

Starting to meet together

Over recent months, many Mothers' Union groups have been taking advantage of the summer weather to gather outside for socially distanced afternoon teas in gardens. But as the autumn beckons, and Government restrictions on gatherings remain, how can Mothers' Union members start to meet again? And is it safe to meet?

The situation relating to the opening of community or commercial premises and facilities, including Church Halls, is subject to change and to local variations.

Meeting in Church Halls or Community Venues

There is Government advice on the safe operation of community facilities following COVID-19 secure guidelines. Ultimately, it is up to those with a responsibility for those facilities to assess whether or not it is possible to be COVID-19 secure and to open premises.

Things to consider before meeting

If your usual meeting place is available, it is advisable to undertake your own risk assessment check to make sure that all the necessary precautions are being taken to keep members safe. Particular attention should be given to:

- Entry & exit points
- Social distancing
- Toilet facilities
- Hand washing/sanitising

A simple risk assessment checklist can be found at the end of this document.

It is important for members to maintain social distancing of two metres (or one metre with risk mitigation) and to limit their interaction with those they do not live with. Even with chairs suitably distanced, for members to be reminded to remain seated as much as possible and not to gather closer together for a chat!

On entering or leaving a communal space, everyone should be asked to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser. It is a good idea to provide hand sanitiser for your group.

To comply with 'Test and Trace' systems, a record needs to be taken for each meeting of the names of those present and a contact telephone number. While Mothers' Union groups should have a record of those present at a meeting and their contact details, you do need to have each person's permission for their information to be shared with the NHS or other equivalent health body, should the need for this occur.

What about our more vulnerable members?

Some groups of people are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including those aged over 70 and those with specific medical conditions. Advice has been given to these groups by the Government about minimising contact and staying at home as much as possible, but individuals are

entitled to make their own decisions about the precautions they wish to take. Some people may choose not to part of a larger gathering because of the situation of their family members.

It's important that members are made aware of the guidelines that are being followed and the special provisions that are being made by local groups, so they can make an informed choice. It is each individuals personal choice whether or not to engage in any meeting or activity, and no one should feel pressurised either to stay away or to participate.

Can I give a lift to another member?

Sharing a vehicle with anyone outside your household is not currently recommended, but if you do:

- Have the same passengers in the car for both outward and return journeys
- Don't fill the car with passengers
- Open windows for ventilation
- Maximise the distance between people in the car and travel side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them
- Wear a face covering
- Clean the car between journeys, paying particular attention to door handles and other areas that people may touch.

Can we meet in each other's homes?

There are a number of Mothers' Union groups that meet in member's homes. However, the current guidelines are that no more than two households can meet together indoors.

Can we meet in a restaurant or coffee shop?

Government advice is that more than two households should not meet together at any indoor venue, so this also applies to restaurants, pubs, coffee shops etc. Such premises are required to provide appropriately distanced tables, etc and you can't have, for example, six people from different households at one table.

There can be additional restrictions imposed on local areas and Government advice is subject to change. For current advice, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Risk Assessment

Mothers' Union group/branch:

Venue Name and Address:

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Area of risk		Action required?	Completed
Entry & Exit	Are one-way systems for entry/exit and/or access around the building required?		
	Will other groups be entering or leaving the building at a similar time?		
Social distancing	Is the seating arranged to meet social distancing criteria?		
	Are tables set out to maintain social distancing, especially where people sit opposite each other?		
Toilet facilities	Is the access to the toilet facilities marked to enable socially distanced queuing?		
Hand washing/sanitizing	Are handwashing facilities (or hand sanitiser) available for those entering and leaving the building?		
Cleaning	What are the arrangements for the cleaning of the premises before and after the meeting?		
Any other areas of risk specific to the venue			