

Running events safely post 19th July 2021, from a public health perspective – Covid 19

Introduction

Our last guidance note was written approaching April, event organisers were following the Governments Spring roadmap out of lockdown, each step easing restrictions, while also being aware of new variants of concern and tracking the vaccination uptake.

We have now passed the final lifting of restrictions which took place on 19th July, and all legal restrictions on social contact and large events have been lifted. Regulations have been replaced by sector guidance and best practice. The Events Research Programme has also fed back its findings, although of limited use.

What do I have to think about when running events?

All event organisers should read the Governments document published on 19th July titled 'COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/covid-19-response-summer-2021>

This documents sets out the Governments plan for summer and emphasises the move from Regulations to individuals taking responsibility and managing risk. It places responsibility on businesses and event organisers to ensure they still operate in a Covid secure manner, but removes the prescriptive nature of Regulations and gives broader guidance around hygiene and ventilation steering towards a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

The document reminds us that the risk of Covid 19 is still present and needs to be planned for, and highlights the following areas as main areas that need to be taken into consideration:

- Meeting in well-ventilated areas where possible, such as outdoors or indoors with windows open.
- Wearing a face covering where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces.
- Washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.
- Covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.
- Staying at home if unwell, to reduce the risk of passing on other illnesses onto friends, family, colleagues, and others in your community.
- Considering individual risks, such as clinical vulnerabilities and vaccination status.

Our current advice to event organisers is to be aware of the local infection rate in the area they intend to operate from, this can be done using the Newham public health dash board for up to date local information.

The above information on the local context will enable event organisers to take into account the local picture when undertaking their risk assessments specifically for Covid 19 controls.

We then advise event organisers to continue to follow statutory health and safety requirements, and conduct a risk assessment, and take reasonable steps to manage risks in their workplace focussing on staff, volunteers and contractors. Specific thought should be given to:-

- Welfare areas and toilet provision
- Enhanced hygiene and sanitation, especially hand contact surfaces
- Training in all areas of procedures and safe systems of work
- Management structures and oversight
- An isolation area and controls in place should someone fall ill during the event
- Encouraging a double vaccine, lateral flow testing and recording results and being aware of individual vulnerabilities such as clinical vulnerabilities
- What personal protective equipment is required
- Will you still advise social distancing and mask wearing, although it may not be practical to ask this of attendees it may still offer a level of protection for staff although it is worth noting that loose fitting face masks were reliant on all wearing to reduce risk of transmission by a significant level – therefore in some circumstances a higher level of mask or even a visor may also be deemed necessary
- Ventilation of all staff areas including welfare areas
- Messaging on being aware of symptoms and not coming to work if feeling ill, on isolating and taking a PCR test if symptomatic
- You may wish to think about staffing resilience and drop out from those who are ill or have been in close contact with a positive case
- A health questionnaire for staff before they attend site is still advisable

After taking into account the risks to staff, volunteers and contractors, thoughts should then be given to those attending and members of the public. In many event situations now it will not be practical to insist on social distancing or face coverings as this is no longer a legal requirement, and the practicalities of insisting this may be impractical in terms of asking too much from staff and volunteers and putting them at unacceptable risk.

Therefore, it is advisable to focus on the controls that can be implemented to manage risk including the following:

- Pre event communications enabling individuals to make an informed decision on attending, to make it clear the masks wearing is advisable in enclosed spaces and that if feeling ill then they shouldn't attend the venue
- Enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures throughout the site, especially hand contact surfaces and welfare facilities such as toilets
- An isolation area for those taken ill on site and appropriate first aid cover for the event

- If ticketing, this presents a practical place to undertake pre event communications and for example a health questionnaire
- It is advisable to continue to enable people to check in at your event, although this is no longer a legal requirement – it is advisable to still display NHS QR code posters depending on your event, at entrances, specific locations around the site, or for example at areas like provision of seating for hospitality
- Lastly, but increasingly importantly, providing adequate ventilation. This is an area that needs particular focus and event organisers should make reference to the updated guidance from the Health & Safety Executive. More information on this can be found at the below link, and in summary this includes promoting natural ventilation, ensuring mechanical ventilation is run and maintained correctly for example maximising fresh air intake and lastly identifying specific poorly ventilated areas that shouldn't be used.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm>

For specific best practice guidance for events and event organisers, the following two documents are key:

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19), Gov.UK – events and attractions

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/events-and-attractions>

Keeping workers and audiences safe during COVID-19 (England) – events industry forum guidance

<https://www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk/index.php>

What assistance can I get from Newham?

We will always give advice and guidance to support event organisers, we also still routinely meet with public health. The Coronavirus Number 3 Regulations have been extended until 28th September – also known as Directions Orders, these give Local Authorities the powers to close premises and events if there is an unacceptable public health risk from Covid 19. We do not envisage having to use these powers, but if it was ever required this would be evidence based and not something that would be a knee-jerk reaction. We will continue to make all event organisers aware of any local issues including infection rates, vaccine uptake and pressure on the healthcare system.

All our safety advisory groups have returned to pre-pandemic terms of reference so we will no longer scrutinise low risk events. We will however maintain a list of all events in the borough to make sure we have oversight so would appreciate this information still being supplied to us.