

Multi- Use Buildings and Diversification – Re-Opening and Trading Safely

Q1) Following the impact of the COVID restrictions & the new ways of working, what do I need to do if I own or manage a Community Centre, used by multiple different groups/people?

Currently (end of May 2020), Community Centres are not allowed to be open, but preparing for when they are is good planning, and will allow you to be ready to allow people back into your premises.

You need to make sure that you have considered all the Guidance offered by the Government at [Working safely during coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#). The guidance applicable for your type of premises at the moment, is [5 steps to working safely](#) which highlights the need to carry out risk assessments, including effective handwashing and robust social distancing. You will need to ensure these systems are in place, known by all your staff and followed by everyone using your premises. The measures are;

- Your Coronavirus Risk Assessment
- Developing a robust handwashing and hygiene procedure
- Consider which people need to be at your premises and keep the number to a minimum
- Maintain the 2m social distancing
- If 2m is not possible, manage the virus transmission risk

Your risk assessment will be unique to your operation, but you may need different versions depending upon what is taking place in your premises. **Please see our risk assessment template**, which you can use to produce your own version.

The owner of the building (Landlord) will need to consider all the people that are using the building for different purposes to ensure that they are aware of their individual responsibilities and how collectively they need to ensure that they are meeting the new COVID regulations.

Please also see our FAQs and checklists for re-opening and trading safely, which contain guidance on social distancing and cleaning practices.

If you need assistance in developing your risk assessment, you can ask your local Environmental Health service, but please remember, that if you cannot safely use your Community Centre, it will have to either remain closed, or be used just for very limited activities.

Q2) I currently operate and manage a freehold pub but due to the delays with opening, I am considering diversifying and using parts of the pub space as offices or possibly a 'dark kitchen' (delivery only restaurant). What do I need to consider?

You will need to approach your local Council and they will be able to talk you through the specific advice in relation to changing your current activities and possibly changing the listed use of your premises. All premises have a permitted listed planning use and it is important to ensure you have the right class of use for your request. You may need to liaise with our planning department to check whether your current premises use accommodates your idea otherwise you will have to consider the 'Change of Use' application process.

Planning regulations Have been relaxed temporarily, so that pubs and restaurants can operate as takeaways during the outbreak – you'd normally need planning permission to do so; however, you still must inform your

local planning team of this change. If you are not already registered as a food business, then you will need to do so.

Depending on the nature of your idea to diversify, you may need to consider whether you need to change your existing licenses or food management provision. For more information on these you should discuss your idea with both your Council's Licensing or Environmental Health services before you make any changes or even commit to any.

Please read the following guidance for further information:

Trading safely as a takeaway and delivery businesses during Coronavirus:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

Business Companion guide for all food businesses that covers how to comply with both Trading Standards and Environmental Health regulations for food businesses at this time:

https://www.businesscompanion.info/sites/default/files/BEIS_Coronavirus_Bulletin_Food_14.05.20_Pages.pdf

The Food Standards Agency have created a re-opening checklist for food businesses:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/reopening-checklist-for-food-businesses-during-covid-19>

Hertfordshire councils have also written a short guide on deliveries/takeaway for Hertfordshire businesses:

<https://www.hertfordshirelep.com/media/8064/advice-to-food-business-operators-looking-to-provide-delivery-service.pdf> and **please also see our checklist on trading safely.**

Q 3) I am currently based in a business centre/multi-purpose office/co-working space. What are both mine and my landlord's responsibilities in relation to COVID-19?

We understand that you may have many concerns relating to the use of your building and any other shared land. With all health and safety matters, you have always had to co-operate with your neighbouring businesses, and, if necessary, your landlord. This is no different. We would advise that you have a robust protocol that outlines who is clearly responsible for all aspects, and this should highlight your responsibilities, those of your neighbouring businesses, and those of your landlord or business centre manager. This can be informed through your risk assessments. As each business/tenant should be conducting their own risk assessment, along with the landlord/management company completing an overall building risk assessment, it is important that communication is extremely clear, so that everybody knows what their individual and collective responsibilities are. Once the risk assessments have been completed, we would suggest that you meet (remotely) with the other parties concerned and these plans can then be discussed and formalised. This will ensure that you are all clear on various issues, new processes and procedures to adopt and have suitable contingency plans in place. Ultimately, it is the landlord's responsibility to ensure that the property and those occupying it are safe, that the various risk management systems do not contradict, and that safety is maintained. Due to this, if your landlord feels that you need to change your safe system of work, then as long as you can see the reason why, you should cooperate.

The government have brought out specific advice in relation to Office space – and it is strongly recommended that you read this guidance and follow: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres> If you need any further specific advice, please contact your local Council in the first instance.