**FAQ – Re-opening VCS Services after Covid closures**

**Covid has not gone away – lots of people hear an announcement and think we can re-open our services as they were before ….**

1. **What PPE will we need?**

PPE is the last ‘line of defence’ – in the hierarchy of risk management it should be the last thing you rely on, so do everything else to remove or reduce the risk first. If you can’t remove the risk you remove the person from the risk. You need to work out what is most appropriate in your setting. Do your risk assessment but in most situations you should only need PPE for essential cleaning or if a Covid case is notified. You need to consider measures that are going to help people limit their potential exposure e.g. consider screens, barriers, distance.

1. **Do staff, volunteers and users need to wear masks or face coverings?**

Masks / face coverings may be required in specific circumstances, but generally you should consider them as the very last line of defence. According to the guidance, people in small spaces need to be 2-meters apart. Avoid less than 2 meters. If the distance between two people is 1 meter, face masks must be worn but PPE would still be the last thing to rely on. Bear in mind the difference between face covering and mask (clinical). Generally services aren’t providing face coverings - you’d be expected to provide your own if you were getting on public transport or going to the opticians etc. so it doesn’t seem appropriate that community settings should be providing face coverings for service users.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/non-healthcare/index.htm>

1. **Can people share equipment?**

Avoid this wherever possible, think about signing in pens, telephones, computers, play equipment. Hand washing, disinfectant and equipment cleaning is really important if you have to share. If possible have individual equipment, e.g. for a children’s group they could have a pack of felt tips each rather than sharing from a general tray.

1. **If masks or face coverings make people feel more comfortable should they wear them?**

 Yes. A lot of managing re-opening is about making people feel more comfortable. We don’t want to make people feel false comfort, but if you feel it’s appropriate as well as the other measures you're taking then yes absolutely people can wear face coverings or masks.

1. **Where can we get funding to cover PPE?**

Remember PPE is a last resort. If PPE is part of the essential business then certain funders will consider it as part of the application. The Lottery have said they will cover requests for PPE as part of a proposal on a case by case basis. If you are struggling to source PPE then you may be able to get assistance via your local CVS or the PPE hub but please see answers 1 and 2 and read the guidance first.

1. **We don’t want to open yet but we are under pressure from service users – do we have to open from July 4th?**

No, make a plan you and your staff / volunteers are happy with. Tell your service users, use internet or social media if needed – or leave an automated answering machine message. Be ready and as confident as possible before opening. Most funders are really supportive of necessary closures, if you need additional support before you open then get that support first.

By all means look at how you can re-open in the best interests of your service users. However if what you’ve got is working don’t feel pressured - if your online offer is working well stick with it. There is no pressure to open if there is no benefit to your service users or if you’re putting people at risk. If that is the case, then on balance it might not be worth opening at this time.

1. **Can I attend or run an activity club or support group?**

Premises such as activity clubs, community centres and youth clubs can reopen, and will need to follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines. You should only attend these in groups of up to two households (your support bubble counts as one household). We recognise that you may know other people in these venues but you should try to limit your social interaction to your own household or one other, to help to control the virus.

1. **How many staff and visitors can we allow on site?**

You will need to calculate this as part of your risk assessment. Social distancing is the key element but also consider entrances and exits, one way systems, ventilation, duration, movement, toilets and welfare facilities – you may also want to group or bubble people so that if self-isolation is needed then you can limit numbers absent at any one time. Recommended to err on side of caution at least to begin with – so if space fits 36 with 2m distancing you may want to initially limit to 24, for example, until your processes have been tested. For example, consider shifts, splitting service user groups and shorter sessions. Each office size is different. A calculation must be made by the leadership about your own risks. Go forward in steps but be cautious. Limit the numbers of people attending then test it out. Bring people back only when you are satisfied that the new systems are working.

See the COVID SECURE CHECKLIST and EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT for some ideas of what you need to include in your risk assessment.

1. **Is there a limit to the total number of households who can attend whilst socially distancing?**

No more than 2 households can interact in the same indoor space at the same time. However, if you are meeting outdoors up to 6 people from different households can meet together while socially distanced. Two households of people may come together one day and then each mix with a different household the following day..

1. **Will our insurance still be valid?**

You may need to check but in general, if you are doing what you usually do and you have a ‘Covid secure’ risk assessment, then yes, provided you are compliant with social distancing requirements. If you are planning anything new then you need to inform your insurers.

1. **What do we do if someone gets ill with Covid symptoms on the premises?**

This should be in your risk assessment – you should have a room and, if possible a separate toilet, to isolate them until they can go home or be collected. Once they have left you can implement your planned cleaning regime and track and trace.

1. **What if a client tests positive after visiting your service?**

Again - this should be in your risk assessment – you should be recording everyone’s contact details for track and trace.

1. **Do we need to keep a register of service users/people accessing our building for contact tracing? What does this mean for GDPR?**

YES – Guidance recommends that the personal details of individuals need to be held for 21 days which is reasonable, as a business you need to make sure this fits with your own policy. Look at your general GDPR – consider how you will store, share and dispose of this information safely and how you will notify people about this.

1. **Can we be sued if someone contracts Covid at our premises?**

There is no precedent for this yet, potentially yes but you can mitigate against this by having Covid Secure risk assessments, signage and active daily management. It’s not clear what evidence there would be to say they contracted Covid19 at your workspace.

1. **Is it good practice to check people’s temperature on entry?**

Temperature checking everyone who comes into the centre may not necessarily the best use of time or energy to monitor people. Preventative measures like handwashing are more useful. You’re probably not going to cause harm by temperature checking, but the person who’s doing the checks might be at greater risk. If you feel it’s beneficial in your setting then it’s something you can include in your risk assessment. Responses will look different in different settings. Go to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk/) for more information. You need the consent of a person to temperature check them.

1. **Can we consult with staff who are on furlough?**

Initially, it was discouraged to contact staff on furlough regarding workplace issues. However it is reasonable to contact them regarding Health and Safety consultation whilst on furlough as people have a choice about whether to respond or not. Additional information and updates can be sent with other updates. Consulting staff about risk assessments may also help to ease anxiety around coming back to work.

1. **Can we open our toilets?**

Yes, having toilets open is encouraged under the guidance - again risk assess – how often will you clean / disinfect? Can clients self-manage (clean up after themselves)? Have you got PPE for cleaners if needed? Are they clear about PPE use?

1. **Will we need to monitor queues for toilets or outside the building?**

Try not to be in the position where queues could be a problem – if you anticipate high demand can you operate an appointment system or staggered arrival? What about restricting numbers or helpers? Pre-registration? If you are in a very busy area you might need a queue monitor and all queues should be outside with the right distance of 2 meters between each person.

1. **Do we need access to hot water?**

Cleaning and sanitation requires hot water, wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap, it’s essential. In a park hut for instance where often times there in no running hot water only cold water hand sanitiser should be provided as an alternative.

1. **Do we need to do a deep clean of the building before opening?**

This isn’t stated as necessary in any of the guidance. Reopening guidance for schools talks about cleaning and essential maintenance e.g. around water systems and making sure legionnaire checks have been done, but there isn’t anything that says community facilities should do a deep clean. If something has happened and you feel you need it that’s different. What the guidance does talk about is having a good cleaning regime - including a ‘sufficient’ level of cleaning and more regular cleaning. If you have a good cleaning regime in place and this is accounted for in the risk assessment a ‘deep clean’ should not be required.

1. **Do I need to consider ventilation?**

Yes centres need to think about this. Ventilation is a key mitigator and it’s in the guidance to create as much ventilation as possible where you've got people together indoors. Open your doors if you can, but bear in mind fire doors and security risks. Definitely open windows! Avoid having people facing each other to further reduce risk. E.g. at 4CT they have circular tables with a maximum of 3 people at each table so that nobody is directly in front of anyone else.

1. **If there are other groups using your building, should they provide you with their risk assessments?**

All tenants/groups which hire a venue should provide a risk assessment. As the building owner, your risk assessments should also be shared with them and all other relevant stakeholders.

1. **Do we need individual risk assessments for each service user?**

Follow your normal procedures for when an individual risk assessment may be required, bearing in mind people’s additional vulnerabilities as a result of COVID-19. You must also consider higher risk groups – older people, people with underlying health conditions, pregnancy etc. Consider that you might not know this information about all your service users in your risk assessment

1. **How can we help workers and users in our centre who have learning disabilities understand our risk assessments?**

Use the clearest possible signage you can e.g. picture signage - [keepsafe.org.uk](file:///\\MACC-SERVER\User%20Home%20Folders\millie.brown\COVID-19\Back%20to%20Work%20webinar\keepsafe.org.uk)has some great resources. An induction in small groups could be a good idea to go through in more detail. You may need to conduct individual risk assessments for specific service users.

1. **What signage do we need?**

Do what you have said in your risk assessments – keep signage clear and concise. Make sure it’s understandable, if your clients include children or people who struggle to read use pictures or simple diagrams. Community language posters are available on gov.uk. The keepsafe link is in the presentation.

1. **Can participants sing or speak loudly in the same room together whilst social distancing?**

There should be no singing aloud, live music or loud voices. In places of worship, live music is allowed, such as a single person singing behind a screen, but not instruments you blow into as that might increase the risk of transmitting the virus.

1. **Can we hold Zumba classes?**

Indoor sports activities of any kind are not yet allowed, although this could be done outside under social distancing guidelines. Keep checking the gov.uk guidance for updates.

1. **Can we hold kids parties or baby/kids groups of up to 30 people at our venue?**

Yes, as long as you risk assess, look at what is practical and safe with the space you have available and follow the guidance. You can accommodate this up to your space maximum capacity if the hirer can maintain social distancing within your space (they need to risk assess too).

1. **Are there any resources for reducing people’s fears about returning to centres?**

The Covid secure poster is a good starting point to reassure people - you’re required to display this any way.  It includes the 5 points that explain what you’ve done to make the building safe. You could include pictures of what you've done to help reassure people e.g. photos of screens up. Lots of schools sent out their full risk assessment to parents along with photos to reassure parents before settings opened up. You could create a user-friendly COVID-secure poster to demonstrate what you’ve done to make the building safe. Being open and transparent about what measures you have taken could alleviate anxiety.

It’s important to consult with your service users as part of your risk assessment. Feed their concerns into your risk assessment so you can take this into account. You could look to share key messages from your risk assessment to help reassure people about the measures you are taking.

1. **Do you know of a company that can do basic fittings in the building e.g. gates, hand sanitisers, etc?**

[Care and repair](https://www.careandrepair-manchester.org.uk/) can provide a list of approved providers.