

## Cleaning

### **Who is responsible for cleaning the hall between use by different groups?**

The Parish Priest as venue manager, is responsible for ensuring that the hall is cleaned between different groups. This may mean recruiting extra cleaning staff; increasing the hours of existing cleaning staff; or engaging a contract cleaner. You may wish to charge an additional fee to those hiring the hall to cover the increased costs associated with this.

Where the hall is used exclusively by a registered preschool or other essential service, the responsibility for cleaning may be delegated to the group organiser. In these circumstances, the arrangements must be clearly stated in the special terms and conditions of hire during COVID-19.

Where the hall is used occasionally by a small number of groups, you may come to agree that the group organiser that they will ensure the hall is cleaned ready for the next group. The cleaning regime must be arranged with each group organiser, the special terms and conditions of hire must reflect the position re cleaning and the group organiser must complete a cleaning record which should be clearly displayed in the hall.

Where the hall is used by multiple groups and cleaning is delegated to group organisers, the Parish Priest remains ultimately responsible for ensuring that cleaning between groups is carried out to an acceptable standard. Accordingly, you should make sure that delegated cleaning arrangements are formally agreed in writing and standards monitored.

Check the position in your diocese by contacting the person responsible for health and safety.

Useful Resources on SafetyToolbox Online:

- Cleaning Plan (COVID-19 section)
- Special Terms and Conditions of Hire (Hiring out Facilities section)
- Hall Hirer Cleaning Record Sheet (Hiring out Facilities section)

**Please can you clarify the issue of cleaning where we have a hire who has multiple back to back classes e.g. a dance company with three different classes. Is it our requirement to clean between these classes or just at the beginning and end of hire?**

The Parish Priest is responsible for ensuring that the hall is cleaned before each new hire session starts. By hire session we mean the period of time allocated to a particular group organiser. In the case of the dance company, this means the hall has to be cleaned ready for the start of the hire period and again at the end of the hire period. Any cleaning between different dance classes during the hire period is the responsibility of the hirer.

You should check that the group organiser has included these cleaning arrangements in their COVID-19 Risk Assessment.

### **Can we use volunteer cleaners in the hall?**

You can use volunteer cleaners as long as they have been given instruction on how the cleaning is to be carried out. Some people are more vulnerable to severe symptoms of COVID-19 e.g. people over 70 years of age, pregnant women and people with underlying health conditions. We advise that you avoid relying on vulnerable people to clean where the COVID-19 virus may be active.

### **Our Hall Caretaker is over 70 and I have been told he cannot return to work due to age. Is this still the Dioceses directions?**

People over the age of 70 years are considered in general to be more vulnerable to severe symptoms of COVID-19. Some people have additional health conditions that make them even more vulnerable. These people, until recently were advised to shield at home. As restrictions have eased, shielding is no longer required and these people along with others in the vulnerable category, need to be mindful that they are more vulnerable to infection and take extra care.

An employed hall caretaker in their 70s can return to a COVID-19 Secure workplace. This means following the return to work process in your Diocese. If the caretaker works in a voluntary capacity, our advice is still to avoid relying on people in the vulnerable category, particularly for higher risk tasks such as cleaning.

### **Are we allowed to use a hoover or vacuum cleaner for cleaning floors?**

It is important to keep surfaces as clean as possible as bacteria and viruses adhere more easily to dirty surfaces. A vacuum cleaner may be used for cleaning floor. Models fitted with a high particulate filter (HEPA filter) are preferable. Where this is not possible, cleaners should wear a face covering during cleaning.

In addition, carpets should be steam cleaned more regularly than usual during COVID-19. How often will depend on footfall.

### **How do we deal with chairs with fixed soft fabric seats and backs?**

The best way to manage chairs upholstered with soft fabrics is to rota them so that a different batch of chairs are used every day with each used batch quarantined for 72 hours before being brought back into service. In addition, cleaning between groups should include wiping down the wipeable parts of chairs. You can also ask group organisers to make sure they sanitise their hands before and after setting out and putting away chairs.

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## Air Hand Dryers

### **Is it OK to use air hand dryers now?**

Government advice on the use of air hand dryers changed in May 2020 and they are now considered safe to use. Air hand dryers or single use paper towels should be provided for drying hands after washing. Communal towels must **NOT** be used. If you are using paper towels; bins should be emptied frequently and waste safely disposed of.

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## Social Distancing

### **Is there a maximum number in each group using the hall?**

The maximum number for your hall will depend on factors such as the venue capacity, the activity being carried out, the type of people participating e.g. people vulnerable to COVID-19 and the social distancing rules being applied.

Venue capacity can be calculated by taking normal capacity and reducing it by three quarters. Alternatively, work out the area to be occupied and divide this by 4. This gives you a baseline venue capacity for individuals distancing at 2metres. We advise that you apply this approach to avoid the risk of overcrowding, particularly where the activities are being run by third parties over which you have less control.

If you have more than one meeting room in your hall you will need to work out the capacity for each room but also consider the implications on communal areas where both rooms are occupied simultaneously.

Other factors to consider are a reduction in numbers below venue capacity to accommodate an additional requirement. For more information on social distancing, refer to the guide in the COVID-19 section of Resources.

Make sure you pass your venue capacity on to group organisers so they can factor this into their social distancing arrangements. Check the group organisers COVID-19 Risk Assessment includes social distancing in your hall.

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## First Aid Boxes

### **Please advise what extra resources are needed for COVID-19 first aid?**

As a minimum make sure that your existing first aid box contains plenty of disposable gloves, aprons and face coverings.

Depending on how much your hall is used you may need to consider a dedicated COVID-19 First Aid Kit for use in the event that someone is taken ill on site and cannot get themselves home. The kit should include the following items:

- Face covering & pair of plastic gloves x 2 – each set in a plastic bag (for responder and patient)
- Plastic face shield – for the responder
- Pocket pack of tissues
- Hand soap in pump dispenser
- Small hand sanitiser gel
- Disposable apron e.g. plastic sleeveless or cheap overalls
- Small packet anti-bacterial wipes
- Rubbish bags x 2 (so disposables can be double-bagged). The outer one should be labelled e.g. "Covid waste".
- Washing up bowl for handwashing

For more information on managing cases of COVID-19 linked to your premises, refer to the guide in the COVID-19 section of Resources.

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## Use of the Hall

### Shared or Multiple Use

**Can you clarify shared and/or multiple use - is it two or more users at the same time or two or more users at different times?**

A hall may be shared where it is used by one group most of the time but occasionally is used by another group or groups. For example, a registered preschool use the hall exclusively Monday to Friday but at the weekend the hall is used to provide additional seating for Mass or by a fitness group on a Saturday morning. Shared use may also apply to external areas where different buildings on the same site are used at the same time. For example, the hall is used by a preschool group at the same time as there is Mass in the church. This might result in congestion on shared pathways, in the car park and at shared entrances. Shared use also requires care over cleaning arrangements to ensure that the hall has been properly cleaned between different groups.

Multiple use describes situations where the hall is being used by different groups simultaneously e.g. a fitness group in one room and a first communion group running in another. Multiple use of the hall increases the risk of overcrowding e.g. congestion at entrances or in toilets. Try to stagger bookings so that groups arrive and leave at different times and encourage group organisers to stagger break times to reduce pressure on corridors and toilets.

Fitness Groups

**Is it correct that participants in sports are exempt from wearing face masks eg Tai Chi, keep fit, bowls etc?**

Yes, this is correct. In both England and Wales sports activities are exempt from mask wearing requirements. However, people attending fitness/ sports activities should ensure they wear a mask in the common parts of the hall e.g. entrance lobby, corridors, toilets.

Because attendees won't be wearing a mask during their activity, and may be breathing more heavily, group organisers should use the two metre social distancing rules as a minimum. You should check the hirers COVID-19 Risk Assessment to check that they have considered these factors.

**Does our Keep Fit Class need to take their equipment home or can we store it in our hall cupboard?**

If you allow a hirer to keep their equipment in your hall you should make it clear that it is their responsibility to keep it clean and that access is restricted to the hirer only i.e.

there is no risk that the equipment might be accessed by someone else. This should be included in the terms and conditions of use.

**We have a fitness group who use mats/equipment. Can they use this?**

Fitness groups who would normally use mats/ equipment would expect to be able to do so. Many groups are asking people to bring their own equipment to avoid the risks associated with shared equipment. You should check the group organiser's COVID-19 Risk Assessment to see what arrangements they intend to implement.

Where an activity has involved lying on the floor, on a mat or otherwise, the floor will need to be cleaned as for other common touch points.

Live music

**What is the position regarding live music? We have a jazz club who hire our hall once a month. We presume they aren't allowed?**

Playing live music is permitted for in halls in England but is not currently permitted for halls in Wales. However, singing and playing wind-blown instruments is higher risk and live music encourages people to shout to be heard over the music which increases the risk of transmission of the virus. You must check that the group organiser's COVID-19 Risk Assessment shows they have familiarised themselves with the government guidelines for performing arts and intend to implement these in their activity.

Licensed premises

**We have a licensed bar in our premises. Can this be open for our members?**

Yes, this can re-open in line with the government guidelines for bars and subject to the venue having been authorised as COVID-19 Secure following the reopening process in your Diocese.

If the licensed club is run by a third party then you must make sure all the relevant paperwork is in place and that you have checked their COVID-19 Risk Assessment.

Enforcement

**Who is the enforcing authority for COVID, police or Environmental health?**

Local authorities enforce COVID-19 breaches in church settings and the police have been given legal powers to enforce breaches of COVID-19 rules around social distancing.

Local authorities may carry out spot checks to confirm COVID-19 secure premises and investigate reports from concerned members of the public or employees.

Children's groups

**One of our groups is a childminders only. Can they meet?**

If the group is a registered childcare provider then they can meet subject to the government guidelines for **education, childcare and out of school settings**.

If the group meets for social purposes rather than as a registered childcare provider, this is not permitted in church halls in Wales. In England the group could meet but the rule of six will apply. The rule of six applies to all those attending including the group organiser and children. NOTE: Only registered childminders should be permitted to use the hall. A social group for parents and children does not have to be registered.

You must make sure all the relevant paperwork is in order including signed special terms and conditions, the group organisers COVID-19 Risk Assessment completed for your venue and evidence of public liability insurance.

**We have two Toddler Groups. Can the groups use the toys or should they bring their own?**

Parent and Toddler groups are not permitted in church halls in Wales. In England, these groups are permitted but are strictly limited by the rule of six as they are social activities.

Because of the increased risk of transmission, we recommend that children bring their own toys unless you are confident that you can manage the additional cleaning that will be required. You must make sure you have prepared a separate COVID-19 Risk Assessment for the activity using the government guidelines for education and childcare settings.

The hall kitchen must not be used if the activity is in a hall in the Diocese of Brentwood or the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

Kitchen facilities

**We provide a hot cooked meal, using the kitchen once a month for the Homeless, Can we do this or would we have to get in touch with the H&S person at the Diocese?**

Use of kitchen facilities for essential voluntary services is usually permitted. When completing the reopening checklist you need to make clear what essential voluntary service you are running and ensure you have completed the Food and Drink section of the checklist. Authorisation will be issued on a case by case basis.

**Can groups be allowed to bring and eat their own food in a church hall?**

You can allow groups to bring in their own food and drink. For some activities this might be necessary e.g. people attending a fitness session would probably need to bring in water. In You need to consider the implications given that consuming food and drink tends to generate additional waste, increase demand for toilets, generate additional cleaning and increase the duration of the activity (activities involving people outside our household group should be kept as short as possible).

**If hall and kitchen are closed, is it still ok for the kitchen to be used by paid and volunteer staff working in church and office?**

The hall kitchen can be used to provide welfare facilities or paid or volunteer workers. Make sure you complete the food and drink section of the reopening checklist and make it clear that this is the nature of use.

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Legislation

**You mentioned “legislation”. Is this all still covered by the Health & Safety at Work Act, or is it separate legislation?**

The COVID-19 response is covered by the Coronavirus Act 2020 and regulations made under it. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974 also applies placing a duty on employers to provide COVID-19 Secure workplaces and to keep people other than employees safe from harm.

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Secure Approval Process

**We have 3 separate areas under the one roof. Do they all have to come under one umbrella or can we do 3 separate risk assessments?**

It depends on how the areas of the building are used. For example, if the different areas are likely to be used simultaneously and people using one area are likely to come into contact with people using another area then you should assess the entire building. On the other hand, if the areas are under one roof but in all other respects are self contained and there is no opportunity for the activities in one to impact the activities in another, then you should assess the areas separately.

**In general, how long does it take to get approval following completion of the risk assessment?**

We try to turn these around as quickly as possible, usually within a week. Processing applications made using the online questionnaire tend to be quicker than applications using the manual template. Applications can be delayed where we have to wait for responses to queries and if there is particularly high demand.

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SafetyToolbox Online

**Is it possible to issue a notice to all users when you update anything pertaining to covid-19 as it is such a fast moving topic?**

Keeping up to date with changes is proving challenging for everyone. When we update a guide or template in our Resource library, the resource title appears on the Recently Updated tab of the Resources panel on your Dashboard. We are also including version tables on our resources to help identify the reason for the update. However, our resources are written in general terms and we advise you to keep up to date with local restrictions via the government coronavirus website.

Diocesan Health and Safety Coordinators issue mailings through the SafetyToolbox platform from time to time, particularly after a major change in the guidelines e.g. when churches were permitted to reopen.

**I don't have access to SafetyToolbox Online. How do I get an account?**

User accounts are issued by the person in your Diocese responsible for health and safety. You will need authorisation from your Parish Priest.

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Questions specific to Wales

**Does the Welsh Government still have to approve all use of our halls?**

The requirement for Local Authorities to give permission for activities in church halls has been withdrawn. It is now the responsibility of venue managers (Parish Priests) to ensure their venues are COVID-19 Secure and only allow permitted activities to take place.

Permitted activities are those defined in Clause 14 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020, for public gatherings indoors. Examples of permitted activities include:

- worship
- access childcare or participate in supervised activities for children
- access educational services
- access or receive public services
- work or provide voluntary or charitable services
- exercise with others, in a gathering of no more than 30 people, at a fitness studio, gym, swimming pool, other indoor leisure centre or facility or any other open premises.

Permitted activities are liable to change or be subject to local restrictions. It is the responsibility of the venue manager to ensure they know what is permitted or not.

### **We have a hirer (a national organisation) who run after school supplementary education classes. Is this permitted in Wales?**

This activity is permitted in church halls in Wales, subject to your hall being COVID-19 Secure (following the process in the Archdiocese of Cardiff) and local lockdown restrictions. Make sure you ensure you provide the hirer with all the information they need to know about the COVID-19 arrangements you have in place in the hall (COVID-19 Secure Information for Hirers) and you have obtained the hirer's COVID-19 Risk Assessment, Public Liability Insurance details and signed copy of the Special Terms and Conditions of Hire.

#### Version Table

Version	Date	Update
1.1	29/3/21	Red banner changes to reflect Roadmap out of Lockdown and Alert Level Change in
1.2	17/5/21	Red banner edited to reflect Step 3 of Roadmap out of Lockdown in England and mo

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