

## **Village and Community Halls for Hall Advisers**

### **Update No. 1 : 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020**

#### **Welcome to the first Update for ACRE Network members supporting village and community hall committees.**

ACRE has been monitoring the situation for village halls from shortly before the national lockdown when all village halls had to close. Brief guidance was produced to assist halls with the actions they needed to take.

ACRE has held many conversations with Government and Jeremy Leggett, ACRE's Policy Adviser, has been monitoring the situation for rural communities. He is part of the RISF (Rural Impacts Stakeholders' Forum). ACRE is grateful to Louise Beaton, ACRE Board Member and Community Halls Consultant, for her work in monitoring the situation for village and community hall committees and working to prepare documentation that can be used by the ACRE Network and hall committees.

The ACRE team, Richard, Paul, Phillip, and I are answering many requests from Defra and others in relation to the current situation for village halls.

#### **From ACRE's Policy Adviser, Jeremy Leggett**

Information for Village Halls to guide them on re-opening in line with Government guidance, policy and the above regulations was issued **by ACRE on 21<sup>st</sup> May**. This was intended to assist Village Halls that provide facilities for schools and pre-schools that will be permitted to re-open from 1<sup>st</sup> June. A copy can be accessed in the relevant Basecamp folder and on the [ACRE website](#)

This is not guidance that has been approved by Government to cover Covid-19 Secure status, but is interim information being provided by ACRE for the Network and Village Halls. It will be updated regularly with the intention of becoming fully compliant with Government guidance in due course.

**The relevant amendment to Health Protection regulations from 11.30 on 1<sup>st</sup> June reads:**

**5. (7) A person who is responsible for a community centre must ensure that, during the emergency period, the community centre is closed except where it is used to provide**

- (a) essential voluntary activities or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency),**
- or**

**(b) for early years childcare provided by a person registered on the Early Years Register under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006.**

**"Early years childcare" is defined as in the Childcare Act 2006 and means a for children from birth to five years old.**

*ACRE has continued to try to engage with DEFRA, DDCMS, MHCLG and Dept for Education over both formal Guidance and the Health Protection regulations as they affect Village Halls for re-opening especially in relation to pre-school and educational use. The Draft Regulations were issued on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May and ACRE has flagged concerns with DEFRA that the new clause 5. (7) b. may not be adequate to cover all educational and otherwise permitted uses to which Village Halls might be put between 1<sup>st</sup> June and further changes on 15<sup>th</sup> June.*

## **New Information Sheet Re-opening village and community halls**

Louise has prepared a new Information Sheet about re-opening village and community halls which may take place from 4<sup>th</sup> July. It is a draft **for consultation only it is not for circulation. Please do not distribute this more widely** (except where asked to do so by email from ACRE), because it may have to be changed substantially before 4<sup>th</sup> July.

This is your opportunity to help ACRE quickly gather Network views on the practicalities of the approach suggested, whether other approaches might be taken, or particular circumstances that need to be considered. ACRE's aim is both to its thinking and, we hope, to influence the Working Parties established by Government, so that Guidance issued by Government is appropriate for the very wide range of use of different halls throughout the country.

ACRE has worked from guidance issued for other purposes (Pre-Schools, Courts, Offices) but the approach required for village halls is quite different. This is because so few have Managers or other staff on the premises while it is used and meeting Covid 19 Secure Guidelines will require delegation of responsibility to hirers. A key question will be how much responsibility can be delegated. Experience from opening for pre-schools may be helpful.

You can provide feedback in one of two ways:

- a) Email [ACRE](#) by Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June.
- b) Louise Beaton will be hosting a zoom session on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2pm, when there will be opportunity for questions and feedback. You will need to have read the document in order to take part. To join this session please add your name to the appropriate tab on this [spreadsheet](#) and you will be sent a link.

The draft [Information Sheet](#) and [Risk Assessment](#) will need substantial formatting and work before circulation.

## **General Information**

### **1. Impact on funding**

We are aware that build projects may be impacted by the Lottery Fund pausing their funding programmes for all except COVID-19 related activity. If you have a village hall that has been awarded a grant under the VHIG Fund and work needs to start or there are concerns about the likelihood of not being able to access Lottery funding in time to complete a project please get in touch.

### **2. Toilets and kitchens**

Although groups of 6 can meet outdoors in private gardens or public spaces from 1<sup>st</sup> June, and families meeting in a garden can access a toilet in a private house, toilets (and kitchens) in village and community halls must remain closed to the public until regulations are changed.

### **3. Activities in village halls**

Given Regulation 7 (a) and (b) all village halls must remain closed and not allow activities to take place at this time.

Using the hall car park for outdoor markets is allowed but committees must make sure that the hall's insurance company is informed, similarly if 6 people decide to meet. Remember the car park is the responsibility of the hall charity and the committee have a duty of care.

To confirm a query on Basecamp, Post Offices have been classed by Government as an essential service ([according to the Post Office website](#)). They can change their opening hours or close due to coronavirus related illness during this time. ACRE is making further checks and will confirm when the situation is clearer.

### **4. Legionnaires Disease**

There has been a lot of discussion and documentation provided on Basecamp but the main point to note is that the minimum expectation for small simple hot and cold-water systems would be flushing through with fresh mains water.

[Deborah Clarke](#)