



Reopening Your Community Facility

With restrictions gradually being lifted, this guide is for Trustees, Management Committees and Officers of any community facility. It provides some useful tips and pointers to get your community facility ready for opening as and when circumstances permit.

This guide is not an authoritative statement of law and should be read in conjunction with all official guidance from Government and Public Health Wales.

1. Who Makes the Decision to Re-Open

The decision on how and when to re-open your community facility ultimately lies with your trustees or persons who are legally liable for your organisation. At a minimum, they must be able to demonstrate that they:

- have thought through the full range of considerations for re-opening;
- are complying with the relevant regulations in force at the time;
- are discharging their legal duties to the best of their abilities.

Here are some specific issues that will require your attention and consideration:

Safety - The safety of those who use your community facility, your volunteers and staff should be of paramount importance. All available protection measures should be considered

Insurance - Consult your insurers on the re-opening options you are considering as they may have certain requirements of you which you need to take into consideration and the validity of your public liability or other insurance may be dependent on this

Risk Assessments & Procedures – Reviewing and updating your building risk assessment and operating plans is essential and documenting this as this may be required by your insurers should claims arise at a later date

Charitable objects - If you are significantly changing what you deliver, you will need to check whether you are still operating within your charitable objects or whether you need to make special arrangements to enable you to do so

Record keeping - Any key decisions are recommended be taken at a virtual meeting of the relevant trustee's/management committee members and minutes/recorded to demonstrate that all material considerations were taken into account in arriving at the decisions

2. Planning Steps

Allocate a COVID Safety Officer

Who should I allocate?

Allocate at least one person from your Management Team to act as a COVID Safety Officer.

This person must:

have the ability to engage with a wide range of community members and stakeholders,

keep up-to-date with the latest public health regulations and

be a focal point for your re-opening preparations.

Who should I engage with?

In the course of planning, it is imperative that trustees or persons who are legally liable consult with your:

- ❖ **Local community including existing users** – their safety is of paramount importance. Your local community will rightfully want to know what you are doing to keep them safe. You will also need to communicate the changes to your local community and existing users when you decide to re-open. Engaging them early will help them feel their views are being listened to
- ❖ **Neighbours** – the importance of treating your neighbours with respect cannot be emphasised enough. Do not let them be surprised when you decide to re-open and they see people entering your building again. They may be worried about the impact of re-opening on the spread of the virus to the rest of the community, so keep them informed of your plans
- ❖ **Volunteers and Staff** – you will need to train your volunteers and staff in managing the building and to be familiar with all new procedures as it re-opens. Engage with your volunteers and staff as soon as possible as it will help them feel their views are being listened to
- ❖ **Other Stakeholders** – Engage, where appropriate, with other stakeholders, e.g. local authority, community council, partner organisations and keep them informed of your plans

3. Risk Assessment

Conduct a Risk Assessment of your building to take into account physical distancing measures - such as maintaining the appropriate physical social distance to avoid any unnecessary physical contact.

This may introduce significant changes to the way your building will be used.

Key questions to consider when conducting a new Risk Assessment and reviewing procedures for your building:

- ❖ **Security** - If your building has been empty/unoccupied for several weeks since the lockdown began, perform a thorough security check for any evidence of break-ins e.g. are your doors and windows sound and secure? Is your building alarm still working?
- ❖ **Entrance/Exit Procedures** - Which entrance and exit routes will you re-open? Have you considered a one-way system? How will you ensure a crowd does not develop at your building's entrance or exit points?
- ❖ **Fire hazards** - Is there unnecessary clutter which might prove an obstacle during an emergency evacuation or present a fire hazard?
- ❖ **Mark spaces**- Consider marking gaps on the floors with tape (to encourage social distancing) at your entrances and exits and in your main rooms
- ❖ **Posters and Notices** - Are your posters/noticeboards up to date? What new information will you need to display? Door stops – For non-fire doors only, consider using door stops to keep doors open for users to pass through without touching door handles
- ❖ **Cleaning procedures** – what frequency of cleaning will you put in place, by who, where and using what equipment?
- ❖ **Taking payments / donations** – Can you introduce a contactless payment facility for taking payments / donations? Can you utilise online donation platforms?
- ❖ **Face Masks/PPE** – It is likely that building users may be required to or highly encouraged to wear face masks, gloves or other Personal Protective Equipment
- ❖ How will you encourage or remind your building users to do this?
- ❖ **Timing** – depending on the phase of re-opening, how will you limit the amount of time users will stay in your building? Have you considered staggering your operating times to minimise the number of people in your building at any one point in time?

4. Capacity

Estimate your 'new capacity' Physical distancing measures such as maintaining a prescribed distance between individuals from different households, will markedly reduce the capacity of your building. Calculating your building's 'new capacity' is essential to plan ahead.

- ❖ Trial run your main rooms or halls with physical distancing measures in place.
- ❖ Estimate the 'new capacity' for each room.
- ❖ In/out flow - How will you communicate and enforce the capacity limits and physical distancing requirements? What new signage roles will you need (See Section 5)?
- ❖ How will you train volunteers/staff to encourage users' compliance with the new arrangements? Where will you store excess tables/chairs?

5. Equipment

Identify what new equipment you will need: -

- ❖ **Signage/Barriers** – What new tape, signage or barriers will you need?
- ❖ **Sanitisation** – Will you be providing hand sanitiser and tissues at entrances/exits?
- ❖ **Cleaning routines** – what additional types and quantities of cleaning products, disinfectants and tools will you require? Have you estimated the weekly cost of this?

- ❖ **Disposable items** – Will you use disposal items such as table covers/sheets on top of flooring in halls or other rooms? Where will you dispose of this? Do you have sufficient rubbish/bin capacity to store the additional waste you will be generating

6. Training

Once you have decided what your new measures and procedures look like, when and how will you train your volunteers and staff? Do they know who is the allocated COVID Safety Officer? Will you require your volunteers and staff to wear face mask/PPE as standard?

What will your volunteers and staff do to ensure crowds do not form at entrances and exits? Where appropriate, who is your Safeguarding Officer? Are they aware of their new duties in-line with your new measures and procedures?

7. Conclusion

The “new normal” for our community facilities will be markedly different to what we were used to. This will be the case for the foreseeable future. To assist the transition, it is important that you plan early, consult widely and take a holistic approach to re-opening to members of the public. When it is safe to do so, and in-line with public health regulations. Ultimately, the decision on how and when to re-open lies with the trustees or persons who are legally responsible for the organisation. Allocating a dedicated COVID-19 Safety Officer is essential, providing a focal point for the transition. It is important that the decision to re-open is not rushed and that all necessary preparations, training and measures are in place well in advance. Trustees have significant legal responsibilities to keep their community facility and its users safe.

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