

## **The revised Social Contact rules (social interactions for groups)**

Key points to bear in mind to help address misunderstandings:

- The Public Health regulations and the Government Guidance for Community Facilities is expected to confirm that activities can take place within a hall's own Covid-secure capacity limits at the dates shown below.
- The aim is to contain risk of virus spread to small groups.
- The "rule of 6" has been changed slightly to "a group of 6 people or 2 households". This means that people must not mix in groups larger than 6 or containing more than 2 households. These groups must be socially distanced from other groups when attending events. More than 6 people can attend events, up to the number limited by the meeting room's Covid capacity. Within a "group of 6 people or 2 households", 6 individuals or people from two households can mix but those from different households should maintain social distancing. A household group can include a support bubble. A single household group can also consist of 2 linked households (single parents with children) so a "2 household group" can potentially consist of more than 6 people including children. Unless in a "rule of 6 group", household groups must not mix with anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble. These "rule of 6 or 2 households" groups must avoid mingling or mixing with other groups. This does not prevent a friendly smile or greeting, discussion in a meeting, but handshakes, hugs, sharing items and close contact must be avoided with those in other groups.
- There are specific exceptions from these Social Contact rules: for support groups, supervised activities for children, parent and child groups, wakes, weddings, and wedding receptions. At Step 2 the group limit is 15 for these.
- Social distancing between adults from different households/support bubbles is strongly encouraged at all activities at community halls (eg voluntary service activities, emergencies, retail, the elections).

### **Step Three: 17 May**

- Indoor and outdoor gatherings or events organized by a business, charity, public body or similar organization can be organized subject to compliance with Covid-19 secure guidance, risk assessment, the premises capacity limits and the social contact rules.
- Film shows, plays, concerts and sports matches can take place, subject to social distancing.
- Hospitality settings will be able to open for seated service in accordance with the "rule of 6 or 2 households", so community cafes, coffee mornings and social clubs can take place.
- Indoor sports activities, including exercise classes, team sports such as table tennis, badminton, indoor bowls, and indoor soft play for children can take place.
- Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions, funerals and wakes and other "significant life events" eg Christenings and bar mitzvahs (but not birthdays).
- Outdoor gatherings can take place in a group of no more than 30 people unless a specific exemption applies.
- Organised performance events can take place with up to 50% of capacity indoors up to 1,000 people and 50% of capacity up to 4,000 people at outdoor events.
- The "rule of 6 or 2 households" will apply to indoor events unless a specific exemption applies (as for parent and toddler groups).

### **Step Four: 21st June**

It is hoped that all legal limits on social contact are removed and dancing is permitted.

- Outdoor events with more than 30 people can take place.
- Restrictions on numbers at weddings and funerals are abolished.

This is all subject to the outcome of an Events Research Programme taking place in April and May.

## **When can the social contact limits be exceeded? What are the exemptions?**

- For supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care (before and after school childcare), groups and activities for under 18s.
- For formal support groups, and parent and child groups – when up to 15 people aged 5 and older (plus children under 5) can attend. Where a group includes someone working, they are not counted as part of the gatherings limit e.g a counsellor can run a support group of 15.

### **Parent and Child groups:**

Up to 15 people aged 5+ are permitted, plus children under 5, either for voluntary or business-led activities. Soft toys should be avoided. Parents can be encouraged to bring toys which are not shared with other children. Government Guidance for early years may be helpful in making arrangements eg focus on hand cleanliness, arranging the room into small groups. Social distancing will be difficult so arrangements may be needed for any families with clinically vulnerable close relatives who attend.

### **Small events and facilities providing catering:**

e.g. coffee mornings, pop-up cafés, luncheon clubs, community cafes.

These are permitted indoors with “rule of 6 or household/bubble groups” from Step 3. Table service only should be provided. A distance of 2m is required between tables (unless other measures such as back to back seating are in place). Takeaway drink or food can be provided. Government Guidance for pubs, cafes and restaurants should be consulted to work out how to run these safely. Arrangements should be available for any particularly vulnerable people, to avoid their continued isolation. NHS track and trace information MUST be provided by all persons over the age of 16 and if someone does not wish to share their details, entry must be refused to cafes (including community cafes), bars and Social Clubs, when the police can be called if required.

### **Playing games at tables:**

The older age profile and difficulty complying with social distancing at card tables (normally 67cm) led the English Bridge Union to advise Bridge Clubs against re-opening in 2020 and their website should be consulted for any updated guidance. However, where members have been vaccinated an informal local group may feel comfortable with arranging for “rule of 6 or household/bubble groups” to play together and avoid mixing with other groups. Slightly larger tables, hand sanitizer, new cards, cleaning cards and tiles touched by other players should assist.

### **Children’s birthday parties:**

Many families do not have the space for this at home. A letter from the Minister at DCMS confirms these can be held indoors at Covid-secure Community Halls from Step 3 as a supervised activity for children with a maximum of 15 adults, of whom a children’s entertainer would count as one. Loud music or activity which would encourage shouting or singing is not permitted until Step 4. The Guidance for Out of School settings should be followed.

### **Parish Council Meetings and Annual Parish Meetings:**

The current regulations permitting local government meetings to be held online expire on 7th May and will not be extended as by then it is expected that meetings of public bodies can take place safely in Covid-secure venues owing to the successful vaccination programme, so parish council meetings and meetings of other public bodies are permitted from 7th May. Councils are encouraged to allow the public to attend meetings online if they wish until Step 4, and to hold their Annual Parish Meetings after Step 3 (due 17<sup>th</sup> May), when the public would normally attend. Any Council subject to an election needs to hold their Annual General Meeting (when the Chair, Vice-Chair and outside appointments are made) within 21 days of the elections (i.e., by 27<sup>th</sup> May).