

CENTRAL ENGLAND QUAKERS TRUSTEES



C19 project team Bulletin No 4 – issued 4 August 2020

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

Dear Friends

On behalf of the C19 project team, I hope that planning for re-opening Meeting Houses is going smoothly. We are aware that one or two Meeting Houses have already opened their doors (and that some are already linking Meetings in person with Friends at home via video-conferencing).

Please ensure that you consult your Link Trustee over your plans, and seek their approval to your COVID-19 risk assessment.

There has been some confusion over “permitted activities”, particularly in relation to room hire. For the use of Meeting Houses by external groups we need to follow the guidance for “Multi-Purpose Community Facilities” (rather than Places of Worship). Some of you may be concerned about the recent announcements made by the Prime Minister regarding delays to particular changes that were due to take effect on 1 August, and whether these might affect any of our hirers.

I am pasting below an email circulated on 1 August by Jonathan Carmichael, Quaker Life which provides a link to the latest guidance and a commentary. **A version of the guidance in pdf format is attached.**

I hope that the latest guidance (which seems clearer than before) will reassure you that, subject to restrictions on social distancing - with limits on numbers dictated by maximum capacity - and the provision of a COVID-19 safe venue, most of our room hire activities are now permitted.

However, things may well change, and we need to monitor these changes if and when they are announced. We need to encourage our hirers to monitor changes in guidance, and to take responsibility for their own activities.

From Quaker Life: Changes to government guidance

The Government's guidance on 'Multi-Purpose Community Facilities' changed on 31 July.

Here's the link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities?utm_source=9b1019b3-c090-457a-8b54-60ca6c34cd7a&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily#history

There are two important changes, one of which applies to Places of Worship in particular.

Groups within a gathering deleted

The confusing/restrictive guidance has been amended. All the references to groups of two households/bubbles within a gathering have been removed. A reference to "formal activities" has been added.

The key sentences now are as follows - but you do need to read the whole of sections 2a and 3c, and note the sign-posting to other guidance, including that for Meetings in 3d:

It is important for people to maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene when visiting these spaces. People using community facilities should continue to limit their interactions with those they do not live with outside of any formal activities they are participating in to help control the virus. People meeting in a club or group context at a community centre should be encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble.

Hopefully our meeting and emails with the civil servants contributed to this change - though lots of other bodies must have been raising this too.

This change appears to have significant consequences for which groups can use Quaker Meeting Houses for community uses - enabling more.

Of course, this may change again...

Face Coverings

In line with the Prime Minister's statement of 31 July, the key paragraph in this guidance is now:

*In England, face coverings are currently required by law to be worn in the following settings: shops, supermarkets, indoor transport hubs, indoor shopping centres, banks, building societies, post offices and on public transport. **From 8 August, face coverings will be required by law to be worn in a greater number of public indoor settings including: museums, galleries, cinemas, places of worship, and public libraries.***

Interestingly, this list does not include community centres (yet). It was published just 3 hours after the Prime Minister's statement. The Places of Worship guidance has yet to be amended (as of 1 August), but doubtless it will be shortly.

Help and support: In the last Bulletin we said that some of our project team members have agreed to help with queries on specific topics, and you are welcome to contact them directly: -

Judith Jenner: risk assessments	clerk.trustees@outlook.com
Richard Tuckett: employment Issues	r_p_tuckett@yahoo.com
Andrew Callan: sources for cleaning products, advice on hygiene regs.	andrew@theprioryrooms.co.uk
Clare Peat: general advice on Meeting House issues and hirers	sellyoakquakers@gmail.com
Mina Tilt: advice on steam cleaning and other cleaning/hygiene matters	minatilt.hgq@btinternet.com
Kris Turner: Tech support for blended Meetings	kris.turner@live.com

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