

Covid-19 Guidance AirS Update 8th February 2021

Volunteering during COVID-19

Government guidance about volunteering has been substantially revised. Only a very few volunteers working in front line risk settings will be eligible for early vaccination. Volunteering must be done from home unless that is not reasonable, but it says:

“Volunteering which cannot be done from home can continue in a closed business or venue while it remains closed to the public”. Volunteers can meet, socially distanced, and work together in groups where required e.g. for training or recruitment. However, a volunteer should not be compelled to volunteer outside their home.

Wet Led Pub Grant and Social Clubs

The BEIS guidance on the Wet Led Pub Grant has been revised. Unfortunately, while the closing date is extended to 28th Feb it is now clear that Social Clubs within Village Halls and bars in sports pavilions are not eligible: The list of premises which are excluded includes sporting venues, theatres etc and guidance is given that this is “not exhaustive”. Para 13 makes clear that only pubs in the business rates system are eligible.

Lockdown Payment and LRSB guidance unchanged

Aside from further encouragement to prompt and efficient payment, re-issued guidance contains no further information to answer concerns about eligibility of halls used for exempt activities or those which have remained closed throughout. The Lockdown Payment should be automatic and paid promptly to premises required to close which are within the rating system. The guidance is clear that this is payable where businesses have adapted (e.g., to takeaway, click and collect or online), providing they were “trading” the day before 5th Jan or closed owing to previous restrictions.

There may be scope for a hall within the rating system which is refused these payments to mount a case for eligibility, because they have had to adapt their services to conform to the restrictions, as per businesses that have moved online. Where a hall remained closed throughout, they have not ceased trading: If restrictions were such that it was not safe for sufficient activities to open, activities moved online (including trustee meetings), they maintained the hall in accordance with insurer requirements, they remained “in business”.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsgand-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Holiday or after-school clubs Test and Trace support payments

The guidance has been amended to address the fact that individuals working in wraparound childcare, when asked to self-isolate, are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result of self-isolating. These individuals may be entitled to a [Test and Trace Support Payment](#) of £500 to ensure they play their part in controlling the virus by isolating at home. To be eligible the individual must meet eligibility criteria and be formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, who will provide them with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID.

The guidance for parents, in the section on choosing after-school clubs and out-of-school activities, has been strengthened to make it clear that parents should try to limit the number of settings their children attend as far as possible. [Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak.](#)

Business Interruption Cover case

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has published a business interruption insurance *policy checker* and *general FAQs for policyholders* following the Supreme Court's judgment in the FCA's business interruption insurance test case.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can someone use a VH kitchen as a short-term solution while moving to a new house to continue a confectionary baking business (in a hall otherwise closed in lockdown)?

A: This would be permitted as work which cannot be performed from home. A COVID-19 Risk Assessment should be required, and the hirer needs to thoroughly clean the kitchen and all other areas used (e.g., toilet) before the hall is used again for any exempt activities or on re-opening. It would be wise to check with the Council in writing whether this use affects eligibility for any of the business support grants/lockdown payment. However, as this is for a business which will not be selling from the hall, merely using the kitchen & toilet, para 59 of the BEIS guidance to local authorities should apply, which indicates adaptation of businesses to online or takeaway does not affect eligibility.

Q: Can halls open as emergency centres during the pandemic? If so, how?

Halls can open for public use in an emergency (e.g., flooding, snow) during the pandemic. While the hall's COVID-19 Risk Assessment should be followed as far as possible, an emergency takes priority. Arrangements should be made to protect the most vulnerable (social distancing, face coverings, hand sanitiser, cleaning, careful attention when providing refreshments). Local Emergency Planning Officers or a Resilience Forum should have plans worked out with the emergency services, which may involve transfer to hotel accommodation with separate rooms. Best endeavours need to be made to co-operate with their plans and the offer of refreshments for emergency workers may be appreciated. Emergency use should be covered by hall insurance and insurers able to advise as to whether any limitations apply.

Q: How to arrange for use as a polling station

Local authorities are now booking halls for the May elections. The hall's COVID-19 Risk Assessment should be provided, and the authority asked for theirs so that everyone is aware of arrangements. There is concern in some areas that local authorities are booking a smaller selection of halls, mainly in larger villages, which means that residents from other villages could be denied access to the right to vote if they do not have a postal vote and public transport to their allocated polling station is poor/absent. If this is the case local authorities can be asked what transport arrangements to have been put in place and/or the case made for a more local polling station. As this is not a national election it seems likely that most rural halls would be able to meet social distancing requirements.

Q: Can Village Hall or sports pavilion toilets or public toilets situated at recreation fields be used during lockdown?

A: Public toilets can be opened, and toilets provided in association with permitted activities (such as out of school youth settings). Guidance is provided in the Government guidance for opening playgrounds and outdoor gyms and at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896040/Joint_letter_Simon_Clarke_MP_and_Rebecca_Pow_MP

Thank you, Louise Beaton, for continuing to monitor the current situation.

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