



## CENTRAL ENGLAND QUAKERS TRUSTEES

### C19 project team Bulletin No 1 – issued 11 June 2020

*COVID-19: Guidance for Local Meetings/Branches on the re-opening of Meeting Houses & Offices*

**Introduction:** CEQ Trustees have set up a small ad-hoc group, with representation from Trustees, Trustees Property, Finance & Employment Committees, AM Clerking Team and Priory Rooms. It will be known as the “C19 project team”. This project team will be responsible for preparing and disseminating guidance for Meetings in consultation with other stakeholders. The project team will send bulletins to Local Meetings and Branches as and when guidance changes or new guidance emerges. James Bradbury (Treasurer to Trustees) has agreed to act as secretary to the project team, and will provide an initial point of contact for queries.

**Re-opening:** Friends need to understand that the re-opening of Places of Worship (which could start on 4 July) will be determined by the government, and the government has not yet published guidance. As an Area Meeting we shall need to follow guidance from both the government and Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). At Area Meeting level guidance will be provided by CEQ Trustees. BYM published some initial “advice to AM Trustees” on 28 May, and this document will be circulated with this bulletin. It is an important “starting point” for all of us, and we encourage all Meetings to read it carefully, making use of the “Guidance Links” to other websites provided. Note especially the link to “COVID-19 secure guidelines” towards the foot of page 2, which sets out the government’s “5 steps to working safely” which we are obliged to follow. The BYM guidance will evolve, as events unfold, and we will send out updates. ***Please note that (irrespective of when the government allows Places of Worship to open – eg for private prayer) Meeting Houses cannot open until they are ready to do so – in other words, when the recommendations set out in this bulletin have been implemented. Furthermore, we ask Local Meetings to advise their Link Trustee when they plan to open.***

**Managing the process:** Meetings will need to consider how best to manage the process at a local level. ***We recommend that you establish a small group of Friends to take responsibility for the planning and implementation, in consultation with other Friends (or business meeting if you are able to hold this).***

**Communications:** These bulletins will be sent to Clerks of Local Meetings (both with and without Meeting Houses), Clerks of Peace Hub & Peacemakers Management Committees, Link Trustees, Property Link Friends, and Elders & Overseers support group. Employees and their line managers will be kept informed via the Clerk to Employment Committee. Bulletins will be accessible to all Friends via the AM newsfeed, and Bulletins plus supporting documentation will be held on the CEQ website in a new site within the policy section at the foot of the home page. ***LM Clerks will be the “default” point of contact, but if you would like to nominate a different or additional contact please let James know. We suggest that you share these bulletins widely within your Meeting.***

**Local procedures:** there is some general guidance regarding options for restarting Meetings for Worship on page 2 of the BYM advice. A procedure will be needed to limit the numbers physically attending Meeting for Worship consistent with social distancing requirements. It will be necessary to keep a register of weekly attendance, as this information may be needed for “track and trace” if someone tests positive after attending a Meeting for Worship. Note that this may require anyone who attended the same meeting to self-isolate for 14 days. (This procedure will also apply to hirers).

**Room Hire:** If you hire rooms we recognise that this is part of your witness, but you will need to agree a strategy for inviting groups back, balancing the conflicts between logistics (eg hygiene and cleaning) and generating income. It may be more feasible to re-open for some groups than for others. We suggest that you start a conversation with your groups now, as some will be more cautious than others, which will help to determine priorities. A model letter to hirers will be available on the CEQ website.

**Hygiene and cleaning:** this will be a crucial component of any re-opening plan, and detailed guidance on this is being prepared. More frequent cleaning will be necessary, and it may be necessary to exclude the use of your kitchen – this will be a local decision, but kitchens pose significant challenges in terms of virus transmission and cleaning.

**Risk Assessments:** you will need to undertake risk assessments for holding Meeting for Worship, ensuring the safety of both employees (if applicable) and volunteers, also for hirers and cleaners. It will be important to ask hirers to either undertake a risk assessment for their activity (and to confirm that they have done so) or to sign a simple declaration confirming that they will follow a number of key principles. This will become (in effect) an amendment to existing room hire contracts. **Further guidance on risk assessment preparation will follow shortly**, and you will be provided with templates and examples. **Above all please remember that the safety of CEQ staff is paramount.**

**Signage:** It will be preferable for Meetings to acquire approved & compliant signage from an external source, rather than to design and print their own. The C19 project team has identified a supplier, and you will be able to order items from their catalogue for delivery to an address of your choice. CEQ Trustees will pay for what you order, with invoices sent by the supplier to the Treasurer to Trustees for payment. **Further details of this scheme will follow shortly.**

**“Blended Meetings”:** as noted in the BYM advice (page 2) *“for meetings wanting to run combined or ‘blended’ online and in-person meetings, this may require investment in technology to enable this style of worship. The technology will also be useful for other building users facing the same need to meet in person and online”*. Some guidance on this was issued by BYM on 3 June, and this document will be circulated with this bulletin. We hope to provide technical advice to Meetings that are contemplating this and we recommend that you seek advice before investing in a particular solution. Some Meetings are already working on this, and we can learn from each other.

**Financial implications:** Trustees recognise that some Meetings are becoming concerned about the loss of room hire income (the impact of which will depend on the timescale for returning to a “new normal”), additional costs associated with enhanced cleaning, and the financial implications for the Meeting. If your Meeting has a particular concern about its finances please speak to your Link Trustee who will liaise with the central CEQ Treasurer team to offer advice and support.

**Feedback and questions:** finally, we welcome feedback - comments and questions – and invite you to contact your Link Trustee, or Property Link Friend, or James Bradbury who will share your questions or comments with C19 project team colleagues.

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