

National ACRE Guidance

Covid-19 – the Government’s Roadmap: Step 4

Step 4 and Learning to Live with the virus

The PM’s announcement on 5th July made clear the intention that restrictions will be lifted, Step 4, with a decision due on 12th July as to whether this will be on 19th July. However, people will be asked “to make informed decisions and act carefully and proportionally to manage risk to themselves and others”. While legal restrictions will no longer apply, Government guidance will continue to be issued. This update is based on information as of 6th July and further information will be issued if the situation changes before the 19th July.

For village and community halls it is clear that all community events and activities and private hires will be able to take place from 19th July (if that remains the target date), with risks managed by hirers e.g., through ventilation, encouraging social distancing, hand washing and use of hand sanitiser.

It remains important to respect and be considerate of those who are more vulnerable and who may wish to take a more cautious approach so it will be appropriate at some activities or events that measures (including wearing face masks and social distancing) are taken so that people who are clinically more vulnerable or not yet fully vaccinated can attend. Good ventilation (or holding activities outdoors) is the best means of reducing risk of transmission so it will be important to take advantage of the better weather in order to enable more vulnerable people to enjoy activities with minimal anxiety.

While all use can resume, and smaller events where social distancing can continue to be achieved will be less risky, the questions now likely to arise are around whether, or when, to continue applying reduced capacity limits and whether to require other mitigation measures for larger or more “crowded” bookings e.g. to charge for additional cleaning afterwards. Reviewing the Covid-19 Risk Assessment should help arrive at decisions.

Pending issuing of more detailed guidance it makes sense for halls to retain the physical measures already in place (e.g., QR poster, hand sanitiser stations, posters requiring face coverings on entry) and more frequent cleaning of regularly touched surfaces, so that people feel comfortable returning to the hall.

The Covid-secure capacity can be relaxed at Step 4 to a level which feels appropriate for different types of larger event, bearing in mind for example whether it’s an audience seated for a performance (less risky), a wedding reception with people dancing and singing (more risky) and whether provision can be made for the more vulnerable and non-double vaccinated.

At step 4 :

- **All limits on social contact will be removed** (currently groups of 6 people or 2 households indoors, or 30 people outdoors).
- **Music concerts, sporting events, singing and dancing can resume** without any limits on attendance or social distancing requirements.
- **All restrictions on life events will be removed** such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms. There will be no requirement for table service or restrictions on singing or dancing.
- **The legal requirements to wear a face covering will be lifted** in all settings. Guidance will advise that wearing a face covering will reduce your risk and the risk to others, where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces, so **use of face coverings will remain advisable in confined spaces such as toilets, kitchens and corridors and at more crowded events.**
- **Social distancing rules will be lifted** (2 metres or 1 metre with additional mitigations). However, the risks of close contact with others should be considered, particularly if clinically extremely vulnerable or not yet fully vaccinated.
- **Table service restrictions, and distancing between tables, will be lifted** for hospitality venues. Guidance will be updated to provide examples of sensible precautions to be taken in risk assessing the situation.
- **Test and Trace will be retained and continued display of QR codes will be advised.** The advice for individuals to get a test if advised to do so and self-isolate if tested positive remains key to reducing transmission.
- People no longer need to work from home.
- Controls for early years, schools, colleges and higher education institutions will be adjusted. **The intention is that children will no longer need to be in consistent groups ('bubbles').**

Government guidance will set out how people can manage the risks to themselves and to others:

1. Meeting in well-ventilated areas where possible, such as outdoors or indoors with windows open.
2. Wearing a face covering where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces.
3. Washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.
4. Covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.
5. Staying at home if unwell, to reduce the risk of passing on other illnesses onto friends, family, colleagues, and others in your community.
6. Considering individual risks, such as clinical vulnerabilities and vaccination status.