Hosting a COVID Secure Event – Guidance
(Version 8 – May 2021)

Current restrictions and requirements

The Government has issued a roadmap for the coming months and the reintroduction of events and gatherings via several stages. These Steps and the current Government restrictions regarding events and gatherings can be found here. The dates referred to are subject to change depending on the rates of transmission of the virus.

The organisers of events must have carried out a thorough risk assessment and taken all reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of viral transmission, taking into account their risk assessment, in line with COVID-19 Secure guidance.

The assessment must have considered the specific risks associated with the activities that are intended to take place and the anticipated level of attendance. This includes ensuring that social distancing is maintained at all times between different groups attending, staff and performers.

For events that are for 100+ attendees at any one time, we are requiring that this risk assessment along with an Event Management Plan (example template available here) and the Event Checklist document are to be provided to licensing@iow.gov.uk as soon as possible when considering holding an event and at least one month beforehand.

If documents are not submitted early enough to allow sufficient time for officers to consider the plans, this may result in a direction being given that prohibits the event taking place, if the local authority cannot be satisfied that it is safe to hold the event.

Please refer to the information contained further below in this document.

Attendees should be signposted to the NHS website for information on symptoms of COVID-19 and asked not to attend the event if symptoms develop. Attendees who develop symptoms while at the event should be advised to leave the event immediately if they are able to, using private transport to return to their accommodation/residence.

Should an incident occur which requires investigating under Health and Safety legislation, your risk assessments and arrangements to implement and manage control measures will be considered as a part of any investigation.

If you become aware of 2 or more cases of COVID-19 in people who attended your event, you should report the suspected outbreak to:
Hampshire and IOW Health Protection Team   Tel. 0344 225 3861 (Option 2)

Licences

It is the responsibility of the event organiser to ensure that the correct licence/consent/permit is in place for the activities being proposed. In most circumstances, the process of obtaining these will include a consultation period ranging from 5 working days through to 28 days. These are often statutory requirements which therefore must be followed before permission can be granted.

Authorisation may be required for activities providing alcohol, entertainment, selling items, conducting raffles etc. To check if any licences are required for the activities you are proposing, please contact the Licensing Section using the details at the end of this document. Please also be aware that failure to provide a suitable risk assessment is likely to result in objections to an application from Responsible Authorities.

General COVID-19 Guidance

Assess your premises against this guidance from government to make your event COVID-19 Secure.

This guidance will help you identify what control measures will need to be implemented to ensure that you fulfil your obligations to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and persons not in your employment under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The controls are generic so must be tailored to the specific circumstances of your business. Depending on the nature of your event you may need to consider more than one guidance document.

Risk Assessments

Please note that the Local Authority will not approve any risk assessments. The risk assessments are the event organiser's documents and should reflect the significant hazards from the event, including COVID-19 and identify the measures that need to be taken to ensure that people are safe as well as to comply with Health and Safety law.

Risk assessments for COVID-19 will need to be active during the whole event and a person will need to be responsible for reviewing risks and mitigation measures as the event takes place. As human behaviour plays a significant role in achieving a safe environment, communication prior to the event, as well as instruction and supervision during, will be essential.

The below points are designed to be used in conjunction with the guidance referenced above and highlight some of the areas that event organisers will need to carefully consider in order to hold an event in a COVID-19 secure environment:

Capacity

- The maximum number of people permitted at any one time ensuring that customers are at tables when consuming food and drink and social distancing can be maintained (it is advisable to document how this has been calculated) considering floor space, seating setting up as well as likely pinch points and busy areas.

- Queueing systems for entering and leaving the event, as well as for toilets, food and other services whilst maintaining social distancing. Consider staggering arrivals and the use of floor markings for the areas where queues may typically form.

- Ensure attendees are not in groups of more than six people. Or, if the group is more than six, ensure everyone is either exclusively from the same household or support bubble.

- If your event is a ticketed/registered event, information collected when tickets are purchased may assist with complying with Track and Trace requirements (subject to data sharing agreements). Further information on maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Track and Trace is available here.

- You must review security and emergency procedures to ensure they enable social distancing as far as possible, or that alternative controls are in place.

Activities and Behaviours

- Face coverings must be worn by staff and also by customers who are not eating or drinking.

- Singing and playing of wind or brass instruments is limited to professionals only.

- When members of 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, but is not limited to, refraining from playing music or broadcasts that may encourage shouting, including if played at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult, for example during performance intervals. This is because of the potential for increased risk of transmission – particularly from aerosol and droplet transmission.

- Discouraging or avoiding activities or features that are likely to encourage audience behaviours increasing transmission risk, such as crowding, clustering, communal dancing and physical contact outside of household groups or support bubbles.

- It is recommended that you advise attendees prior to the event, and prior to or at the start of the event, of the behaviour expected e.g. no singing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene, and maintaining social distance.

- You must consider how you will ensure that any behaviour that is outside the expected 'event rules' is addressed. It is advisable to consider the use of SIA security staff, particularly if alcohol is being sold at the event or, if people are permitted to bring their own where it is more difficult to monitor the amount of alcohol being consumed.

Hygiene and First Aid

- You must implement cleaning procedures which ensure hand contact surfaces are regularly cleaned and implement the measures in the guidance for cleaning in non-healthcare settings following a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 at an event.

- Adequate facilities are made available for hand washing (with soap and water) and frequent waste disposal. It is also recommended that hand sanitiser is provided at queuing points.

- Consider whether toilet-to-person ratios needs to be revised to allow for physical distancing, minimising queues, and enhanced cleaning routines. The frequency of cleaning should be increased beyond what has been the case before COVID-19 and should be based on a risk assessment which includes both the usage of the facility and the fact that COVID-19 may survive on the hard surfaces present in toilets for at least 72 hours. Enhanced monitoring of facilities will be required to ensure hygiene is maintained.

- Consider the action you will take should someone presents themselves with COVID-19 symptoms. You should consider establishing isolation areas where persons can be provided with first aid (if they are too unwell to immediately return home), and plan communication pathways with NHS services. The isolation area should be equipped with the necessary supplies to facilitate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Further guidance on producing a risk assessment can be found here.

Other matters for consideration

- Check your ticketing Terms and Conditions and ensure that you are clear about your ticketing refund strategy and that the impact of cancellation or postponement is communicated effectively to your customers.

- We suggest that your public liability insurance covers COVID-19 in terms of infection control and cancellation due to local restrictions.

Event Management Plan

For all events it is good practice to provide an overall event plan which details the activities and how it will be operated. The plan will be circulated to the Police, Ambulance Service, NHS, Fire Service, Emergency Management, Highways and Environmental Health who may request that additional measures are put in place to ensure a safe event is provided for all.

The size of the event will often dictate how detailed the plan needs to be, however in all circumstances it should at least include the following information:
- A brief overview of the event
- Location
- Dates and times

- Name and contact details of event organiser
- Security/stewarding arrangements
- First aid provision
- Fire safety arrangements
- Food safety arrangements
- Noise management plan
- On and off-site traffic arrangements
- COVID-19 plans and
- Any other relevant information.

An Event Management Plan template is available here.

Organised outdoor events

There are currently trials taking place which will lead to more detailed guidance being provided by the government regarding what measures are required to mitigate the risk of transmission but there are various resources available that have been produced by the industry:

Event Industry Forum - Event Guidance and Key Considerations

Purple Guide Supplementary Guidance

Association of Event Organisers - Risk Assessment Templates

Prohibiting an event

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.3) Regulations 2020 came into force on 18 July 2020.

These regulations give local authorities powers to issue directions imposing prohibitions, requirements or restrictions in relation to the holding of indoor and outside events as well as the use of outdoor spaces in its area.

The Council may therefore prohibit an event or require additional measures or restrictions if they are satisfied that there is a serious and imminent threat to public health and it is necessary and proportionate to prevent and protect against controlling spread of infection of coronavirus in the area. Any such directions from the Council will be documented.

Events and infection control data in the local area will be kept under constant review and any event may be subject to these measures up to and including the day of the proposed event if at the time, the infection rate is such that to continue to hold the event would pose an imminent threat to public health.

Contact Details

For further information or advice please contact:
Licensing on 01983 823159 or licensing@iow.gov.uk ; or
Environmental Health on 01983 823000 eh@iow.gov.uk