

ACRE (Action in Communities for Rural England)

Covid – 19 Pandemic

Road Map to unlocking as applied to Village and Community Halls

This information is up to date on 1st March 2021

It is dependent on -

1. The coronavirus vaccine programme continuing to go to plan.
2. That evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently reducing the number of people dying or needing hospital treatment.
3. That Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospital admissions.
4. New variants of the virus do not fundamentally change the risk of lifting.

Step One: 8th March and 29th March

- Two people will be able to meet in outdoor public spaces, meaning they can sit down for a coffee, drink or picnic in a recreation ground, park or playing field.
- Up to 30 can attend funerals, up to 6 wakes and weddings (no longer limited to exceptional circumstances).

From 29 March

- Outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households will be allowed – the “rule of six”.
- Outdoors, organised activities for children can take place (e.g., cubs, brownies etc).
- Outdoors, parent and child groups can meet with up to 15 attending, plus under-fives.
- Out of school children’s settings will be able to accept all children.

Step Two: 12th April

- Only the activities shown here are permitted. Other activities (e.g., art classes, clubs, WIs, craft groups, Parish Council meetings) will not yet be permitted.
- Exercise classes are **not** allowed.
- Wakes and weddings will be allowed up to 15 guests.
- All indoor children’s activities can open, including dance classes, musical activities, cubs, scouts, brownies.
- Parent and child groups can open indoors, e.g., parent and toddlers, with up to 15 attending plus under-fives

The social contact rules will continue to apply in all settings - meaning social distancing must be maintained and masks mandatory no indoor mixing allowed between different households.

Government guidance issued on 25th February on re-opening venues in England says:

“indoor events that bring people together - even if they do not mix with other households - must not run until Step 3. This is only permitted if there is an explicit exemption - this includes support groups, supervised activities for children, parent-and-child groups (up to 15 people, not counting those aged under five), communal worship, or a wedding, reception or commemorative event like a wake.”

It explains all children can attend from 29th March and addresses face coverings for those aged 11 or over.

Step Three: 17 May

- Controlled indoor events can take place with up to 50% capacity.
- Hospitality settings will be able to open in accordance with the “rule of 6”, so community cafes, coffee mornings and social clubs can take place.
- Film shows, plays, concerts and sports matches can take place, subject to social distancing.
- Indoor sports activities, including exercise classes, table tennis, badminton can take place.
- Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions, funerals and wakes. Christenings and bar mitzvahs will be allowed.
- Organised outdoor entertainment can take place.
- The "rule of six" will be abolished for outdoor gatherings, replaced with a limit of 30 people.

The “rule of 6” will apply to indoor events. Guidance on social contact between friends and family will be reviewed. While so-called “vaccine passports” are under consideration for allowing certain indoor venues to re-open safely at this step that would hopefully be confined to larger venues, not village and community halls.

Step Four: 21st June

- All legal limits on social contact are removed. Outdoor events with more than 30 people can take place.
- Dancing is permitted.
- Restrictions on numbers at weddings and funerals are abolished.

Test, trace, and isolate will remain in place, so there will be continued need to keep records of attendance for this purpose.

Continued attention to hand washing, good hygiene, wearing of face masks, social distancing and indoor capacity limits will be required until at least the 21st of June.

The government has warned that some of these measures may need to be reapplied next winter to keep the virus under control.

Annual Parish Meetings

The Annual Parish Meeting is required to be held between 1st March and 30th June each year. This is when the Parish Council report to the community on its work the preceding year and plans for the future. Usually, other groups are invited to do the same and a speaker is invited. This could become an important community event this year. The potential for delay on 17th May (Step 3), when 50% capacity is permitted, and 21st June (Step 4), when full attendance is due to be permitted, makes it prudent to arrange these for June rather than May, with capacity for people to join via Zoom.

It explains all children can attend from 29th March and addresses face coverings for those aged 11 or over.

There could be some updates to follow but I feel this is as comprehensive as possible for committees to start planning.