



## C19 project team Bulletin No 5 – issued 22 September 2020

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

Dear Friends

Our last Bulletin was issued on 4 August, and there have been a number of changes to government guidance since then. The project team feels that it may be helpful to bring you up to date on the most recent guidance – we were waiting to see if the announcements by the Prime Minister yesterday were likely to have an impact, but initial indications are that the guidance for places of worship and multi-purpose community facilities (which governs our room hire activity) are largely unaffected. If any further guidance emerges over the next few days we will let you know.

I hope that those Meetings that have re-opened, or are contemplating doing so, have all of the “tools” they need to make the Meeting House a “COVID-19 secure” venue, for Friends and hirers, as set out in earlier Bulletins – including how to acquire signage at no cost to the Meeting. At the end of Bulletin 4 we gave you a list of contacts for help and support on specific topics, and please feel free to make use of these Friends. **Note that all of the Bulletins and guidance documents issued to date are on the CEQ website (Coronavirus Guidance)**

To bring you up to date I am pasting below/overleaf an email issued on 18 September by Jonathan Carmichael (Quaker Life) on behalf of Quaker Wardenship Support and will circulate with this Bulletin the BYM document updated 18 September that Jonathan quotes as a link, and the government guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities, updated 14 September. There has been some confusion (and ambiguity) over the so-called “rule of six”, and the latest guidance clarifies this a bit. The key wording change (for Friends attending Meetings for Worship) is that no-one should **mix** or **mingle** in a group of greater than six. Previous guidance talked about not **visiting** in a group of greater than six. However, note that “socialising after worship is not exempt”, and **we encourage Friends to have their post-Meeting conversations from the safety of their socially-distanced seats, and not to “mingle” and chat on the way out or in the car park.**

With regard to the Multi-Purpose Community Facilities attachment, the BYM guidance states *“this document has been in place for many months, and is used by many Meeting Houses who hire out space. It was updated again on 14 September. Sections 2a and 3c were changed significantly, and merit re-reading. This document is quite complex, and for the full meaning to become clear you need to read 2a and 3c together. In particular, please read very carefully the whole of the paragraph in section 3c starting “However, for activities...”, to avoid seeing this as an absolute prohibition of the examples in the bulleted points”*. The wording says that groups that should not meet “may include” (followed by a list) and this is a **suggestion**, not an **instruction**. The key criterion for a hire group is not what it does (or whether the government thinks that it can’t be trusted to comply!), but whether it has undertaken a risk assessment (which you are confident will be followed), and whether it has signed an amendment to the Hire agreement setting out its obligations as determined by your Meeting. It is good that BYM is supporting this “nuanced” interpretation of para 3c, and I hope it will encourage hire groups to return.

If you have any immediate queries please feel free to contact me, and I will liaise with my project team colleagues to assist you.

Finally, I am including below details of a Test and Trace App, and how you can register your Meeting House.

**Central England Quakers:** Office, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF  
Telephone 0121 236 2644 Email: [ceq@phonecoop.coop](mailto:ceq@phonecoop.coop) Internet: [www.centralenglandquakers.org.uk](http://www.centralenglandquakers.org.uk)

**NHS Test and Trace App (England and Wales):** The NHS Test and Trace App will be rolled out across the England and Wales on 24 September. This is a free App available on [Android](#) and [IOS](#) smartphones and tablets. The App is a free service as part of NHS and Trace to help individuals keep a record of their activities and places that they have visited. It notifies the user when they have been in contact with someone else who has tested positive for Covid-19. All data is anonymised and stored on the user's device and can be deleted at any time. **Venues** including **Places of Worship** will be asked to register and display a poster which users can scan using the app on their device. Find out [more about registering your venue](#) and [how to produce a poster that can be displayed at your venue's entrances](#). We encourage you to register and display a QR code in your Meeting House.

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**Sent:** 18 September 2020 17:36  
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**Subject:** [wardenshop] More clarity on "rule of six" - England

Friends,

The English 'Places of Worship' guidance was revised late on 17 September: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

We have also received a Frequently Asked Questions about worship, from the government department.

So I have just updated the BYM document published yesterday about the "rule of six", which covers both lettings and worship, in England. This is now on the BYM Coronavirus webpage, here <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/detailed-changes-english-government-covidg-guidance-14-september> and anyone going to it from 'Quake!' will see this new version. The Frequently Asked Questions about worship are in an appendix. These address quite a few of the points that Quakers have understandably been asking this week. If you have a particular query about worship, you may find it best to look through the FAQs first.

The good news is that

- the revised worship guidance, and frequently asked questions, spell out several things more clearly than before,
- it is consistent with the advice BYM has been giving this week,
- so the substance of what we can do has mainly not changed (today). It is just more clearly explained.

However, there are significant changes about outdoor worship, which you may need to address. These are explained in the new version of our BYM document.

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