

Covid-19 Risk Assessments

Guidelines for risk assessing your group's activities or your community venue to prevent the spread of Covid-19

Although legal restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the UK mostly ended in 2022, the virus remains prevalent. Your group might choose to continue thinking through how you can keep the risk of Covid-19 infection down for people who participate in your group's events and activities.

This information sheet includes:

- ♦ What is a Covid-19 risk assessment? (page 1)
- ♦ How could the virus be spread in our group activity or community space? (page 1)
 - Direct contact between people (page 2)
 - Shared air (page 4)
 - Shared equipment and facilities (page 5)
- ♦ Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for an activity (page 6)
- ♦ Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for a community venue (page 7)

What is a Covid-19 risk assessment?

A risk assessment lists the hazards that people might face when engaging in a particular activity or event, and the measures you are taking to mitigate the risk from those hazards. See our *Risk assessment* information sheet for a general guide.

A Covid-19 risk assessment specifically addresses the hazard of spreading or catching the Covid-19 virus.

Doing a risk assessment is a useful tool to help your group consider how the virus might be spread during any activity that you organise, and what you will do to reduce the likelihood of it being spread, in order to keep everyone in your group as safe as possible.

How could the virus be spread in our group activity or community space?

The Covid-19 virus is transmitted from one person to another through: 1) airborne particles (droplets and aerosols); and 2) particles on surfaces (fomites). This means that, in basic terms, the virus is spread when people are close together and breathing the same air and/or touching the same things. Some people who are infected with the virus do not have any symptoms and do not know they are infected. They can still

transmit the virus to others, however, through talking, breathing, coughing, sneezing, and sharing of equipment and facilities.

Regulations and guidelines that the government developed during the height of the pandemic – like social distancing, mask wearing, and increased cleaning of hands and equipment – were all designed to reduce the risk of virus transmission. Your group might still choose to use some or all of these measures, even though there are no longer any legal requirements to do so.

Key ways in which the virus could be spread in any group activity are listed below. Your risk assessment should include consideration of all these risks, and outline what your group will do to reduce the likelihood of them happening. You should also include any other risks that might be specific to your group members or activity e.g. if your group includes people who are clinically vulnerable, are there extra measures you need to put in place to minimise risk to them?

Direct contact between people

Staying away if you have symptoms

If you are running a community space or organising an activity, you should ask anyone who has symptoms not to come to the venue or event. The three main symptoms of Covid-19 originally identified were: cough, high temperature, and loss of smell (anosmia). Other key symptoms have since been identified, including fatigue, sore throat, headache and diarrhoea¹. A full list of identified Covid-19 symptoms can be found on the Zoe Covid Study website².

Symptoms can vary depending on a number of factors, such as the individual, whether they have been vaccinated, and which variant of the virus they have. Your group might decide to ask anyone who is feeling unwell, with any set of symptoms, not to attend your venue or activity. Or you might ask them to stay away unless they have taken a Covid-19 test and had a negative result since they started having the symptoms.

Testing in advance of an event

Some groups and events might choose to ask all attendees to take a lateral flow test (LFT) on the day of the event. LFTs are no longer available for free, but can still be purchased from most pharmacies. They cost about £2 each.

Social distancing

‘Social distancing’ originally referred to government guidance that people who do not live together should keep 2 metres apart from one another. Although there are no longer government guidelines requiring this, you can still think through how crowded your activity or event will be and make choices about numbers and spacing that can reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19.

¹ <https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/what-are-the-symptoms-of-covid?>

² <https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/the-20-symptoms-of-covid-19-to-watch-out-for>

If you are running a community space, you should think about:

- The size of each room and how many people can fit into it safely. You can find online space calculators to help you with this, although they can be quite complicated.
- 'Pinch points' (where people would be forced to move closer together e.g. through doorways). Is it possible to set up a one-way system so that people come in one door and leave through another? Do you need signs to make this clear? If you are in Brighton & Hove, you can get signs printed at the Resource Centre.

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- The maximum number of people you can safely allow at your event. Plan how you will limit numbers – will people have to book in advance? You could use an online ticketing service such as Eventbrite for advance bookings (there's no cost if you are not charging for your tickets).
- Whether your event or meeting would work as a hybrid event, where some people join via Zoom. If you are in Brighton & Hove, the Resource Centre has equipment that can help you to organise events like this.
- How you will set up the space and mark distances. It is a good idea to have someone from the committee set up the space before other people arrive e.g. by setting out chairs or marker cones that are appropriately distanced for your activity. You can hire free-standing signs from the Resource Centre and print your own information to display in them.
- How to minimise the need for people to be too close together as they are arriving and leaving. You might decide to have staggered arrival times so people do not end up queuing to get in, or a one-way system so that people are not going in and out of the same door.

Face coverings

The most recent government guidelines³ suggest you should wear a face mask when:

- You are coming into close contact with someone at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from Covid-19 or other respiratory infections
- Covid-19 rates are high and you will be in close contact with other people, such as in crowded and enclosed spaces
- There are a lot of respiratory viruses circulating, such as in winter, and you will be in close contact with other people in crowded and enclosed spaces

If you are running a community venue, you should think about whether your staff would still like to wear face coverings, or have screens between them and venue-users.

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- If your group would like to ask people to wear masks during the activity
- How you will let people know in advance about your decisions on wearing masks

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19#when-to-consider-wearing-a-face-covering-or-a-face-mask>

- How you will respond if people don't want to wear a mask. Will you let them do the activity anyway?
- You may want to supply masks at the door, for people who don't remember to bring their own mask with them.

Hand washing

Making sure people wash or sanitise their hands frequently can help reduce the risk of passing on the virus through direct contact or shared surfaces.

If you are running a community venue, you should think about:

- ♦ Providing information about good handwashing technique in the toilets or other places where people can wash their hands
- ♦ Providing hand sanitiser at the entrance and asking people to sanitise their hands as soon as they arrive in the building

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

- ♦ Providing hand sanitiser for people arriving at your event. But be careful about where you place this, so that people are not bunched up together at the door.

Shared air

There is evidence that the virus can spread between people who are not close together, if they are in an enclosed space and breathing the same air.⁴ The main way to reduce this risk is to improve ventilation. The Airborne.cam app can help you think through the measures you can take to decrease risk of indoor transmission of the virus.⁵

If you are running a community venue, you should think about:

- ♦ Advising users of your venue to open windows and doors during their activities
- ♦ Monitoring the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) inside your venue, to give you an indication of how well the space is ventilated. Outdoors, CO₂ levels are just above 400 parts per million (ppm). A well ventilated room will have around 800 ppm of CO₂. Any higher than that and it is a sign the room might need more ventilation.⁶ If your group is based in Brighton & Hove, you can hire a CO₂ monitor from the Resource Centre⁷. Otherwise, or if you need one long-term, you can buy them for between £30 and £60.
- ♦ Installing a mechanical ventilation system (eg extractor fans) in rooms where it is not possible to open the windows.
- ♦ Purchasing an air purifier, which filters the air and can remove particles the size of those that typically contain the virus. Look for one which has a HEPA filter. You can buy an air purifier powerful enough to cover a typical 70m² room for around £300. Be aware that an air purifier will not reduce the level of CO₂ in the air.

If you are organising an activity, you should think about:

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-how-is-it-transmitted>

⁵ <https://airborne.cam/>

⁶ <https://theconversation.com/how-to-use-ventilation-and-air-filtration-to-prevent-the-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-143732>

⁷ <https://resourcecentre.org.uk/equipment/carbon-dioxide-monitor/>

- ♦ Is it possible to organise your activity outdoors?
- ♦ If you need to be indoors, ask your venue about ventilation
- ♦ Make sure you have windows and doors open during the activity

Shared equipment and facilities

Covid-19 transmission can occur through touching contaminated surfaces, according to the World Health Organisation⁸.

The main mitigation for the risk of passing on the virus after touching shared surfaces is frequent handwashing. This is covered above, in the Direct contact between people section. Nevertheless, you may want to introduce additional cleaning measures, and minimise shared equipment.

If you are running a community venue, you could think about:

- ♦ Using paper towels or a hand dryer instead of shared hand towels
- ♦ Setting up a routine to clean equipment between hires of your venue – you could ask hirers to do this, or use your own staff or volunteers.

If you are organising an activity, you could think about:

- ♦ Propping open doors so that people don't all touch the same door handle during your activity (this could help with ventilation too)
- ♦ If you use equipment during your activity, asking each participant to clean their own equipment before putting it away (you could provide disinfectant wipes to make this easier)

⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-how-is-it-transmitted>

Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for an activity

Hazard Getting or spreading the Covid-19 virus by:	Who could be harmed?	Actions taken to minimise risk	Who is responsible for taking these actions?
People coming to the activity who have symptoms of Covid-19	Facilitator Group participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ People will be asked not to come to the activity if they are feeling unwell ♦ Signs will be up at the door asking people not to come in if they have specific symptoms 	Group member setting up All participants
Direct contact between people	Facilitator Group participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Participant numbers will be limited to 10 – everyone will book their place in advance ♦ Chairs will be set out before participants arrive, with at least 1m between chairs ♦ Participants will be 1m apart throughout the session, wearing masks ♦ We will have a greeter at the door to remind people to keep a distance and to put on their masks on as they arrive ♦ We will supply masks for anyone who arrives without one ♦ Participants will be asked to sanitise their hands on arrival, and after leaving the room for any reason during the session ♦ We will provide hand sanitiser 	Greeter Group member setting up All participants

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ After the group is finished, 3 people will leave at a time to prevent queues to get out of the door ♦ Signs will be up around the venue reminding people to keep a 2m distance (1m with mask) 	
Shared air	Facilitator Group participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Group is being held in a venue with adequate ventilation ♦ Extractor fans will be turned on before participants arrive and kept on for the duration of the session 	Group member setting up
Shared equipment and facilities	Facilitator Group participants Greeter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Participants will be asked to stay in the same chair throughout the session ♦ We will not use the kitchen – participants have been asked to bring their own refreshments ♦ Participants will be reminded to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet 	Facilitator

Sample Covid-19 risk assessment for a community venue

Hazard Getting or spreading the Covid-19 virus by:	Who could be harmed?	Actions taken to minimise risk	Who is responsible for taking these actions?
People coming into the venue	Staff Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Signs will be up at the front entrance 	All staff and volunteers

Hazard Getting or spreading the Covid-19 virus by:	Who could be harmed?	Actions taken to minimise risk	Who is responsible for taking these actions?
who have Covid-19 symptoms	Centre users	<p>asking people not to enter the venue if they are feeling unwell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will advise hirers to ask people not to participate in their groups if they are feeling unwell 	
Direct contact between people	Staff Volunteers Centre users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will allow a maximum of 30 people at a time in the large hall and 15 people at a time in the small hall ♦ We will advise hirers to use the car park door as an exit, to avoid crowding in the lobby ♦ We will provide hand sanitiser at the entrance ♦ We will ensure that there is plenty of soap and paper towels in the toilet in advance of each hire ♦ We will put up notices ♦ At the entrance, asking people to disinfect their hands and wear a mask ♦ In the toilets, reminding people 	Centre manager All staff and volunteers

Hazard Getting or spreading the Covid-19 virus by:	Who could be harmed?	Actions taken to minimise risk	Who is responsible for taking these actions?
		<p>how to wash hands properly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will install a screen at the reception desk ♦ All staff and volunteers to wear face coverings inside the Centre unless working behind the screen or alone in a room 	
Shared air	Staff Volunteers Centre users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We will install CO2 monitors in both halls and provide instructions for hirers on how to read them ♦ We will advise hirers to keep at least 3 windows or doors open during their activities 	Centre manager
Shared equipment and facilities	Staff Volunteers Centre users	<p>End of day cleaning routine to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Disinfect all door handles and light switches ♦ Clean toilets, flush lever, taps, hand soap dispensers in both toilets ♦ Wash all cutlery 	Cleaner