-19](#). This was last updated on 26 March and CTA are planning on updating it further, however, many of the sections (eg. cleanliness and hygiene, collecting passengers and volunteers) are relevant for charities currently offering or planning on restarting a volunteer driver scheme.

If you are planning to resume activity with volunteer drivers using their own vehicles this needs to be fully risk assessed. The government has specific [guidance for transport operators](#) and Transport for London has published useful [guidance for taxi and private hire vehicles](#). It includes, for example, suggesting car windows are kept open, passengers sit on the opposite side from the driver, asking passengers to wear masks and requesting they carry tissues and hand sanitiser.

Specific Resources & Support - if you own or manage a building/community centre

On 30 June the government published [COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities](#). This guidance is split into sections and includes core principles for safely reopening community facilities and a section on permitted activities. This guidance is designed to be read in conjunction with the return to work guides we highlighted at the beginning of this document. In particular, community buildings will find the [visitor attraction guidance](#) relevant.

However, if your building has office space, tenants, an outdoor space or runs frontline activity, such as food production, other guides will be relevant too. The guidance is clear that reopening is at the discretion of the managers of community buildings. So a board may decide to remain closed if they are not able to follow the advice in the relevant guidance(s) to make the building Covid-19 secure. Boards may also decide that it is not financially viable for them to reopen and, in that case, they should continue to make use of the government support available through the furlough scheme.

While centres as a whole can open, there are still restrictions on the type of activity that can be offered - for example, drama, music or comedy performances cannot take place in front of a live audience. Indoor sports are also currently not permitted, so no dancing, aerobics, yoga or pilates classes can take place. If it would normally happen in a gym, sports venue, fitness or dance studio, then it can't currently happen in your community building.

From 4 July indoor gatherings can happen but only in groups of no more than 2 households (including your support bubble) at one time. It is against the law to gather in groups of up to more than 30 people, except for limited circumstances.

However, premises which are Covid-19 secure will be able to hold more than 30 people, subject to their own capacity limits, although individual groups should not interact with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with - so in a group no larger than 2 households, or 6 people if outdoors. Whilst wedding ceremonies can take place, wedding receptions and other celebratory events, such as birthday parties, cannot. This is because it is considered difficult to maintain social distancing at this type of event.

If you hire your venue, the guidance advises you to take additional steps to ensure the safety of the public and prevent large gatherings or mass events from taking place. It is suggested that when a hirer arrives, or at the time of booking, a check is made to confirm that no more than 2 households, or for outdoor spaces 6 people, are attending. This could be done in

person or as a check box as part of an online booking system. However, users and hirers of community facilities have responsibility for managing risk arising from their own activities when they have control of premises and they should take account of guidance relevant to their activity or sector.

Locality - have created a great [reopening guidance for community buildings](#) which will be useful for staff and boards.

Ethical Property Foundation – are a source of information, advice and support and have a one-page [advice sheet for businesses going back to work](#).

This resource was first prepared by Julie Gavin on 29 June 2020 and updated on 2 July. Please do continue to check government guidance for the latest information and obtain professional advice where necessary.

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