



Restarting face-to-face services: FAQs

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If you have any questions which aren't covered below, please email the Volunteer Support Team on volunteersupport@mssociety.org.uk, or call 0300 500 8084 (#3).

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- **How long before an event restarts should information and paperwork be uploaded to the Portal?**

Please do it as soon as you can. We'll review the paperwork as quickly as we can, but please bear in mind that we have around 250 groups. We'd hope to get back to you in four to five days.

- **Why can't we use unmanaged venues?**

We don't think it's appropriate for volunteers to have to make and keep a venue COVID safe, or to bear the responsibilities that would go along with that.

- **A managed venue we want to use has requested a copy of the MS Society's COVID Risk Assessment – but we're only using Guidance documents now for managed venues. What should we do?**

All you can do is provide them with copies of the Guidance documents and supporting documents we're using.



- **We run a service in a church hall. The caretaker prepares the room, but leaves us the key to lock up. Is this an unmanaged venue?**

Yes. If there's nobody there in case of emergency while you're using the venue, and to ensure it's thoroughly cleaned afterwards, it's unmanaged and the Service Provider would now need to hire it.

- **Could we use an unmanaged venue if we hire a cleaning company?**

Currently, no you can't. This is because it doesn't solve the issue of having somebody responsible there in case of emergency and for ensuring that the venue is made COVID safe, or to bear the responsibilities that would go along with that.

- **We've been told by the community centre we use that we must now be responsible for putting tables and chairs up and down. Should we agree to this?**

As groups must not take on any responsibility to make a venue COVID safe, which includes the organising of tables and chairs, groups cannot agree to do this. Staff at a managed venue are responsible for ensuring a room is COVID safe, and this would include the setting up and putting away of tables and chairs.

- **Does MSS require all attendees at group-run events to have had a vaccination?**

The Government have not announced any plans for COVID-vaccination passports for members of the public. Without such a scheme, or any other reliable way of checking that people are vaccinated, we're not considering this option at the moment. If the Government's position on this changes then we'll review our decision. It's therefore up to each individual to decide whether they would feel safe attending any group-run events.

- **Can we plan to use an unmanaged venue for a group meeting after 19 July?**

Currently, no. It depends on what the 19 July changes will be and if we can support the processes required for making a venue COVID safe. This may require our groups to undertake and complete potentially lengthy COVID risk assessments. We're keeping this under review.



- **We'd normally start thinking about our Christmas events at this time of year and booking venues. What should we do?**

Our current advice is that, if the event is to be held in a managed venue, then go ahead and book it. But please bear in mind that, in the event of another lockdown happening (national or local), it's very likely that any deposits will be lost.

QUESTIONS ABOUT RESTARTING SOME FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES THROUGH GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS / RISK ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTS:

- **Can we start booking street or store collections?**

Yes. If you've followed the process for restarting your fundraising activity, you may begin to organise these. Bear in mind that not all venues are currently accepting collection bookings and will be limiting the number of people that can attend.

- **We urgently need better card reader machines. When will these be available?**

We've now gone to tender with the two suppliers whose products meet our needs. We hope to make a decision and roll the new model out to groups very soon.

- **Can we still give out stickers at collections?**

Not at the moment, as this would potentially require an unnecessary breaking of social distancing requirements.

- **Do we need to upload PARQ forms to the Portal?**

Completed PARQs must be kept and stored for a minimum of three years for legal reasons. But, for GDPR reasons, they shouldn't be uploaded to the Portal.

- **What should we do about any cash received?**

Continue to follow good normal hygiene practices. If you're handling a lot of cash, think about wearing gloves. Wash your hands afterwards and before eating. Current advice from the Fundraising Regulator is that any



cash received in sealed collecting tins/buckets should be stored for 72hrs prior to opening and counting.

o **What should we do after using fundraising equipment?**

All fundraising equipment should be washed/wiped down after use and ideally between users (or at least sanitised). Avoid sharing equipment where possible and wash your hands afterwards and before eating.

QUESTIONS ABOUT RESTARTING SOME SOCIAL ACTIVITIES THROUGH GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS:

o **Can we now hold Coordinating Team meetings in someone's house?**

Unfortunately not. The Government guidance for support meetings states that these still shouldn't resume in private homes.

o **If we hold a social in a managed venue like a restaurant, how many people can we take (divided into groups of six)? And do we have to wear masks and observe social distancing?**

This depends upon current official guidance in your nation/area, and also the requirements of the venue – so check with them first. We do, however, strongly recommend social distancing and the wearing of masks indoors, other than when eating and drinking.

o **Do we still need to do risk assessments for social events in managed venues?**

No. You just need to complete the relevant Guidance document.

o **We hold a social at the same venue every week. Do we need to complete a new Guidance document each time?**

No. In this case, you would only need to complete it once, stating the start and end (if known) dates for running the event. Please also give details of the occurrence of the meeting, such as 'every Tuesday', or 'first Tuesday of every month'.

o **What do we do if someone turns up to a social unexpectedly, so we haven't been able to send them the attendee COVID guidance in advance?**



Have the guidance available to hand out on the day. To avoid printing and handling multiple copies, perhaps stick a copy on the wall if you can.

- o **Can people bring their own food and drink to events?**

Yes, we recommend this. Groups should currently not be preparing drinks and snacks for their events.

- o **What about providing food and drinks for people? If the venue has a kitchen, can we make hot drinks and hand out sealed packets of biscuits, etc?**

We're not currently supporting this, so please ask attendees to bring their own snacks and drinks to venues that do not offer this as part of the hire.

- o **If we hold social events outdoors, do we need masks?**

We advise you to check your nation's governmental advice on this, as it can vary between nations and could change dependent on the local COVID situation. If an attendee feels more comfortable wearing a mask (even if it's not a current requirement) then it's their personal choice to do so.

QUESTIONS ABOUT RESTARTING SERVICES PROVIDED BY A PROFESSIONAL THROUGH AN SLA (SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT):

- o **Does my service need an SLA?**

Services delivered by a professional Service Provider (whether this is an individual or an organisation) need a written SLA which sets out the expectations of everyone involved. So, an SLA is required for services such as group exercise classes, therapies delivered to an individual, and partnerships with other organisations such as the CAB.

An SLA is **not** required for social events and meetings organised by a group. We have separate guidance paperwork instead which must be completed for these activities.

- o **Does my Service Provider need a Disclosure check?**

[Click here for our guide to the need for a Disclosure check.](#)



- **What support is there for me if I've never negotiated an SLA before?**

If this is your first experience of working with a Service Provider to develop a service, your Regional Development Officer will be able to help you. You can contact them via the Volunteer Support Team by emailing volunteersupport@mssociety.org.uk, or calling 0300 500 8084 (#3).

- **I've completed SLAs in the past for my group's services, and some are still current. Why do I have to start again?**

As groups restart services following the easing of lockdown restrictions, it's important that all services are delivered in a COVID-safe environment. We want to ensure that the responsibility for meeting the necessary COVID-secure measures become the responsibility of the Service Provider and the owner of any premises that the service takes place in.

The new SLA template contains clauses that emphasise where these responsibilities lie.

- **How do I upload an SLA to the Portal?**

We've created a short video with simple instructions on how to do this. [Click here to watch it.](#)

- **What if I still can't upload an SLA to the Portal?**

If, after watching the video, you're still having difficulties uploading an SLA, you (or your Service Provider) can email it to the Volunteer Support Team on volunteersupport@mssociety.org.uk.

- **What happens when I've added my SLA to the Portal or sent it to the Volunteer Support Team?**

A member of the team will check that you've completed all the right areas and that no amendments have been made by you or the Service Provider. When the check has been completed, you'll receive an email confirming your service can restart. If we have any concerns over how the SLA has been completed, we'll be in touch instead to discuss. **Please note that you can't restart your service until you receive the confirmation email.**



- **If a professional is visiting a client in their home, does the home address have to go on the SLA?**

No. 'At client's home' is sufficient.

- **What do we do if the Service Provider is a private individual and doesn't have a 'Registered office' address to put on the SLA?**

They put their personal address or, if they operate as a sole trader from another address, they put their business address.

- **How do I complete an SLA without a printer?**

You can download it, complete it electronically and email it to your Service Provider, who can then email it back to you to upload to the Portal. No hard copy is required.

- **As we need to keep an email from the Service Provider to support typed signatures on the SLA, should we upload this to the Portal as well?**

Yes, that's a great idea as it keeps everything together and, if the volunteers involved change, the new ones then have all the information they need about the service in one place.

- **Why does the SLA not stipulate that a Service Provider must be vaccinated against COVID?**

There's currently no legal requirement for this, so it's a matter for the Service Provider and their insurer.

- **If we complete a new SLA and then something small changes (eg scheduling details, or number of sessions provided), will we need to do a fresh one?**

No. For changes like that, you can upload a Letter of Variation to the Portal, explaining the new terms which have been agreed.

- **We currently use the same service provider as another group for a similar service. Do we need our own SLA with the Service Provider?**



Yes. Each group using the service provider needs to agree the terms under which the Service Provider is engaged, and what levels of service can be expected.

- **If a Service Provider visits a client in their own home, is this a managed or unmanaged venue?**

Managed. The Service Provider will have their own code of practice (likely through affiliation to a professional body) and insurance, and will make their own decisions about a client's home. And the client should work with them to mitigate any risks and make them feel comfortable to operate in the home.

- **We have several Service Providers running different classes at the same time in an unmanaged venue? How do we decide which one should book the venue?**

This is something you will need to get the service providers to agree between themselves as they will need to decide how they accept the responsibilities required under hiring the venue.

- **If we have to ask our Service Providers to organise venue hire, we may well lose them. Is there any way around this?**

Sadly not. It's not reasonable for our volunteers to take responsibility for COVID safety at this time. If you've moved any services online, continue in this way instead for the time being.

- **We use a managed venue, but they won't take responsibility for COVID safety, and neither will our Service Provider. What can we do?**

Unfortunately, if this is the situation you find yourself in, you won't be able to use this venue at the moment. If you've moved any services online, continue in this way instead for the time being. We will, of course, be constantly reviewing the situation and will update our process if and when we can.

- **Our group was part of the pilot project last year and completed an SLA for a service in a managed venue. Do we still need to do a new one now?**

As long as the venue you're using is managed, and accepts full responsibility for COVID safety, you can continue with the SLA you



prepared at the time because it was a COVID SLA prepared for the pilot project.

- **We already have an SLA in place for an online-only service. Is it still valid?**

Yes. You can continue to operate online with this, as COVID concerns don't apply. If the service moves to become fully or partly face to face, you'll need a new, COVID-safe, SLA.

- **Our Service Provider uses their own home. Is this a managed venue?**

Yes, it's a managed venue as they'll need to have the appropriate insurance in place to bring clients into their home.

- **We do yoga in a managed venue, but our service users would prefer to bring their own mats now. Is that OK?**

That's fine so long as the venue and Service Provider are happy about it. But do remember that groups must not fund exercise equipment for service users.

- **If a Service Provider offers more than one service, do we need a separate SLA for each?**

If the services being delivered are similar and of the same service category (eg they can all be categorised as complementary therapy or an exercise class) then you can detail each on the same SLA. If the services are of a different category (eg an instructor who provides an exercise class and also provides massage) you'd need two different SLAs to cover the different category of service.

- **If we complete a new SLA now, are you likely to ask us to complete another different one in the coming weeks?**

This is very unlikely. We would only request this if something changed that made it absolutely necessary.

- **Do we have to formally terminate an existing SLA to change over to a new one?**

If your Service Provider is not willing to transfer the service to the new COVID template, and insists that there is unexpired time left under your existing SLA, then you will have to give notice to terminate. You won't be



able to restart the service until you've discussed and negotiated the service being provided under the new template with either the existing or a new Service Provider. If you need support with this, contact your Regional Development Officer.

- **How many signatures do we need on an SLA?**

Three. The group must sign the document in accordance with the signing instructions for financial documents, as per the 'financial rules' for groups. The Service Provider must also sign the document.

- **If we're only signposting members to exercise classes organised elsewhere, do we need to know whether the venues are managed?**

No. In this case, the provider of the service is responsible for ensuring that all COVID safety requirements are being met, and individuals should make up their own minds about attending. You should make it clear when signposting that it's not an MS Society-organised event.