

## Appendix J Performances in Village and Community Halls

This Appendix contains key points from the Government guidance as they relate to performance activities in village and community halls. The important 5 points of the COVID-19 Secure guidelines set out in Section 2.1 of the ACRE Information Sheet should be in place and are not repeated here.

A village hall which has undertaken a COVID-19 risk assessment and is following the steps identified to minimise transmission should satisfy most points in the Government guidance for performance, the full text of which is contained here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>.

**In tiers 1 and 2 rehearsals and performances to socially distanced audiences are permitted up to 50% capacity. Dancing classes are permitted,** following [guidance for providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#). In tier 3 training, rehearsals and performances without an audience for broadcast or recording only are permitted. Outdoor performances can continue to take place.

Both professionals and non-professionals can now engage in singing and playing wind and brass instruments in line with the performing arts guidance. For amateur rehearsals and performance, the section on the performing arts guidance for non-professionals should be studied. Particular note should be taken of the guidance on safe singing: [recent paper on principles for safer singing](#).

### Who Might be at risk?

In the context of a village hall this could be somebody taking part in a performance, a related activity or an audience member, a visiting professional e.g. in a touring company. If clinically vulnerable or higher risk individuals would normally take part or attend, consider whether they can do so from home, e.g. in rehearsals or by recording performances. Alternatively, they might be given the safest roles or seating which enable them to maintain social distancing (preferably 2m, or 1m with robust risk mitigation). If they cannot maintain social distancing this may not involve an acceptable level of risk.

### Key Points

1. **Risk assessment:** Bear in mind that the Government guidance on performance says: "Risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace."
2. **Singing** There should be no **group singing by worshippers**. Places of worship should take account of the Performing Arts guidance. Otherwise singing is allowed subject to risk assessment and mitigation measures.

3. **Communicate with those using the hall or outdoor areas for performance activities** to ensure the COVID-19 secure guidelines are met. Providing a copy of the hall's own COVID-19 risk assessment showing the measures you are adopting (e.g. your cleaning, entrance/exit, "pinch point" control arrangements) should help them work out what additional measures they need to take, if any.
4. **Communication to the public:** Provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to visitors before arrival, for example by email when purchasing tickets, and on marketing and websites.
5. **Food, drink and retail purchases:** Consider allowing guests to pre-order and collect refreshments at designated points to reduce queues and pinch points or adopting seat service at intervals. Consider providing programmes in digital format. Bars may be open to ticket holders only for one hour in total, which can be split before the performance and during an interval. See also the [guidance for restaurants and bars](#).
6. **Noise:** When the public are attending performances, organisers should ensure that steps are taken to avoid audiences needing to unduly raise their voices to each other. This includes avoiding playing music or broadcasts at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult, e.g. during performance intervals. This is to avoid increased risk of transmission from aerosol and droplet transmission.
7. **Cleaning:** Performances should be scheduled to allow sufficient time to undertake cleaning before the next audience arrives.
8. **Where performances or events are likely to have more than 30 people,** the organisers need to take additional steps to ensure the safety of the public and prevent large gatherings or mass events from taking place. The Government guidance for performing arts should be consulted to ensure appropriate measures are put in place. Note that gatherings of more than 6 people outdoors are currently only permitted where organised by businesses, charities, public bodies, or political groups.
9. **Those organising performance activities** need to ensure social distancing can be maintained by working out the maximum capacity that is appropriate. It may differ if the activity is static, such as a band rehearsal, or requires movement, such as a ballet class. They may need to consider whether a stage is big enough to rehearse, pay attention to ventilation and sufficient circulation space e.g. between any teachers and classes.
10. **A booking system will be needed to manage attendances or ticket sales,** preferably online or by phone. The National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF) has suggested halls might try using <https://www.izettle.com/gb> or <https://sumup.co.uk/>.
11. **Areas may need to be marked out temporarily** to help people achieve social distancing.
12. **Attendants and Toilets:** Sufficient attendants will be required to manage queues, seating, toilets etc. A longer interval is likely to be required and an attendant present to invite people to use them row by row, to manage numbers.

13. **Space outside for queuing** needs to be available, and safe. People may need protection from traffic by routing them behind physical structures such as bollards or putting up barriers. It may be necessary to liaise with neighbours or local authorities.
14. **The needs of disabled individuals and those who are frail or have sensory disabilities** need to be considered at entrances, exits, in queue management and seating arrangements. Arrangements need to be communicated effectively.
15. **Where social distancing guidelines cannot be followed** in full, all appropriate mitigating actions should be taken to reduce the risk of transmission between people. It may be impractical where one professional works with groups e.g. in a dancing class, costume-fitting, make-up, intimate/fighting scenes. Mitigation measures include, for example:
  - increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning,
  - keeping the activity time as short as possible,
  - using back-to-back or side-to-side seating or working (rather than face-to-face),
  - using screens or barriers.
  
  - reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others), These teams should not mingle with each other in a non-socially distanced manner.

### **Managing Seating:**

Seating needs to be provided in a way which ensures social distancing can be maintained between individuals or groups, which should be no more than 6 unless they are a "qualifying group" (see Appendix D for explanation of a qualifying group). Village halls, with removable seating, are at an advantage over theatres with fixed seating. Consider measures such as:

- Space rows further apart than usual, providing 2m spaces (or 1m plus mitigation) between seating for groups, providing one or two empty (marked) seats between household groups.
- Providing allocated seating and managing seating plans through ticketing systems to ensure social distancing is maintained.
- Provide attendants to help with social distancing e.g. to ask people to occupy seats from the furthest point first and evacuate from the point closest to the exit first.
- Encourage people not to bring bags and coats where possible to reduce clutter at seats.
- Remind those accompanied by children that they are responsible for supervising them at all times and should follow social distancing guidelines, not mingle with friends in other groups.

### **Handling props, musical instruments, technical equipment etc**

To avoid transmission through contact:

1. Instruments and other personal kit should be kept clean by the owner, and not shared with others. Name labels on equipment will help identify an owner or designated user. People should avoid sharing scripts, scores, and personal items such as phones, chargers, pens etc. A drop off and pick-up point should be created rather than passing equipment such as props and microphones hand to hand.

2. Any equipment which has to be shared should be regularly disinfected and always between users.
3. Waste and belongings should be removed at the end of a class, rehearsal, or performance.
4. Use a consistent pairing system if people must work in close proximity, e.g. for handling heavy equipment.

**Organisers of outdoor performances should also consider:**

Consulting the guidance on delivering outdoor events. Points here are only a summary.

- Managing groups who start to mingle with other groups or individuals, which is unlawful and, in doing so, may encourage others to cluster in a similar manner. Communication is key to this.
- Planning car parking to allow sufficient spacing for social distancing in case people need to visit their vehicles to collect chairs, coats, drinks etc. or gather around vehicles.
- Discouraging activities likely to encourage audience behaviours increasing transmission risk, such as clustering, communal dancing, singing and physical contact outside of groups.

Local authorities can provide advice on how to manage outdoor events. They will avoid issuing licenses for events that could lead to larger gatherings forming. If appropriate, the Government has powers under Schedule 22 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 to close venues hosting large gatherings or prohibit certain events (or types of event) from taking place.