



# Easing the lockdown - guidance notes for permaculture project leaders and educators

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# Introduction

NOTE – please check government updates regularly as these are changing times and new information is regularly added. This document can be used as a checklist of considerations when looking to reopen and when undertaking your Covid-19 risk assessment – please add to it and amend to suit your group. See <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for up to date info, or details below for information for each country within the UK. If reading this from outside the UK, review your own government’s advice and check with your local municipality for local information.

## Should we restart activities yet?

Ultimately groups need to decide for themselves if they wish to re-open (if they are legally allowed to do so). You may be shielding vulnerable people, or have decided that you will wait until the pandemic has subsided further. Do what is right for you.

You will also need to check that the community, project users or student group are also willing to restart. Have an open conversation with them and use this to understand any concerns or practical considerations that affect their ability to re-engage.

Some LAND centres are remote and rural and we are aware that there is quite a difficult atmosphere at the moment in some places where visitors are not welcomed. It’s important to take your local community into account, especially in smaller close knit communities.

Talk about this within your group. Different members may have different circumstances - for example shielding vulnerable family members - or feel less comfortable with restarting activity. Make sure everyone in your group has an opportunity to share, ask questions and contribute to the plan. Once a plan is agreed it is essential that everyone knows how it will work, who will be responsible for any particular aspects, how you will review the plan and so on.

Use your design skills - survey, analyse, design, implement, tweak - is a useful process to go through to help develop your group’s response.

## Going ahead? Carry out a risk assessment

If you decide to re-open you must reduce the workplace risk of Covid-19 infection to the lowest reasonably practicable level. This can be done through a risk assessment that helps to manage the risk for yourself, your colleagues, learners, family and your community/visitors.

### **A risk assessment must:**

- identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus

- think about who could be at risk
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

We strongly recommend that all groups restarting activities carry out a written risk assessment, keep this on file, and review it regularly. Given that this is a new situation, we would advise that the risk assessment is reviewed and updated after the first day of operation as part of a debrief, and at the end of the first week, and then as new observations arise, or when government advice is updated.

HSE - Risk Assessments:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>

You can also find sample risk assessments here from City Farms:

<https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-links-resources-and-support>

## General advice from the Government

General advice and guidance or further information can be found below.

Although many of the issues that need to be considered are common wherever the site, please follow local guidance:

- Wales: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
- Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-Covid-19>
- Republic of Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

Government guidance for risk:

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

HSE Covid Guidance

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/working-safely-during-coronavirusoutbreak.htm>

HSE - Risk Assessments

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-Covid-19/>

### "COVID-19 Secure" [guidelines](#)

Lists 12 industry specific areas of guidance, none of which directly cover adult learning or outdoor projects. Having read a number of them, the guidance is similar throughout. The most important area that covers all industries and activities is called [5 steps to working safely](#). The steps are:

#### 1. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment

Before restarting work you should ensure the safety of the workplace by:

- carrying out a risk assessment in line with the [HSE guidance](#)
- consulting with your workers or trade unions
- sharing the results of the risk assessment with your workforce and on your website

## **2. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures**

You should increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning by:

- encouraging people to follow the [guidance on hand washing and hygiene](#)
- providing hand sanitiser around the workplace, in addition to washrooms
- frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly
- enhancing cleaning for busy areas
- setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets
- providing hand drying facilities – either paper towels or electrical dryers

## **3. Help people to work from home**

You should take all reasonable steps to help people work from home by:

- discussing home working arrangements
- ensuring they have the right equipment, for example remote access to work systems
- including them in all necessary communications
- looking after their physical and mental wellbeing

## **4. Maintain 2m social distancing, where possible**

Where possible, you should maintain 2m between people by:

- putting up signs to remind workers and visitors of social distancing guidance
- avoiding sharing workstations
- using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance
- arranging one-way traffic through the workplace if possible
- switching to seeing visitors by appointment only if possible

## **5. Where people cannot be 2m apart, manage transmission risk**

Where it's not possible for people to be 2m apart, you should do everything practical to manage the transmission risk by:

- considering whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working whenever possible
- staggering arrival and departure times

- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering’

## Guidance from the Permaculture Association

### Working and learning outside

#### Check your site and buildings

- Have you been closed for a while? Before reopening, it is important to carry out a health and safety check of the site and buildings.
- If the building has not been used for a while, check each room, and run taps for some time to ensure that no one drinks water that has been left standing for three months.
- It is suggested that a couple of people carry out the initial review and any maintenance tasks to ensure the building is safe before bringing the wider team in.
- To prepare for people to visit again, review your site and the rooms available and think about the following questions:
  - Can you spread activities out to enable social distancing?
  - Will you need to clean the whole site in between activities or just certain areas such as toilets?
  - Have you the capacity to clean the site more than once a day if running regular activities - consider the wiping down of tools etc
  - Do you have adequate handwashing facilities, for example hand washing stations. Do you have the appropriate toilet facilities? You may need to think about extra cleaning of these facilities
  - Can you maintain good ventilation throughout the site at all times. Ventilate buildings – open doors and windows where possible and prop doors open accordingly.
  - Can you use tape to mark off 2 metre zones in commonly used areas in accordance with up to date guidelines.
  - Can you use external doors for entry and exit to rooms if possible.
- Once the site has been checked:
  - Display posters throughout the site, for example hand hygiene, social distancing and catch it, bin it, kill it. Poster publications can be found at the Public Health Agency under this link <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications>.
  - There is a poster available to display to state that you have complied with the government’s guidance on managing the risk of Covid-19, once you have done so. [Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020 poster](#)
  - Consider if any other signage is needed, such as for tool use and cleaning, or to make areas out of bounds.

## Using tools

Tools are often passed from person to person without even really thinking about it, and this is a potential route for spreading the virus, so it's an area which needs good attention. There are still questions about how long the virus can last on different surfaces, so until the evidence is clearer:

- Try to minimise the number of tools used during your sessions. This could include pens and markers, as well as spades and forks.
- Wherever possible, use easily washable or wipeable tools.
- Develop a cleaning rota for tools to ensure that they are disinfected. You could consider colour coding and rotating after cleaning, or have a green table for clean tools, a red table for tools that need cleaning.
- Make sure it is clear who is responsible for cleaning tools and how often.
- Isolating tools - consider having different sets for key volunteers, or ask groups that are in the same household or 'social bubble' to maintain their own set.
- Ensure you have sufficient disinfectant, cloths, soap and hot water on site.
- Be clear about what tools are needed, and ask volunteers to bring their own where this is possible.

## Food and being sociable

- Food for courses, open days or ongoing work on site needs to be handled carefully.
- Where food is to be served, ensure that the strictest hygiene measures are in place for the kitchen and cooks, and ensure that serving is done carefully, with serving spoons and implements used by a very limited number of people. Avoid all possibility of cross contamination and do not allow multiple people to serve themselves. Masks should be worn, both to follow government regulations and to reassure participants.
- By far the simplest option is to ask people to bring their own food.
- Whilst our culture is one of sharing, we strongly advise against people bringing food to share.
- Seating for meals will also need to be distanced, and wherever possible, aim to eat outside where it will be easier to ventilate and provide space to distance.
- Separate bins. Be mindful that tissues with any body fluids need to be disposed of carefully. Hayfever or crying, nose blowing. Ensure there is a separate bin for disposal. Client may take away and dispose of it themselves

## Volunteers and visitors to projects and LAND Centres

- Keep a clear list of all learners / visitors so that people can be contacted after the visit if it is reported that someone has become unwell (to support effective [test and trace](#) work.)

- Consider scheduling different times for people to visit so there are fewer people in the project at once, if they overlap to respect social distancing.
- WWOOFERS - if you are re-opening to long term volunteers, ensure that this can be done safely and that expectations are very clear in advance. Ensure that they will be able to access the things they need without compromising your household safety.
- For each party to update each other before sessions each week to state whether they are fit and well and not showing signs of either a high temperature or continuous cough.

## Information to give learners, visitors and volunteers

### Before people arrive

It is important to set expectations and be clear about any requirements or conditions that visitors, learners or volunteers need to follow before they arrive. As per government regulations, it is important that visitors to your site or course do not attend if:

- They feel unwell
- They have even mild symptoms associated with Covid-19
- They are shielding for someone else
- They have been contacted via a government agency to say that they need to self-isolate due to someone they have met recently.

Before people decide to come, it is important that they check that they are allowed to do so if travelling from another country, or a newly locked down place.

### When people arrive

Make sure they know that during the visit they will be required to:

- Maintain social distancing requirements of 1-2 metres at all times. Give everyone space.
- Wash their hands regularly and use any hand sanitizer that is offered.
- Follow instructions given by instructors or project leaders.

### When people leave

Ask people to get in touch to let you know if they become unwell or have been tested as positive with Covid 19 after their visit to your site.

## Organising visits to projects and LAND Centres

If organising a course visit to a permaculture or other project:

- Ensure you speak to the project leaders in advance and understand any restrictions or requirements they may have.
- Check whether they have carried out their own risk assessment and ensured the site is safe to visit.

- Make sure you are clear about the numbers of people allowed on site and how long the visit can last.
- What things do you need to bring - like food, flasks, tools and gloves?
- What space is available in bad weather?

## Travel plans

Students, visitors and volunteers will need to get to your site or course or group visit destination, so you will need to create a travel plan to ensure that your participants can travel safely and follow distancing guidelines. This could be very challenging, unless cycling or walking are possible. 5 people in a car would not be following guidelines, so trips may require a much greater use of cars, or public transport, which will be difficult for some participants, as a significant number of people are now worried about using public transport. If your venue, site or visit destination is not easily accessible by walking or cycling, and public transport is limited, you will need to work with your group to consider what other options are available.

## Working and learning inside

### Choosing a venue to teach in

- If you are using your own venue, then review 'checking your buildings advice' above.
- If you are using a venue that you hire, contact the owners to ensure that they have carried out a full risk assessment and ask them about what measures they have put in place. Check about hygiene, washing, toilets, ventilation, cleaning rotas.
- Ask them for an estimate of how many people can now use the space taking into consideration social distancing measures.
- Check what responsibilities you would have when hiring the space, including cleaning, removing rubbish etc.
- The main challenge will be to find venues that are big enough to allow your group to carry out learning activities safely. We will not be able to have people sitting up tight to each other any more, so larger venues will be needed in general.
- At present gathering of 30 people or more are not allowed, and it is unclear whether this applies to adult education courses or voluntary project activities, but in general, smaller groups will be much easier to support indoors.

### Residential courses

- If you are offering residential courses, ensure that good plans are in place to allow camping spaces, rooms or dormitories to meet new requirements, and that eating spaces are big enough.



- Particular attention should be paid to eating and food preparation spaces and agreements.

## Small group work

- When designing learning activities, consider how students will need to interact with each other to carry them out.
- Group activities in which 4 or 5 people cluster together will need to be physically spaced out, and carried out ideally in well ventilated spaces or outside.
- Think and listen style one to one conversations will need to be carried out differently - perhaps with people facing away from each other, rather than towards each other.

## Interactive activities

- Practical sessions, games and ice-breakers will all need to be checked for their impact on social distancing.

## Other resources

See the Permaculture Association's list of [Covid 19 resources here](#)

Comprehensive resources and links can also be found on the Social Farms and Gardens Website: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-links-resources-and-support>

In particular the resource on reopening Care Farms and Green Care sites:  
[https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/sites/farmgarden.org.uk/files/covid-19\\_risk\\_assessment\\_checklist\\_-\\_reopening\\_care\\_farms\\_and\\_gc\\_sites\\_june\\_2020.pdf](https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/sites/farmgarden.org.uk/files/covid-19_risk_assessment_checklist_-_reopening_care_farms_and_gc_sites_june_2020.pdf)

The Land Workers' Alliance has put together a series of helpful resources covering:

- Advice on safer working practices
- Solidarity Pot for members
- Food bank and food poverty organisations
- Mental health support and resources
- Matching need with demand – produce, advice and labour
- Join an agroecological land army
- Further resources and support

<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/covid19-support>

## Help us keep this updated

As our learning progresses we will identify successful strategies that will make it easier for us to cope with the 'new normal'. A number of epidemiologists have suggested that the pandemic could last for 36 months, so we should aim to get good at this as quickly as possible!

If you have suggestions for new areas to cover or successful strategies to include, please send them to: [andyg@permaculture.org.uk](mailto:andyg@permaculture.org.uk)

## Contributors

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