

Briefing for village and community halls The Government's COVID-19 Winter Plan Continuing to live with the virus 22nd September 2021

The Government's COVID-19 Winter Plan announced on 14th September 2021 set out a **Plan A and Plan B**.

Plan A is to sustain progress through 5 approaches:

- Building our defences through pharmaceutical interventions
- Identifying and isolating positive cases to limit transmission
- Supporting the NHS and social care
- Advising people on how to protect themselves and others
- Pursuing an international approach

The advice to all is:

- Stay at home if you feel unwell. Get tested and isolate if required
- let fresh air into buildings or meet outdoors ,
- wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet,
- maintain good hygiene practices: regular hand washing with soap and water or hand sanitizing, covering coughs and sneezes.

The test, trace and isolate programme will continue but in due course there will be a charge for Lateral Flow Tests. The advice remains " If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#), even if your symptoms are mild". The legal obligation to self-isolate for ten days for those who have tested positive, and their unvaccinated contacts will continue.

While legal restrictions will no longer apply, Government Guidance has been re-issued to reflect renewed emphasis on ventilation and wearing face coverings. Read it [here](#)

If Plan A does not control the virus **Plan B** would include:

- Mandatory vaccine certification in certain, riskier settings
- Legally mandating face coverings in certain settings, such as shops and public transport
- Communicating clearly and urgently to the public if the risk level continues
- Asking people to work at home again if necessary.

The Winter Plan as applied to Village and Community Halls

1. All community events, activities and private hires can continue to take place.
2. Risks can be managed by hirers through ventilation, opening doors and windows. Encouraging use of face coverings in confined places, regular hand washing or hand sanitiser and cleaning frequently used surfaces. See ventilation advice below.
3. Village and community hall managers need to continue to risk assess for Covid-19 as part of health and safety risk assessment and should take reasonable steps to mitigate any identified risks. For example, hirers and users can be required to co-operate through booking conditions, posters can remind people to wear face coverings in corridors, toilets, kitchen and other confined areas, hand sanitiser provided, cleaning materials provided.
4. Any places where ventilation is inadequate should be identified and arrangements made to improve it or to require face coverings.
5. Capacity limits have been lifted. However, people should remain considerate of anyone who is Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, for whom the advice to shield has been lifted. They may feel cautious about attending a more crowded event such as a wedding reception, film, or play. It is important to help allow those people extra space so that they feel safe. They might, for example, be invited to sit near an open window or door, to use toilets first in the interval and ask everyone to wear face coverings. Reserved notices could be put on adjacent seats.
6. Bars, cafes, and catered events are no longer required to provide table service or follow other social distancing rules. The principles set out in the [working safely guidance](#) should be followed.
7. While social distancing rules are not in place, advice to individuals is to avoid close contact with anyone that they are not in regular contact with. Consequently, risk assessment may indicate that arrangements such as stewarding or a one-way system, to avoid areas such as foyers and corridors becoming congested, remain sensible for some halls and some events.
8. Display of NHS QR codes for attendees wishing to check in using the NHS COVID-19 app is still encouraged, so they are alerted if there's an outbreak and can take action to protect others. However, this is no longer a legal requirement.

Ventilation advice

Easy to read guidance is provided [here](#)

In a nutshell:

- Let fresh air into enclosed spaces, making it less likely a person will inhale infectious particles.
- Avoid meetings being held in small, poorly ventilated rooms.

- Windows opened at the top should help avoid draughts.
- If windows and doors need to be closed for warmth during the event open them in the interval and after the event finishes for 10 minutes. To save heating costs open for short periods of time.
- Encourage people to come warmly dressed as weather gets colder.
- Do not prop fire doors open.

NHS COVID Pass

The NHS COVID Pass allows people to demonstrate that they are at lower risk of transmitting to others through full vaccination, a recent negative test, or proof of natural immunity. While organisations operating large, crowded settings (such as nightclubs) are encouraged to use the NHS Covid Pass as a condition of entry it is not appropriate for buildings used for community activities and services. Those holding a crowded event e.g., a wedding where Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people are expected may, if they wish, ask guests to use the NHS Covid Pass and/or show proof of a negative lateral flow test taken in the previous 2 days, but this is not mandatory.

ACRE Information Sheet for re-opening

This briefing note updates ACRE Information Sheet for re-opening village and community halls, version 11 issued in July 2021, which remains available on the ACRE website for the time being as a reference source.

Appendix E, The Special Conditions of Hire, has been slightly adjusted to show that some clauses are now optional, reflecting current government guidance as set out above.

Please contact your local ACRE Network member for support and advice for your village hall. You can find details by clicking on the relevant area of this [Map](#)