

COVID-19 Restrictions: Guidance for Community Venues Across County Durham

[National lockdown restrictions](#) came into operation on 5 January 2021.

The restrictions state that:

- **You must stay at home.**
- You must not leave or be outside of your home except where you have a
- 'reasonable excuse'.
- You may only leave the home to:
 - shop for basic necessities, for you or a vulnerable person;
 - go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home;
 - exercise with your household (or support bubble) or one other person, this should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area;
 - meet your support bubble or childcare bubble where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one;
 - seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm (including domestic abuse);
 - attend education or childcare - for those eligible
 - to attend a support group (of up to 15 people).

As you may know there is an increased risk of virus transmission the more people gather together.

To reduce social contact, the regulations require some businesses to close and impose restrictions on how some businesses provide goods and services. Community centres and halls **must close** except for **a limited number** of exempt activities:

- Education and training – for schools to use sports, leisure and community facilities **where that is part of their normal provision** – schools are currently closed to all except vulnerable children and critical workers;
- Childcare purposes and supervised activities for those children eligible to attend;
- Hosting blood donation sessions and food banks;
- To provide medical treatment;
- For elite sports persons to train and compete (in indoor and outdoor sports facilities), and professional dancers and choreographers to work (in fitness and dance studios);
- For training and rehearsal without an audience (in theatres and concert halls)
- For the purposes of film and TV filming; and
- Support groups.

At this time of tighter restrictions, we would urge you to consider whether it is essential for support groups to meet in person or whether they can be paused or done virtually.

Support groups that must be delivered in person can continue if:

- No more than **15 participants** take part
- They are **formally organised** to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support
- The organiser or manager has carried out a COVID risk assessment and taken all reasonable measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus

Support groups include, but are not limited to:

- support to victims of crime,
- people in drug and alcohol recovery,
- new parents and guardians,
- people caring for those with long-term or terminal illnesses, or who are vulnerable (please note those who are clinically extremely vulnerable have been advised to take additional precautions under the new restrictions),
- people facing issues relating to their sexuality or gender,
- those who have suffered bereavement, and
- vulnerable young people, including for them to meet youth workers.

We take “formally organised” to mean groups that allocate a number of official roles and run structured activities and are affiliated with an overarching official organisation or are commissioned or funded by Durham County Council or a statutory partner.

Where permitted activity takes place, managers of community facilities, and organisers of the permitted activity within community venues must take reasonable steps to ensure that people using their facilities do not socialise/mix with people who they do not live with; and that they are able to make the space COVID-secure. Being COVID secure means:

- Strict adherence to social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation (i.e. face coverings) (where 2 metres is not viable);
- All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched, should be cleaned regularly, using standard cleaning products;
- On entering and leaving a community facility everyone, including staff, should be asked to wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or to use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available.
- Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- All venues should ensure that steps are taken to avoid people needing to unduly raise their voices to each other.
- Collect test and trace information for all activities and events taking place within the venue. This should be collected by the person who hires the space. The venue must display an official [NHS QR code poster](#) which can be used for every activity that takes place there.

Managers of community facilities must ensure that they have an up to date COVID-19 risk assessment and COVID-secure measures in place within the venue.

Managers of community facilities will have discretion over when they consider it safe to open for permitted activities. Therefore, all managers of community facilities must request a COVID-secure risk assessment from the organiser of the permitted activity and decide on whether the groups can operate safely and in line with the COVID-secure requirements. If a group activity being proposed cannot meet the requirements, the activity should not be authorised.

Community venues are encouraged to continuing following the [guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities](#) to ensure that they are COVID-secure.