

St Catherines Hill Community Hall – Risk Assessment for Re-opening – August 2021

Prepared by: John Spittle Cert Occ Hyg, NEBOSH Part 1 Diploma, Chairman, St Catherines Community Hall

Introduction

The Hall has been closed since March 2020 at the start of the pandemic. There was an opportunity to open again that summer, but with the rise in Covid cases in September and the overwhelming elderly demographic of our users, the trustees reluctantly decided not to re-open. Future lockdown restrictions confirmed this decision.

Limited opening would have been possible from May the 17th, but the work involved for what was anticipated for a 5 week period, the trustees decided to wait until Stage 4 – projected to be June 21st. As is now known this was delayed until July 19th. The Hall is now in the situation where legal compulsion has been replaced by “strong encouragement” and “personal responsibility”. The Hall is still required to carry out a risk assessment under Health and Safety law where we decide what precautions and measures are required.

Risk Assessment

The first step is to describe the hazard. COVID is a virus with a significant mortality risk, which is significantly reduced by double vaccination, but the elderly are more likely to be severely affected.

People predominantly become infected by exposure to the airborne virus, either by being in a poorly ventilated crowded indoor area or by close contact with an infected person. For example you are “pinged” by the app if you are within 2 metres of an infected person for longer than 15 minutes. This is the reason for the strong emphasis on effective ventilation and often the reason that colds, influenza and other viruses are seen more in the winter when people are inside in often poorly ventilated areas. The wearing of masks also limits the spread of airborne virus from infected persons. Current guidance is that we should continue to wear them in crowded indoor areas even when not legally required to do so. Government guidance, updated 20th July now states:

“You are expected and recommended to continue wearing a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you don’t usually meet. In particular, where the risk of transmission is likely to be greater.”

Previous exemptions were when eating and drinking, or when the wearing interfered with the activity a person is undertaking.

The other route of exposure is via contaminated surfaces, hence the emphasis on regular cleaning in all the guidance. It should be noted that the outer fatty layer of the virus means that it is deactivated by soap, a standard cleaning agent or alcohol based sanitisers.

The upshot from this is that there are actions we can all take to limit the risk of catching this disease. Listed below are the actions the Hall will take followed by the actions we expect hirers to take. These

are summarised in Table 2. Hirers should also make their own assessment of precautions and measures they intend to take to protect their users.

Precautions to be taken by Hall

Social Distancing

People are no longer required by law to socially distant, but are encouraged to take personal responsibility and behave in an appropriately careful way. Previous capacities were based on the two metre rule. Since then the rule of 6 and two households meeting or mingling (ie no distancing) have been allowed inside a building. In order to maintain a degree of distancing it is proposed to limit the capacities of each area as follows:

Table 1 – Proposed number limits

Room	Dimensions(m etres)	Area (m2)	Original Maximum Number(2m rule) July 2020	Proposed Maximum No July 2021
Main Hall	8 x 9.2	73.6	16	36
Conservatory	6.75 x 6.00	40.5	9	NA
Britannia Room	11.33 x 4.028	45.5	10	15

The 36 is based on three tables of 6 per side being able to set up with reasonable separation. This should allow most events to take place.

In addition 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of the booked time for setting up. Events must finish at the scheduled time and 15 minutes allowed for packing up, cleaning and leaving the Hall. For example if a Hall is booked from 10-12am, the access will be available from 9.45am, and the Hall must be vacated by 12:15am. The next group could then enter for an event at 12:30. This will keep mixing of groups to a minimum.

Ventilation

The caretaker will open the sky lights in the main hall every morning. Users are encouraged to open windows and keep doors open. This will help ensure that contaminated air will drift upwards and out and not disperse within the building. This will obviously be difficult in the winter during inclement weather, but we will endeavour to keep to this practice.

The Conservatory has minimal ventilation and it is proposed not to use this as a meeting place.

The first floor has similar windows to the main hall, but they are manually operated. Depending on the weather these will be opened to an appropriate extent in the morning.

Cleaning

The Hall will undergo a thorough clean once a week by a professional firm of good reputation according to a schedule provided by the Hall

The caretaker or other appropriate person will clean parts of the Hall likely to have been contacted by the previous day's users, except when the Hall has been previously cleaned by the contract cleaners. This will include the contact areas in the toilet. This will be carried out after the last event,

either in the evening before or the morning immediately preceding the day's events. It will not include tables.

Surfaces in the kitchen will be clear except for the necessary cleaning materials. Items held in the Hall will be checked before re-opening

Personal Hygiene

Sanitising solution for hands will be provided in various locations.

Track and Trace

The QR code notice for the Hall will be displayed on the door and notice boards.

Notices and entry rules

There will be a notice in the Hall saying that persons should not enter if they have:

- Tested positive for Covid 19
- Display symptoms of Covid 19 – persistent cough, fever, lack of taste or smell, difficulty breathing.
- Have been told to self isolate by Track and Trace.
- Have recently returned from a country where you are required to self isolate for 10 days after return

Disallowed Activities

Certain types of event will increase the risk of exposure. These include more strenuous activities such as Zumba and some forms of energetic dancing. Events such as quizzes and parties with large numbers(>40) where alcohol will be consumed, are, for the moment, not allowed. This will be kept under periodic review.

Precautions – Hirers

Risk Assessment

Hirers are expected to make an assessment of precautions and measures they wish to take to protect their users.

Ventilation

Maintain ventilation as much as reasonably practicable. Encourage warm clothing during cold weather. Upstairs windows should be closed after each event in the event of inclement weather.

Cleaning

Hirers are expected to clean surfaces contacted during an event including tables. Items can only be stored in the Hall with the permission of the Trustees. Beverages and foodstuffs are not to be left in the kitchen.

Any crockery and cutlery used must be washed in warm water with appropriate detergent added and dried with tissue supplied. The dishwasher can be used as an alternative.

Personal Hygiene

Hirers are expected to encourage hirers to wash or sanitise hand on entering the Hall. This will reduce spread of any possible contamination. Hirers are also encouraged to bring their own sanitiser solutions.

Track and Trace

If the QR code check in is not used then Hirers are expected to keep a record of all attendees at an event for a minimum of 21 days. This will be used in the event of a positive COVID test of a group member to trace contacts. Hirers are asked to inform the Hall if any of their group is tested positive, so any recommended action can be taken e.g. additional cleaning. Identity does not need to be revealed.

Notices and entry rules

Hirers should draw their member's attention to the notice and the rules the hall is operating under.

Table 2 – St Catherine's Community Hall – Precautions Summer 2021

Precaution	Hall	Hirer
Social Distancing	Limit Main hall to 36. Britannia Room to 15. Conservatory will not be used as a meeting place. Institute a 30 minute period between each booking.	Ensure numbers do not exceed stated numbers. Encourage wearing of masks where appropriate. Ensure Hall is only entered and left at the stipulated times.
Ventilation	Caretaker or other appropriate person to open skylights in main hall every morning, weather allowing. Aperture dependant on outside temperature and weather. Britannia Room windows to be opened, aperture dependant on outside temperature and weather	Ventilation – maintain ventilation as much as reasonably practicable. Even small openings are better than nothing. Encourage warm clothing during cold weather. Upstairs windows should be closed after each event in the event of inclement weather.
Cleaning	The Hall will undergo a thorough clean once a week by a professional firm of good reputation according to a schedule provided by the Hall The caretaker or other appropriate person will clean parts of the Hall likely to have been contacted by the previous day's users, except when the Hall has been previously cleaned by the contract cleaners. This will include the contact areas in the toilet. This will be carried out after the last event, either in the evening before or the morning immediately preceding the day's events. It will not include tables	Hirers are expected to clean surfaces contacted during an event including tables. Items can only be stored in the Hall with the permission of the Trustees. Beverages and foodstuffs are not to be left in the kitchen. Any crockery and cutlery used must be washed in warm water with appropriate detergent added and dried with tissue supplied. The dishwasher can be used as an alternative.

Table 2 – St Catherine’s Community Hall – Precautions Summer 2021

Precaution	Hall	Hirer
Personal Hygiene	Sanitising solution for hands will be provided in various locations.	Hirers are expected to encourage hirers to wash or sanitise hand on entering the Hall. This will reduce spread of any possible contamination. Hirers are also encouraged to bring their own sanitiser solutions.
Track and Trace	The QR code notice for the Hall will be displayed on the door and noticeboards. The Hall will keep records of groups using the Hall.	Hirers are expected to keep a record of all attendees at an event for a minimum of 21 days. This will be used in the event of a positive COVID test of a group member to trace contacts. Hirers are asked to inform the Hall if any of their group is tested positive. Identity does not need to be revealed
Notice and Entry Rules	There will be a notice in the Hall saying that persons should not enter if they have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested positive for Covid 19 • Display symptoms of Covid 19 – persistent cough, fever, lack of taste or smell, difficulty breathing. • Have been told to self isolate by the NHS or Track and Trace. • Have recently returned from a country where you are required to self isolate for 10 days after return 	Hirers should draw their member’s attention to the notice and the rules the hall is operating under.