

Updated 23 March 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19), Communities and Community Buildings

This article contains information on general guidance, social distancing and stay at home guidance, advice for village halls, advice for community groups, community response, volunteering and protecting the isolated & vulnerable.

Information surrounding coronavirus and COVID-19 may change and therefore **ACTion with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)** recommends that everyone should follow the guidance issued by Public Health England and the NHS and keep abreast of the ever-changing situation.

Coronavirus

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are a new continuous cough and/or high temperature.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

The [NHS website](#) has more information about how coronavirus is spread and answers [common questions about the virus](#).

General Guidance

Common sense is key in a situation like this and there are things you can do to help stop germs like coronavirus spreading:

- The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started. Follow the [Government stay at home guidance](#)
- Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.
- To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue away immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people

Further information available at:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): latest information and advice](#)

[NHS advice on reducing risk](#)

Cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus

Social Distancing Guidance

The [Government guidance on social distancing](#) is for everyone. It advises on social distancing measures we should all be taking to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). It is intended for use in situations where people are living in their own homes, with or without additional support from friends, family and carers. Further guidance if you live in [a residential care setting](#).

Key messages:

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). They are:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible.
- Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information.
- Avoid large gatherings, and gatherings in smaller public spaces such as pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, clubs.
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.
- Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is pragmatic.
- We strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible, particularly if you: are over 70; have an underlying health condition; are pregnant.

Stay at Home Guidance

The [Government stay at home guidance](#) is for:

- People with symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus, and do not require hospital treatment, who must remain at home until they are well.
- Those living in households with someone who shows symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus.

Key messages

- If you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), you'll need to stay at home for **7** days.
- If you live with someone who has symptoms, you'll need to stay at home for **14** days from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms.
- For anyone else in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period.
- If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.
- If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.
- If you have coronavirus symptoms **do not** go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home. Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home.
- Plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure that you can successfully stay at home and consider what can be done for vulnerable people in the household.
- Ask your employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home.
- Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser.
- If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the [NHS 111 online](#) Coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

Government guidance on [Shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable people](#)

Village Halls & Community Buildings

Village Hall Management Committees running charitable halls must act in the best interest of the hall charity and have a duty of care in providing a safe facility for the community to use.

Previous guidance on social distancing has already led many hirers to cancel / postpone bookings. However, following the [Government announcement on further social distancing measures](#), including measures to close entertainment, hospitality and indoor leisure facilities, some halls have closed. Some remain open for the provision of essential services.

Join the Cumbria Village Halls Network on Facebook @CumbriaVHN to keep in touch with other halls. This is a private group for village hall volunteers in Cumbria.

Precautions include:

- Take notice of the Government and Public Health England websites and keep up to date with the ongoing situation.
- Keep the Hall very clean and ensure that hand washing facilities, soap and/or hand sanitiser are available, paper towels are available and hand driers are working efficiently. Avoid the use of hand towels for the time being. [Government cleaning guidance](#)
- Encourage everyone to wash / sanitise their hands regularly. Put up notices about hand cleaning, particularly in toilets and kitchen areas and a poster on the front door asking anyone with Coronavirus symptoms not to come into the building. Links for posters: [Catch it bin it kill it](#), [NHS hand cleaning](#), [Public Health England posters](#)
- Advise hirers that they are expected to act responsibly and take notice of Government and Public Health England advice.
- Regarding cancellation of bookings, follow the steps in the hall hire agreement and conditions of hire.
- Review the hall's insurance policy and contact insurer to discuss cover regarding cancellation of activities in the event of the hall having to close.

Norris & Fisher Insurance Brokers Ltd. has issued the following statement:

Coronavirus Advice for Village Halls:

We have received a number of enquiries as to whether Village Halls would be insured should they be forced to cancel activities or if hirers cancel their bookings owing to COVID-19. The Business Interruption cover under the policy would not provide cover for this type of loss so there is no insurance for loss of earnings. If there were to be a pandemic it would be beyond the capability of insurers to pay for such losses.

Some of our halls have asked their hirers to ensure that, if one of their members is ill, they should not attend the Hall. Should a visitor have been in contact with anyone suffering from the virus they should self-isolate. However, if an outbreak of COVID-19 were to be traced to the Hall it would not be possible for you to be held liable. In addition it may be best to ensure you have a good supply of soap, hand sanitisers and paper towels.

Allied Westminster Insurance Services Ltd. has issued the following: 17 March 2020

Coronavirus and Village Halls:

- *Loss of revenue cover comes into force only after damage to property caused by an insured peril. It is designed to cover loss of income when the hall is closed for a period of time in order for repairs to be carried out. Unfortunately, if the hall has to be closed due to a breakout of the virus, no property damage has occurred so there is no business interruption cover in place.*
- *Property insurers would not cover closure due to pandemic.*

Protecting Your Village/Community Hall at this time:

- *Halls may become unoccupied or operate on a significantly reduced level, and this increases the risk of losses.*

- *If your hall is running on a significantly reduced basis, and especially unoccupied due to the pandemic, letting your insurers know, and keeping them informed of any developments, is essential.*
- *It is essential that you let your insurer or policy administrator have a second and ideally third contact in the event of an insurable loss, allowing them to process the claim with an authorised and recognised person (GDPR!)*
- *This will help speed along any claims and avoid hold-ups. This is especially important right now when key contacts may suffer as a result of the illness.*
- *There are some considerations that should be kept in mind to protect their assets and people:*
 - *Risk assessments must be carried out on the changing risk/lack of supervision in place*
 - *Heating left 'ticking-over' but other critical services powered down if not required, unless to support protection or detection systems*
 - *All external areas must be clear of waste and combustible materials*
 - *Consider waste build-up and the controls needed if waste collection services are affected*
 - *All fire protection, detection, and security systems to remain active and monitored remotely where possible*
 - *Maintenance on all protection and/or detection systems (where in place) must be a priority to protect the property*
 - *All physical security and locking devices are working and in place*
 - *There are no leaking fluids or spills*

Sources and Useful Links

- [Q&A on Coronaviruses – World Health Organization](#)
- [Managing Epidemics: Key facts about major deadly diseases – World Health Organization](#)
- [Pandemic Flu – Workplace Guidance – Health & Safety Executive](#)

Village Hall business continuity:

- Keep up to date with the latest [Government](#) and [Charity Commission](#) guidance
- Plan for trustees to take on additional responsibilities in the event of others being unwell or self-isolated, e.g. Chairperson; Treasurer; Signatories; Keyholder; Bookings secretary etc.
- Consider meeting alternatives e.g. Skype, WhatsApp, Facetime.
- Review existing hire agreements and consider the financial impact of cancellation of bookings and possible hall closure.
- Speak to your funders about the possible impact of cancelling or delaying project activities which are part of funding agreements.
- Plan for how the hall will be cleaned / maintained in the event of the cleaner / caretaker being unwell or self-isolated.

The Charity Commission has issued [guidance for charities during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) and has general [guidance on charities and risk management](#)

The Government has issued [guidance for employers and businesses](#)

Community Groups

- Keep up to date with the latest [Government](#) and [Charity Commission](#) guidance
- Follow the [Government guidance on social distancing](#) (see above)

Meetings and Events:

Many events and activities are being postponed or cancelled following the latest guidance on social distancing.

- Check cancellation policies for venue bookings.
- For formal meetings such as an AGM, refer to your organisation's governing document to see what it says about remote participation and quorum.
- Consider electronic alternatives such as Skype, WhatsApp, Facetime.

Community Response

Many people are looking to help others in their community at this difficult time, and much can be achieved by encouraging individuals to support their neighbours.

- [Ten simple ways you can help people in your local community](#)
- [Download the “Hello if you’re self-isolating, I can help” card](#)
- For groups looking to take a more coordinated approach, ACT’s [Community Resilience and Emergency Planning](#) guidance and [Good Neighbours Scheme](#) guidance can also help.
- For information about volunteering, including resources for both formal organisations and informal groups working with volunteers visit cumbriacvs.org.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-volunteering/

The Eden Project Communities and partners have launched the [Community Action Response](#) to encourage everyone to do what they can to support their communities, and particularly vulnerable and isolated people during the Covid-19 crisis. [Download the Poster](#)

Key messages:

- Think of other, consider your actions and be kind
- Connect and reach out to your neighbours
- Make the most of local online groups
- Support vulnerable or isolated people
- Share accurate information and advice

Volunteering

[Support Cumbria](#) is an official collaboration of partners across Cumbria, working together to provide community support to residents who are struggling to access basic or essential services during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The website:

- Provides a central point to help coordinate volunteering efforts to support Cumbria residents who may need help.
- Can help you find local organisations to register an interest with in volunteering in your community.
- Allows volunteer groups to register with Cumbria CVS and recruit volunteer support.
- Is supported by agencies coordinating the response to coronavirus in Cumbria, including Cumbria County Council, Cumbria CVS, district councils, NHS and Cumbria Police. Voluntary organisations will use their safeguarding processes to keep people safe in their communities. New volunteer groups registering will be approved by Cumbria CVS who will help you to recruit volunteers safely.

For more information about volunteering, including resources for both formal organisations working with volunteers, and informal groups visit cumbriacvs.org.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-volunteering/

Protecting the Isolated and Vulnerable

[Neighbourhood Watch](#) has produced guidance on [protecting the isolated and vulnerable](#)

[Age UK](#) has produced guidance on [practical ways to help older people](#)

Donations

People are already giving generously to a [Cumbria COVID-19 Response Fund](#) set up by Cumbria Community Foundation to help charitable groups support vulnerable people affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Foundation is aware that many people and businesses will be struggling financially, however, for those that are able and would like to donate to the Fund, they can [donate online](#) or phone 01900 825760.

- Ends -

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)

- ACT is the rural and community development charity for Cumbria.
- ACT champions community and rural issues and supports communities to plan for their future, develop projects, work with others, and influence and change policy.
- ACT's work focuses on helping people and communities achieve their aspirations; we provide practical advice, support and deliver training. Through a variety of partnerships we are also able to represent the interests of communities locally, regionally, and nationally.
- ACT is registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria, Charity Registration Number 1080875, Company Number 3957858.
- For more information, please visit ACT's website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk
- Contact Tel: 01768 425666 or Email: info@cumbriaaction.org.uk