

Space for Learning: Covid guidance for museums, galleries, heritage and performing arts sites

This document is to help learning services and freelancers understand how to work safely during the Covid-19 pandemic. (See www.gov.uk/coronavirus for information about Covid-19.) It aims to provide a practical framework to think about what is needed to continue, or restart, learning services during the Covid-19 pandemic and to support the health and wellbeing of workers and audiences.

It should be read alongside other relevant Covid-19 guidelines published by HM Government and is intended to supplement advice published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Department for Education (DfE), the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and associated bodies such as the National Museums Directors Council and Museums Galleries Scotland.

You may find it helpful to start with the checklist of questions on page 35 and then consult the sections that are relevant to you.

The guidance was developed by members of the Space for Learning: Covid Secure working group and individual task and finish groups, with support from the Clare Duffield Foundation, Engage, the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) and the Theatre Education Forum (TEF). Members were drawn from learning teams from UK museum, gallery, heritage and performing arts sites. This project builds upon earlier partnerships established in 2015 to develop the original *Space for Learning* publication and has been expanded to include performing arts sites.

The guidance is correct to the best of our knowledge as of 2 December 2020 and will be updated as new information becomes available. Information will also be available on <https://spaceforlearning.org.uk/covid-guidance/>. Please note that all links in this guidance were verified as of 1 October. However, as the world re-opens, change is constant and inevitable. We will endeavour to keep information up to date; but do check back regularly to official advice channels and if you have a query, please contact us on admin@cloreduffield.org.uk to discuss.

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1. Workforce safety and wellbeing

1.1 Risk Assessments

Assessing and mitigating for risks is at the heart of being Covid Secure as a workplace and cultural venue.

Completing a Risk Assessment should be the first step in any plans or actions around re-opening. Guidance from DCMS on re-opening includes comprehensive sections on managing risk. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have a [Risk Assessment template](#) on their website and colleagues have shared some examples on the Space for Learning: Covid guidance [webpages](#).

1.2 Training and resources

You will need to consider what new training may be needed for your workforce in light of changes you make to be Covid Secure. For example, visitor welcome training may need to be tweaked to include building awareness of how PPE can impede non-verbal communication with audiences, particularly those with sensory impairment, mental health and communication conditions or a dementia diagnosis. If you are delivering more activity online or offsite, do team members need additional training in how best to devise sessions or deliver?

You should also consider the cost, resource and timing implications of any training.

Training needs

[GEM](#), [Engage](#) and the TEF surveyed freelancers about their current needs in July 2020. The most frequently mentioned skills freelancers wanted more training on were:

- Delivering learning online
- Using online platforms (for example, Zoom)
- Creating digital content (for example, making films)
- Running a Covid Secure workshop or using objects and resources in a safe manner
- Developing blended learning pedagogy
- Online safeguarding

Training providers

The key UK training providers for topics related to museum and gallery learning are [GEM](#) and [Engage](#). Both have been developing online training to support the sector as a result of Covid-19.

Other training providers include the [Museums Association](#), [Museums Galleries Scotland](#) the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) and [Kids in Museums](#). Support for digital can be found at [Culture 24](#) and the [AMA](#) provides support for freelancers.

Artwork delivers safeguarding training and Engage Scotland are planning online safeguarding training.

Further resources

StageTEXT have launched a series of free training videos to teach people working in arts and culture how to subtitle their own work and to understand the benefits and importance of subtitles.

Arts Marketing Association are offering free online training and webinars, open to members and non-members.

1.3 Face coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Everyone is strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in enclosed spaces where there are people they do not normally meet. Face coverings are not classified as PPE.

In England, Scotland and Wales, members of the public are required by law to wear face coverings in cultural venues. There is specific guidance for each home nation that also includes information about disposal of face coverings.

Scotland guidance

Face coverings must be worn by everyone aged five and over at indoor tourist, heritage or cultural sites, museums and galleries. There is an exemption for 'members of staff, or volunteers, of indoor premises where it is mandatory to wear a face covering who are physically separated, by means of, for example, partition screens, from passengers or customers or if they maintain a two metre distance from customers or members of the public'.

England guidance

From 8 August members of the public in England visiting theatres and 'museums, galleries, aquariums, indoor zoos or visitor farms, or other indoor tourist, heritage or cultural sites' are required to wear a face covering by law. Children under the age of 11 are excluded. Schools are not included in the list of indoor settings, however the guidance says 'You should also wear a face covering in indoor places not listed here where social distancing may be difficult and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet'.

Wales guidance

Face coverings must be worn in all indoor public places. Children under 11 do not have to wear face coverings. Face coverings need to be used by persons aged 11 and over in areas to which members of the public have access. Education and childcare settings are not public places.

Ask yourself:

- Are all your staff aware of face covering exemptions? Are they fully trained in how to deal with queries or situations surrounding the use/non-use of face coverings?
- How will the use of face coverings and PPE affect staff communication with audiences, particularly non-verbal communication?
- Will staff use face visors/shields rather than cloth face coverings? How about front-of-house staff? Mix of both? (In Scotland visors must be used with a face covering underneath.)
- Will hand sanitiser gel points be available for visitors as well as staff?
- Will you provide protective items for the public and if so, will these be free of charge? Have you factored this into your budgeting?
- How will your organisation dispose of face coverings and PPE?

1.4 Useful online resources relating to workplace safety and wellbeing

Covid-19 guidance

- [The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#)
- DCMS [Performing Arts](#)
- [Museums, Galleries and Heritage, Scottish Government](#) including an [Operational Guide checklist](#) useful for planning front of house operations.
- [UK Hospitality](#)
- England [Retail](#)

PPE disposal guidance

- [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#)
- [Scotland primary healthcare setting](#)
- Cabinet Office Face coverings toolkit (see our [website](#) to download)

2. Adapting – your buildings and learning spaces

2.1 Ventilation

One of the ways to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 transmission is good ventilation that draws outdoor air into the building and does not recirculate indoor air. The available evidence indicates that:

- Transmission of Covid-19 commonly occurs in closed indoor spaces.
- There is currently no evidence of human infection with the virus via aerosols distributed through the ventilation system ducts of Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning systems (HVACs). The risk is rated as very low.
- Well-maintained HVAC systems, including air-conditioning units, securely filter large droplets containing the virus. It is possible for Covid-19 aerosols (small droplets and droplet nuclei) to spread through HVAC systems within a building or vehicle and stand-alone air-conditioning units if air is recirculated.
- Air flow generated by air-conditioning units may facilitate the spread of droplets (exhaled by people infected with Covid-19) further within indoor spaces.
- HVAC systems may have a complementary role in decreasing transmission in indoor spaces by increasing the rate of air change, decreasing recirculation of air and increasing the use of outdoor air.

From European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control:

[Heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems \(HVACs\) in the context of COVID-19](#)

Air conditioning and airflow

HSE has provided guidance on [Air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#) and there is government guidance on [Ventilation of indoor gyms and leisure facilities](#) that could be useful when calculating the amount of space and airflow needed for indoor performing arts activities:

- The maximum occupancy of each indoor facility should be limited by providing a minimum of 100sqft per person. For this figure, the area is the net useable indoor facility space available to members to use, including changing rooms, toilet and wash facilities. Reducing capacity in this way whilst sustaining ventilation flows, will increase the typical current 10l/s/p flow rate of ventilation to at least 20l/s/p, as fewer people are being served by the ventilation system.
- Ventilation systems should provide 100% fresh air and not recirculate air from one space to another.

Government advice [Keeping workers and customers safe during COVID-19 in shops and branches](#) includes a section on ventilation, and suggests the following steps will usually be needed:

- Increasing the existing ventilation rate by adjusting the fan speed.
- Operating the ventilation system when there are people in the building.
- Monitoring and managing filters in accordance to manufacturer instructions.
- Keeping doors and windows open if possible.
- Using ceiling fans or desk fans to improve air circulation, provided there is good ventilation.

If you are keeping interior doors open for ventilation, ensure this doesn't break your fire or safeguarding regulations. If windows are open, ensure this doesn't breach your collection care or security protocols.

2.2 Visitor numbers

The [NMDC guidance](#) Public Safety section contains sections on *Managing visitor capacity*, *Mass gatherings*, and *Making changes to visitor experiences*, all of which provide useful guidance on planning movement through sites.

NMDC advise that where calculating exact floor space is complex, museums may find it more logical to carefully manage the flow of visitors.

Isometric Studio, an exhibition design company based in America, have created a [toolkit](#) to help museums consider how to calculate new occupancy limits for social distancing, as well as think about best practice in visitor circulation.

2.3 Furniture, layout, fixtures and fittings

You may need to reconfigure learning spaces to ensure you can meet social distancing. This may require you to remove some furniture, change the layout or change the function. You may require different types of furniture that allow for a different type of activity to take place. Avoid soft furnishings that cannot be cleaned easily.

Complete an audit of the fixtures and fittings in your learning spaces. For each item, consider how it could be made Covid Secure. Can it be adapted? Can a regime be implemented to ensure continued safe usage? Which items need to be removed or taken out of use?

Can you remove unnecessary items making cleaning regimes quicker and easier? There may be workarounds that enable you to continue using items, for example:

- Is it possible to install no-touch automatic doors? Or can you equip your staff with door opener tools to avoid touching handles?
- Can taps be adapted to sensor taps?
- Can you install no-touch light switches?
- Can you purchase no-touch sensor lid bins?

- Can you use removable, re-usable table coverings that can be placed in quarantine after use?
- Can you compartmentalise large spaces using room dividers such as portable screens?

2.4 Toilets

Some sites are offering dedicated resources, spaces and times for particular groups to use – for example, a booked group having their own toilet for the day or learning space. Others are designating toilets for a group's use for set hours and planning cleaning in between different groups' usage.

As your venue makes adaptations to toilet procedures, can you ensure equality of access for those with additional needs or invisible disabilities? For example, a 'one in, one out' policy resulting in a queue could cause issues for those that need quick access to toilet facilities. Consider staff training, effective communications and no-fuss procedures for ensuring toilet access for all.

A great Twitter feed to follow on 'all things toilets' is @MuseumToilets. They teamed up with various other organisations and individuals in June 2020 to host a [webinar](#) about re-opening and toilets, and it's available on YouTube.

Wallace Collection case study

The Wallace Collection doesn't have dedicated toilets linked to its learning space, operating instead a series of unisex toilets for general visitation. In order to support visiting school groups onsite, they are planning to remove one of their public toilets (the closest to the learning space) from general use on the day the group visits. This will enable Primary classes and Secondary year groups to maintain their 'bubble' through the use of a dedicated toilet facility.

The toilet will be deep cleaned before the visit, and directly afterwards, and returned to general visitation; cleaning schedules will be adjusted in accordance with group bookings. Due to the significant reduction in general visitor numbers due to social distancing measures, they have determined that taking one toilet out of general use will not place pressure on other facilities, for which an enhanced cleaning plan is already in place.

They also only have one accessible toilet onsite and cannot ring-fence this for visiting groups. However, through close liaison with the school, they determine in advance if there is likely any need for this facility and if so, make bespoke arrangements to have the facility deep cleaned before and after use. This information will be shared in advance with the school so that they can determine suitability. The Wallace Collection aims to admit schools before the museum opens to the general public, so if the toilet break is at

the start of the session there will not be any issues around using the accessible toilet. An extra plan will need to be in place if someone needs to use the accessible toilet during opening hours.

From England DfE guidance for out of school settings:

- It is not necessary for each class or group to use a separate toilet. However, you should consider how you can limit the number of children using the toilet at any one time and, where possible, avoid different groups using the same facilities at the same time. Importantly, you should promote good hand hygiene and encourage all children to wash their hands thoroughly, with soap and running water for 20 seconds, after using toilet facilities.
- As with all frequently used surfaces, toilets should be cleaned thoroughly using standard products such as detergent and bleach. The frequency of cleaning required will depend on usage but is advised to be more than might have been previously considered appropriate. In most cases we expect cleaning of toilet facilities to take place at least twice a day, and in particular between use by different classes and groups.

3. Adapting – your processes

3.1 Arrival on site

England: NHS Test and trace

Venues in hospitality, the tourism and leisure industry, close contact services and local authority facilities must collect details and maintain records of staff, customers and visitors on your premises to support NHS Test and Trace. The Government has provided guidance on the information to collect and how to store and dispose of it: Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace

Providers of out-of-school activities should keep a written or electronic list of the children in each group they work with for at least 21 days for Test and Trace purposes.

Scotland: Test and Protect

Scotland's NHS tracking and testing programme – data will need to be collected as part of ticketing and visiting and held for 21 days.

Wales: Test, trace, protect

Certain businesses are expected to collect and retain information about who has been on the premises, and when, for 21 days. Museums, heritage and performing arts sites are not specifically mentioned, however the guidance highlights settings where 'staff, customers and visitors will spend a longer time on these premises than in other surroundings and potentially come into close contact with people outside of their household' as needing to collect details.

3.2 Booked visits

Many sites are asking visitors to pre-book their visit, to allow them to manage numbers of visitors in their spaces. The pre-booking process can also be used to help manage your test and trace records.

- Art Fund's Art Tickets is a ticket management system for selling tickets online designed exclusively for museums and galleries. It is free to use.
- Some venues, such as the National Trust, are using Eventbrite for booking visits. It is free to use if your tickets are free. There is a charge if you are selling tickets.
- Tickets is another online ticketing system.

3.3 Creating a welcome video

Some sites have created a welcome video to help visitors understand what to expect when they arrive at a venue, including information about access and toilets.

- [Painshill Park](#)
- [National Memorial Arboretum](#)
- [Auckland Museum](#)

3.4 Opening hours

To facilitate visitors' social distancing and prevent them from waiting in large groups, some sites are offering pre-opening-hour arrival options for designated groups – for example pre-booked organised groups of adults, school groups and holiday clubs. Groups can then arrive individually and use the facilities, such as toilets, and move through spaces before public opening hours.

3.5 Meeting visitors' access needs while being Covid Secure

Situations may arise when museum staff would previously have offered support that requires physically touching visitors – for example, [sighted guiding](#) for a visitor with visual impairment. You should have discussed these needs with your front of house and learning team in advance of re-opening and decided on your organisation's approach.

- [Disability Collaborative Network](#) are putting out some great guidance and collaborating on webinars, so they're a good place to look for information. Twitter handle: @museumDCN.
- [EMBED Reopening Recommendations Support Service](#): created to support organisations in their decision making prior to reopening following COVID-19 lockdown. It considers potential barriers faced by disabled visitors.
- [Making Events Accessible](#) from Shape Arts is a useful list of questions for producers to ask of themselves.
- [RNIB guidance for retailers](#)

Inclusive principles

[We Shall Not Be Removed](#) has worked in partnership with [Ramps on the Moon](#), [Attitude is Everything](#), [Paraorchestra](#), and [What Next?](#) to create a new guide for the arts and entertainment sectors to support disability inclusion. The [Seven Inclusive Principles for Arts & Cultural Organisations working safely through COVID-19](#) is designed to complement the suite of guidance documents already issued by UK Governments and sector support organisations. Section five in the guidance looks at mapping the visitor journey and includes resources to help organisations reconsider their existing practice.

3.6 Turnaround time and cleaning

When in use you will need to consider the required turnaround time for your learning spaces, including cleaning of fixtures, fittings and furniture. Alternatively you may choose to quarantine spaces for 72 hours between uses.

Ask yourself:

- Who will be responsible for doing this cleaning?
- How will you ensure they are kept safe whilst doing so?
- How long will it take them and what will they require to get the job done?

Guidance for England on [Cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home](#).

Some venues are using fogging machines in spaces without collections or precious objects that could be damaged by the cleaning mist. For example the Victoria & Albert Museum have bought a handheld [Vector Fog](#) machine to use in back of house offices.

4. Your audiences

4.1 Adhering to relevant government advice

Colleagues are strongly encouraged to ensure that programming, resources and interventions allow audiences a consistent opportunity to adhere to the government guidelines of their home nation.

We have attempted to summarise and link to current relevant home nation guidelines on our website [Government guidance](#) pages. The pages include summaries of rules on group sizes and links to government guidance on the safe opening of cultural venues, schools and out-of-school settings. We will update the web pages as new information becomes available.

4.2 Early Years audiences and audiences with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Some audiences rely more on touch than others as a method of learning. This is especially true for Early Years and for children and adults with Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities) – SEN/SEND.

For **Early Years** practice, consider:

- *The experience.* Maintain a balance between the needs, rights and experiences of children and the measures that must be put in place to reduce risk of infection. Reducing contact between young children during Early Years sessions is difficult; risk can be mitigated by regularly cleaning surfaces, objects and toys. Avoid using objects and toys with intricate parts or made from materials that can't be easily cleaned.
- *Contact between families.* Encourage adults and children from the same household to interact with each other and not across family bubbles. Can handling objects and toys be used solely by one family group during a closed museum session? Can you position families in socially distanced spaces? Consider measures for wandering children! How will this impact on workshop delivery, quality assurance and the overall experience?
- *Contact between families and members of staff.* Implement measures that limit the number of contacts between children and unrelated adults (for example, seat a storyteller at a social distance from listening families).
- *Hygiene procedures.* Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces such as table tops, play equipment, toys, handrails and door handles. Refer to the HSE guidance. Handwashing is key: have you got access to handwashing facilities before and after object handling or play? If not, can you use bubble group buckets of warm soapy water? How will this be managed in the space, time and with mess limitation? Consider the swallow risk of hand sanitiser and the impact on delicate skin.
- *Capacity.* Drop-in sessions in public and closed learning spaces will be difficult to manage. Consider making them into bookable sessions to manage numbers or

create targeted programmes (for example, open to an invited group of participants only).

Early Years case studies

Manchester Museum have continued their Muso-Baby session virtually during lockdown. It's a closed session for parents referred from social care settings. Relationships are vitally important.

For **Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities)** practice, consider:

- *Information prior to a visit.* Social stories, or filmed introductions, are a good way to convey what a visit might be like and how this has changed to make the building Covid Secure.
- *Talking to audiences and groups about their comfort levels around returning in the short, medium and long term.* Some groups with complex needs may have particular health needs to consider. There is likely to be a deeper level of conversation with those with whom you have a pre-existing relationship.
- *Accessibility.* What and where are the touch points that make a visit accessible (large print guides, braille panels, touch screens, tactile surfaces)? How can these be cleaned on a regular basis, or rotated? Can visitors help by cleaning before and after touching, or using hand sanitiser? Talk to venue colleagues. Will this impact on staffing?
- Consider the impact of PPE and hygiene procedures on your staff welcome. Some people may dislike the texture of hand sanitiser, or nitrile gloves. Are there hand washing or glove alternatives? PPE and face coverings can be intimidating for some neurodiverse people, and hinder lip reading for those who are visually impaired.
- *Digital inclusion.* Some digital methods may exclude those with additional needs. The DCN digital inclusion standards may help aid thinking.
- Direct Access offer excellent accessibility services and have experience of working with the arts, cultural and heritage sector. They offer audits, training and free resources covering physical, online and learning access.

RNIB have issued some useful guidance for retailers that may provide a starting point for supporting visitors who would usually rely on being physically guided.

Special education needs (SEN) case studies

Natural History Museum, London, have pivoted to digital engagement for Dawosaurs Online for children with neurodiverse conditions and sensory processing difficulties.

Melbourne Museum, Australia, have created specific Covid-19 related social stories.

4.3 Useful online resources relating to working with audiences

- Guidance for England on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings
- Guidance on meeting in social situations for England
- Guidance for Wales on protective measures in childcare settings
- Guidance for Scotland on the strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision
- Guidance for Northern Ireland on reopening Early Years settings and schools
- Guidance for Northern Ireland on special schools
- 'EMBED Reopening Recommendation' guidance created in collaboration with the Disability Collaborative Network (DCN) and the School of Health Sciences University of East Anglia considers potential barriers faced by disabled and neurodiverse visitors.
- Seven Inclusive Principles for Arts & Cultural Organisations working safely through COVID-19. Section five in the guidance looks at mapping the visitor journey and includes resources to help organisations reconsider their existing practice.

5. Delivering activities

5.1 Performance-based and participatory activities

See our website [Government guidance](#) pages for current rules on the number of people who can be involved in events taking place inside or outside at a Covid-secure venue.

DCMS has provided [guidance](#) on how to resume singing, woodwind and brass playing indoors with mitigating measures. This advice is based on the results of a UK Government-commissioned study [Perform](#) and the study by SOBRADA which found the risks of Covid transmission for singing and playing are similar to those for speaking at a similar volume.

For activities that involve singing, playing wind or brass instruments DCMS suggests:

- Sing in groups or play instruments outdoors wherever possible
- If indoors use a room with as much space as possible (rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission)
- Ensure good ventilation
- for singing, wind and brass playing allow at least 10l/s/person for all present, including audiences
- observe social distancing
- position pupils back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player.
- keep background noise, including accompanying music low to stop performers rising their voices unduly
- use microphones and do not share microphones, if possible
- no physical correction by teachers or coaches and contact between pupils in dance and drama

Delivering performance-based and participatory activities

The Space for Learning Covid Secure working group, including colleagues working at the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, have compiled the guidance below, drawing on DCMS guidance for [Performing Arts](#) and [Providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#) and guidance from the Department for Education: [Guidance for full opening: schools](#) and [Protective measures for out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).

The following is some general advice about steps you can take to make any performance-based or participatory activities safer:

- Avoid physical paperwork by bringing processes like bookings, permission slips, etc. online.

- Programme workshops to avoid groups meeting when arriving or leaving, and so that practitioners work with as few different groups – and in as few different spaces – as possible.
- Work outdoors if possible; if indoors, ensure adequate ventilation (see *Adapting buildings* section).
- Ensure doors are left open when safe and feasible.
- Schedule time between groups for thorough cleaning of space and toilets.
- Reduce group sizes in line with HM Government guidance.
- Ensure there is sufficient space for the facilitator and participants to practise social distancing from each other.
- Keep groups in their ‘bubbles’ with the facilitator at social distance.
- Consider if additional measures such as face coverings can or should be deployed if you can only keep the 1m+ distance between facilitator and participant bubble.
- Adapt work to reduce physical contact and practise social distancing either between the facilitator and participants in a children’s group, or – if working with households or adults – between participants from different households.
- Provide cleaning stations and ask participants to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser upon entry and exit.
- Avoid or reduce use of props and ensure that any which are used are cleaned in between groups – or quarantined for 72 hours between uses.
- Ensure members from different bubbles do not use the same toilets and lunch or rest spaces at the same time.
- Provide scripts or other resources on-screen or ask participants to bring their own devices to view scripts and resources on.
- Share Risk Assessments with schools and facilitators.
- When work is taking place offsite, use a practitioner who is local to the school or venue to avoid unnecessary travel and accommodation (refer to DfE guidance regarding avoidance of class travel beyond walking distance).

5.2 Handling of objects and art materials

The transmission of Covid-19 is thought to occur mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing, and through contact with contaminated surfaces. The predominant modes of transmission are assumed to be aerosol, droplet and contact.

Survival rates of the virus vary on different surface types and in different environmental conditions. Learning in museums focuses a lot on touch, handling and sensory experiences, all of which could enable transmission, and need to be risk assessed and the risk mitigated.

It is worth noting that research published in the Lancet on the 29 September has found a lower risk that previously thought for touch transmission in real life conditions.

To begin your enhanced Risk Assessment process, consider:

- Which objects, materials and surfaces are regularly handled or breathed on by staff or members of the public?
- What are they made from, and how long does the virus survive on those materials?
- In what environmental conditions do the handling happen?

Research on virus survival on different surfaces

The tables below show current research on the length of time the virus survives on different surfaces – results vary slightly across studies. The information should help you assess what actions may be most appropriate for you to take in your own situation.

Environmental conditions play a part in how long the virus survives. It lives longer on smoother surfaces, like plastic. Freezing (or a freeze-thaw cycle) doesn't destroy the virus and, as this is the usual method of disposing of unwanted pests in museums, other methods need to be considered. At lower temperatures, the virus seems more stable (4°C survival rate is up to 2 weeks) and is destroyed quickly by high temperatures (70°C survival rate is 5 minutes).

Study: Stability of SARS-CoV-2 in different environmental conditions¹

At a standard 22°C and relative humidity of 65% it survives for the timescales set out below:

Surface	Time to no viable virus
Paper	3 hours
Fabric & wood	24 hours
Glass	4 days
Plastic & stainless steel	7 days

¹ Stability of SARS-CoV-2 in different environmental conditions. Open Access Published: April 02, 2020 DOI: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247\(20\)30003-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanmic/article/PIIS2666-5247(20)30003-3/fulltext)

Study: Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1²

Virus survival time on different surfaces	
Surface	Time to no viable virus
Copper	4 hours = no viable virus
Cardboard	24 hours = no viable virus
Stainless steel	48 hours = 10 ^{0.6} TCID ₅₀ per millilitre of medium
Plastic	72 hours = 10 ^{0.6} TCID ₅₀ per millilitre of medium

To gain the above times the researchers used chemicals to retrieve the surviving virus, so they indicate this is not necessarily the same for a casual contact during an object being handled. This will have an impact on objects being used or stored in temperature-controlled museum stores. Relative humidity has been found to have no impact (speeding or slowing) on the decay rate of the virus.

Sunlight speeds up the destruction of the virus in the air, but sunlight is not good conservation for many objects or artworks. Studies have used simulated sunlight on air droplet transmission (not by touch) and shown that in the average light-levels of an autumn day, there is a 90% destruction rate within 19 minutes, rising to 90% destruction in 6 minutes for a sunny day in high summer³. This research is worth considering when managing the wider learning environment, along with air circulation within spaces.

HSE guidance on cleaning surfaces

5.3 Use of interactive elements within open access public areas

The ability to touch and play with interactive elements in arts and cultural spaces is key to the learning experience. We define interactive elements as any resource or activity that invite touch and manipulation as part of the cultural learning experience. This could involve digital technology (e.g. touch screens), physical and mechanical play (e.g. building blocks, dressing up, trails), museum object handling (e.g. specimens, sculptures, art pieces, décor), creative activities (e.g. making art and

² Survival of COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces, Van Doremalen N, Morris D, Holbrook M *et al.* Aerosol and surface stability of SARS-CoV-2 as compared with SARS-CoV-1. *NEJM* 2020. *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, April 2020, Vol 304, No 7936, online | DOI: 10.1211/PJ.2020.20207889. [doi: 10.1056/NEJMc2004973](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMc2004973)

³ Simulated Sunlight Rapidly Inactivates SARS-CoV-2 on Surfaces. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, Volume 222, Issue 2, 15 July 2020, Pages 214–222, <https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiaa274> Published: 20 May 2020

craft) and sensory aids (e.g. phonic/audio devices, large print books/tactile panels, braille labels, smell stations). These are likely to be in open access public areas.

The interactive elements of galleries and learning spaces and attendant risk of transmission need to be thoroughly risk assessed and control measures put in place to create a Covid Secure environment.

Ask yourself:

- Will this area of the building or space be open initially?
- What is the interactive made of, and what risk factor does that carry?
- How many opportunities are there for touch, and how can risk be mitigated?
- How might any control measures impact on accessibility for audiences with additional needs; and what reasonable adjustments can be made?
- Can you replace sections of the interactive to make them more secure through use of different materials, instructions, covers or sanitiser?
- Are you working with venue teams around cleaning rotas?
- If removal is the safest option, what are the timescales for re-introduction and where are these stated?
- Can you safely remove interactive elements from displays and galleries such as sketch pads, drawing stations, handling objects and any dressing-up garments and props?
- With interactive areas which cannot be removed, can these be covered, and signs placed explaining why?
- Can you implement a stricter cleaning programme for high-touch areas and ensure your audiences are aware of this?

The following table illustrates popular interactives and example control measures to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission:

Interactive type	Considerations/Control Measures
Sensory aids, i.e. anything that might require on- or near-facial contact (e.g. phonic or binocular devices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Due to the potential of direct contact with the face, eyes, nose, etc. these devices can be high risk. ● For audio guide technologies, are you able to sanitise effectively between users? Can equipment be single use? What are the waste or environmental impacts? ● Will this impact on equality and access needs? ● Are there lower risk alternatives to provide the same information? E.g. speakers and automated triggers, additional interpretation, QR codes that can trigger the experience on a personal device? ● Can you remove or prevent access to fixed sensory interactives?
Large print guides, tactile drawings and maps, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can they be monitored and cleaned between uses? Whose role will this be? Will this impact on staffing? ● Is single use possible? What is the environmental impact of this? ● Will this impact on equality and access needs? ● Are there possible alternatives? E.g. making available online (large print guides) or small, socially distanced tours for audiences with additional needs?
Digital touchscreens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Could the digital content be left on a loop? ● Are there alternative ways for visitors to engage, e.g. through the use of a stylus? (Could you lend styluses to be sanitised for re-use or give them away?) ● Are there alternative triggers such as floor or foot, RFID, gesture recognition technologies, voice control. etc.? (Touching screens may still be the default, familiar response.) ● Would the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning with associated signage minimise the risk? ● Are there alternatives such as traditional interpretation or explainers?

<p>Touch objects and physical interactives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the object made of and can it be sanitised? What could be used to prevent any damage to the object? Is there a conservator you can seek advice from? • Would the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning with associated signage minimise the risk? • Would frequent touching from hands with sanitiser damage the object? • If it is not possible to touch the object, is it possible to temporarily remove or prevent access, or would signage suffice? • For handling collections or objects, is it possible to clean between usage or rotate collections to enable quarantine?
<p>Art/craft activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible to sanitise equipment between usage? • Would single use equipment be possible or sustainable? • You may be able to secure funding to provide activity packs for children to use onsite or at home afterwards.

Also see this [summary of approaches](#) to interactives during Covid-19 put together by colleagues at the Natural History Museum and Science Museum.

If an activity cannot be made Covid Secure, there needs to be a clear strategic direction around its temporary removal, including procedures, risk level and a plan with timelines that defines the conditions under which these activities (or similar) will be returned. Developmentally, this may be a good point at which to work with audiences to refresh older interactives or think about enhancing the offer.

Case studies

The [Wonderlab](#) at the Science Museum is open. Visitors must pre-book a ticket to enter the Museum, and they are then limiting the number of people who can enter Wonderlab at any one time. Visitors with a Wonderlab Annual Pass can book a free timeslot online in advance by logging into their account.

The Rijksmuseum are using their [multimedia tours](#), which will be disinfected between each use.

The Cincinnati Museum Center has put their digital interactives on a [downloadable app](#).

Very high-touch play environments, such as Children's Museums in the USA, currently remain closed.

5.4 Use of objects within pre-defined programmes (e.g. booked workshops)

In a pre-booked workshop, there is more of an element of control of touch and contact points for museum objects and art material handling. This might be a school workshop at the venue, an outreach workshop, or a booked activity for family or community group.

Consider the following:

- The overall learning environment, including surface cleaning, air flow and circulation, light levels, and position of furniture to allow social distancing. Discuss building and space needs with colleagues, and risk assess for outreach.
- Handwashing is key. Have you got access to handwashing facilities before and after object handling (standard best practice)? If not, can you use hand sanitiser, or bubble-gum buckets of hot soapy water? How will this be managed in the space and time? Consider conservation impacts of cleaning products on museum objects.
- Given the Covid Secure timeframes above, how many 'sets' of objects and materials do you need for rotation? Extra sets of art materials may have cost implications. Work closely with collections colleagues around museum object access.
- If you only have one 'set' of objects, how often can you repeat a session safely and how long needs to be left between groups?
- Will the facilitator alone hold the object? Will each group have a 'set' of objects, or single objects? How will this impact on workshop delivery, and quality assurance?
- If you usually handle museum objects using nitrile gloves (it's possible that PPE may be in short supply), are there alternatives you can use such as cotton gloves, or alternative ways of working to enable access? Consider access needs in terms of textural dislikes for nitrile gloves, and potential allergies.
- For use of loans boxes as outreach participation, refer to the guidance around Covid Secure handling for groups and schools.
- Consider quarantine processes for materials, tools and equipment between group use. [Library examples](#) of the 72-hour quarantine procedures may be useful here.

5.5 Conservation guidance for handling objects without damage

Conservators advocate for clean gloves, or thoroughly cleaned hands when handling objects. Most hand sanitisers have an alcohol base which evaporates quickly off the

hands to leave them dry within a minute. Begin to handle once hands are dry; transference of liquid may damage objects.

- These materials should be unaffected by use of hand sanitiser prior to handling: waxed and bare wood, glazed ceramics, glass.
- These materials could be affected, if the sanitiser is not dry: textiles, metal work, paper, painted surfaces and artworks, taxidermy (e.g. anything that would be damaged by amino acids in our sweat, moisturisers, medication creams, etc.).

Avoid using anti-bacterial wipes on objects, as we don't know how that could damage or affect the surface of the objects without testing. Objects sealed in Secol™ sleeves or acrylic boxes could be wiped. Consider staff PPE for cleaning products used.

Case studies

Leeds Museums and Galleries manage a primary schools membership scheme, including loans boxes containing only accessioned museum objects. These can be made Covid Secure using the 72-hour rule and robust handling practices in school. During lockdown they produced Museum at Home films for schools and families based on the boxes, which have longevity beyond Covid.

5.6 Use of self-directed art materials (e.g. family learning trails and backpacks)

Many arts, cultural and heritage organisations have materials to help guide families or groups around their spaces. These may take the form of backpacks, trails or guides, and usually involve art materials or sustainable, reusable resources.

Consider the following:

- Can you make the collection/return of a backpack Covid Secure? Can you clean each bag and its contents between each use? This will involve working with venue teams.
- If contents cannot be cleaned, given the Covid Secure timeframes for surface transmission of Covid-19 on materials above, how many 'sets' of backpacks do you need for rotation? Extra sets may have cost implications.
- Can you give away art materials to families to take home with them? This will have a cost implication, so can you charge or ask for donations? Think also about the environmental impact of a takeaway resource pack.
- Can you encourage families to bring their own materials to the venue? This may have conservation implications, so consult collections colleagues.

- Are there ways of capturing information/answers or making art using digital means with a person's own technology? What's the alternative if a family has no access to digital capture?
- Can you work with local schemes who are providing art materials to families who need more support as outreach?

If an activity cannot be made Covid Secure, there needs to be a clear strategic direction around its temporary removal, including procedures, risk level and timelines when these activities (or similar) will be returned. Developmentally, this may be a good point to work with audiences to refresh trails.

Case studies

There are currently many schemes across the country to provide families with art material packs to help them learn and play at home. These are being distributed through food banks, schools, social care teams, holiday hunger programmes and through small, grassroots charities. As this is so current, very little is online about them to signpost to. It is very local area based in England, with schemes across Yorkshire, London, Nottingham, and Cambridge; and being managed centrally in Wales. To see how you can help in your area, contact your local authority, Art Council bridge organisation (England), Arts Council of Wales or Arts Council Northern Ireland.

England's scheme from the government, operational in [Newcastle-Gateshead](#).

[Let's Create packs](#) and Bags of Creativity is being managed in England through Arts Council England bridge organisations and Local Cultural Education Partnerships across the country.

National Galleries of Scotland have distributed art packs and printed copies of family activities for family groups throughout Edinburgh:

- [Home is where the art is](#)
- [At home holiday activities](#)

[Children's Art Week](#)

The Royal Shakespeare Company have produced [theatre play boxes](#) for families in Bradford, containing everything needed to make their own puppet theatre.

Slung Low (@slunglow), a theatre company based in Leeds, use their spaces, expertise and humanity for social good. Art doesn't have to be in a building: look up the [LS11 art gallery](#).

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art is distributing 'Art Lab' creative materials and activity prompts alongside food deliveries to family partners.

The Museum of London has created individual family packs for use on gallery and at home. They include a Family Challenger game that can be played in any gallery, stickers and sensory and drawing materials.

Culture Mile has put together monthly Play Packs for families, available online and with hard copies distributed via local food banks.

The Museum of London have designed simple creative activities for people affected by dementia, their carers and loved ones. Available online with hard copies distributed through care home partners.

5.7 Blended learning: using digital engagement

Blended, or hybrid, learning between the real and digital worlds may be a way forward for school, family and community work. This might be especially relevant if we are in and out of lockdown (locally or nationally), or if our audiences can't, or are uncomfortable to, visit in person.

Consider the following:

- *Local or national guidance for audiences, such as DfE or local authority guidance on school trips, or for audiences with specific needs or risks.* When are the likely timescales for revisiting? DfE are now allowing schools in England to visit in autumn 2020, but local authorities or academy chains may have different regulations or guidance. School insurance may also prevent them from visiting.
- *Talking to audiences about their comfort levels around returning, and how they might want digital engagement in the short, medium and long term.* This might include live broadcasts or films for school workshops in conjunction with loans boxes, setting live briefs, online discussions, book or art clubs. There is likely to be a deeper level of conversation with those with whom you have a pre-existing relationship.
- *Any training needs for staff.* Do you know how to do the digital wizardry you want to be able to offer? Where can you find training or advice? This may have a cost implication.
- *Online safeguarding.* Check, and update as necessary, your organisation's online safeguarding policy and procedures, and implement enhanced Risk Assessments. Live broadcast, or anything involving chat, will have more safeguarding implications than filmed, or static resources. Be transparent. If there is a possibility of building a relationship, then there is the possibility of the channel being open to abuse and misuse.

- *Inclusion.* Not everyone has access to digital means, and some digital methods may exclude those with additional needs. The [DCN digital inclusion standards](#) may help aid thinking.
- *Future-proofing the resources and programmes.* How are you going to use the resources in the long term? Which resources, content or programming will have longevity beyond Covid-19?

Online safeguarding policies examples

- Royal Shakespeare Company: [Online safeguarding guidelines](#)
- [The Barber Institute of Fine Arts](#), University of Birmingham

See the [Space for Learning: Covid guidance](#) web pages for more examples.

Case studies

National Museum Wales Museum Sleepover: [Dino Nights – AT HOME](#)

National Museum Wales usually run a physical sleepover in National Museum Cardiff – where families get to exclusively see the Museum after hours, take part in themed activities, watch a film in the Reardon Smith Theatre, and then sleep under the dome in the grand hall. Obviously due to Covid-19, this hasn't been possible and in March, they were faced with cancelling their planned summer sleepover.

During the first Welsh lockdown, they decided to trial a free digital offer for families to take part in a sleepover from home. Eventbrite was used as a platform to host this digital event – using the new online portal function as a 'hub' to house the pre recorded and live activities. Activities included in their 'at home' sleepover event include:

- A downloadable activity pack
- Dino themed recipes for baking and craft activities
- Quiz (using kahoot)
- Den building
- Storytelling
- Virtual tour of the evolution of Wales gallery
- Dino themed yoga

Many elements of the programme have been pre-recorded at the museum. The event also includes a live element with their regular sleepover contact Dino4Hire. Families can join a live zoom call with Ranger Chris and Trixie the baby dinosaur. Families navigated their way through the content structuring their experience to meet their needs. A private Facebook group runs alongside the eventbrite portal for families to share their pictures and

videos. This group is seen as the interactive/live element of the event and it establishes a community feel – something that’s difficult to foster in a digital environment. 697 families took part in their November sleepover.

National Museum Wales school sessions

While National Museum Wales is currently unable to offer school workshops or group visits at its Museums, some of the learning sessions are now available virtually, making it possible for even more people to take part. Schools can connect with some of the Museum’s most popular workshops using Microsoft Teams. Each session lasts about 45 minutes and involves watching pre-recorded content and taking part in a live facilitated workshop. Digital resources complement each workshop and can be used either before or after the session.

The Jewish Museum London have shifted all their school workshops from physical to digital throughout lockdown using virtual classrooms, tours and talks.

The British Museum deliver an online schools workshop programme (pre-Covid), using the Samsung Digital Learning Centre (sponsorship). Film of staff talking about setting it up.

Natural History Museum, London, have pivoted to digital engagement:

- Nature Live Online is twice weekly live, conversational event for families, adults and schools.
- Virtual family festivals during school holidays
- Virtual Lates for adults

National Galleries of Scotland pivoted their family, adult and access learning programmes to create a series of online resources including:

- Online concerts
- Family resources for use at home or in learning settings: Home is where the art is and At home holiday activities
- Gallery Social for anyone affected by dementia

All resources are available through the learning section.

Scarborough Museum Trust have been engaging primary age children through lockdown using a digital escape room game, Whispers from the Museum.

Leeds Art Gallery Meet and Make is a physical adult group meeting monthly to craft. During COVID, the tutoring and activities have gone online, whilst also talking with participants about when a physical return might happen.

Arts Award have developed a way forward for remote delivery.

Arts Council England [#GetCreativeAtHome](#) encourages people to try new things. This year has focused on at home activity. Search the activity database to find good digital practice in your area, activities or organisations you could partner with, or ideas to 'borrow' (with credits!).

The Fitzwilliam, Cambridge worked with sheltered housing residents prior to Covid-19 to produce co-created films around wellbeing based on the art collections, which they promote as part of [wellbeing at home](#).

The Birmingham Rep have begun [REPosed](#), a series of digital conversations around theatre and theatre making.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art have been digitising their weekly, free, artist-led [Meet&Make](#) sessions for families since March. This will continue until 2021.

Cove Park have developed a series of [downloadable sheets](#).

The Barber Institute (University of Birmingham) have delivered free weekly digital resources and events through their [Barber Home](#) programme.

The Museum of London adapted their school [live stream](#) about the Great Fire of London for a family audience learning from home during school closures. Also, their planned work experience programme was revised to an [online offer](#).

5.8 Delivering in outdoor spaces

Current government recommendations for participatory activities stipulate working outdoors if possible to minimise the risk of transmission of Covid-19. (See guidance for [schools](#) and [out of school settings](#).)

You can also see guidance from the Events Industry Forum [Keeping workers and audiences safe during COVID-19 \(England\)](#) about running outdoor performances and events.

Ask yourself:

- Have you thought about what outdoor spaces you have available on or around your site, small or large?
- What opportunities do you have to take learning activity outdoors?
- Does the outdoor space belong to your organisation or do you need to seek permission to utilise it?
- If you are using outdoor furniture that belongs to your organisation, who in your team will be responsible for cleaning between users?

- If using temporary outdoor structures (e.g. gazebos), have you sought permission to erect them and have you risk assessed them?
- What additional safeguarding and Health & Safety considerations does the outdoor space present?
- Have you added outdoor spaces to your Risk Assessments and policies?
- Have you considered how you will communicate with staff who are outside your building?
- Have you got adequate first aid coverage for outdoor spaces?

Isometric Studio, an exhibition design company based in America, have created a [toolkit](#) for museum re-opening that has a useful section on creating outdoor exhibitions.

5.9 Off-site activities

If schools and groups can't visit your venue, you may wish to deliver off-site workshops or programmes in their settings. Museums and heritage sites normally call this off-site work outreach.

As is always the case, when delivering off-site you will be in buildings and spaces where you, or your organisation, can work but have little or no control over the management of the space and the Covid Secure measures already in place.

You may already have existing risk assessments, lone working policies, procedures and practice in place for off-site working. You can build on these, or perhaps use resources from other organisations that already deliver off-site to develop Covid Secure sessions.

Colleagues have shared some example risk assessments on the [Workforce safety and wellbeing](#) website page.

Check the website sections on [government guidance](#) for the home nations to find out if peripatetic teachers (someone who can teach across several schools) are allowed in schools at the moment.

Remember that school guidelines and ways of working are adapting during the pandemic as advice and rules change and teachers are still altering how they work to react to the current situations they find themselves within. Even if you have already worked in the school everything might not be exactly the same as before, so check in advance of visits and be prepared to adapt to the needs of the school and the class teacher you are working with.

Consider:

- Are staff comfortable working in a different setting? Do they need additional organisational sign off or risk assessments to work in other settings?
- Are there any logistical challenges with working in an outreach setting? Can staff get there? Does it involve car sharing (currently discouraged under some

guidance)? Or public transport? What do you need to transport for the workshop?

- Who manages the building or space? This might be different to the group leader. Talk to them about what measures are already in place (ventilation, cleaning, hand washing / sanitising, toilets, furniture, social distancing) and who will be there to assist you with building matters, if needed.
- Can you share risk assessments with the venue or group organiser?
- What happens if there's a local lockdown? This is especially important if you crossing area or national boundaries. Talk to the group leader about what happens in terms of cancelations and payment if you, the group or the venue are locked down.
- Is the group made up of a single bubble or individuals? Follow the current legislation and guidance around household mixing, considering exemptions. Be aware of passing materials or objects across groups.
- As with any workshop or interaction, materials or objects used will need to be cleaned or quarantined for 72 hrs, and social distancing will need to be observed.
- At the end of the workshop, is there anything you need to do to clean the space for others?

Case studies

Wakefield Museums and Castles case study: adapting a schools programme in response to Covid-19

Wakefield Museums and Castles has an established schools programme of on site and outreach sessions, which halted with the Covid-19 pandemic. From July 2020 we started to receive enquiries from teachers about our provision in the new academic year. At this time, we were still uncertain how and when our sites would be re-opening, and schools themselves did not yet know their own plans and restrictions.

Each teacher that contacted us was asked if they would discuss future planning and provision. An online survey had been sent to teachers in May, but a low-response rate coupled with a changing environment necessitated a more proactive approach. It became clear that teachers were looking to book or at least 'pencil in' sessions that could complement and support their in-school teaching. The rapidly changing guidelines were complicating travel arrangements for schools, and so teachers were requesting outreach sessions over on site visits.

Extending the outreach programme

We already have a well-developed and popular outreach programme, and so a decision was taken to select sessions from the existing programme that

could be tailored to still provide high quality engagement but within safer socially distant, Covid-secure delivery. To do this we have taken the following steps:

- Spoken to other local museums and galleries about their ideas for future provision from September 2020
- Written a new Covid-secure risk assessment and Safe Working Practice for outreach delivery
- Reassessed session content to revise handling opportunities for pupils
- Rewritten content to ensure enquiry, thinking and creativity is still within sessions
- Discussed session content with teachers before delivery
- Increased the questions we ask teachers in the booking process to ensure we are aware of their procedures in-school
- Amended our cancellation policy to cover local and regional lockdown restrictions
- Requested teachers to provide a way to send presentations and support resources prior to the session
- Prepared and quarantined session boxes, objects and resources a minimum of 72 hours prior to session delivery
- Set up a quarantine time of 72 hours after delivery for session boxes, objects and resources

We now have seven different sessions marketed and hope to be adding more as the term progresses. Our outreach programme has begun to be delivered in schools whilst we are more distant from the pupils the content and engagement is still strong.

The spark in a session remains the objects we hold in our collections. Having chance to hold an object to get a tangible connection with the past is a huge 'wow' moment for pupils. Even now we have minimised handling, taking an original 1920s liquorice tin, ancient Greek pot or crocodile skull into the classroom still creates those 'Whoa, is that real miss?' moments. We still get to see eyes light up and questions provoked, ideas created and thoughts discussed.

Our suggestions:

- Get in touch with your teacher contacts and chat with them to see how things in their school are working
- Talk to other local organisations about how they have and are planning for schools delivery
- It adds time, but ask questions in the booking process about safe working in school and how to send your support resources before the session

- Don't underestimate the time it takes to plan, pack and quarantine session boxes and resources – get dates in your diary and stick to them
- Remember the power of the object! The fact you have brought an object to school is a connection many pupils would not normally get
- If you can't or don't want to move around the classroom, ask teaching staff to do this for you
- Chat with your delivery staff after a session – check their welfare and how the session went

Louise Bragan – Wakefield Museums and Castles

Leeds Playhouse case study: Delivering arts in school: the new challenges – and unexpected opportunities – created by the pandemic

Building meaningful relationships with schools is always a challenge for engagement teams in arts and cultural organisations. Changes in staff and school structures, and the weighty demands from the government in terms of curriculum and results, make it tricky to maintain a strong connection even at the best of times. This year, when schools were forced to close their doors to visitors and trips were put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it felt like we were facing an insurmountable challenge.

But that's not quite how it turned out. In fact, we, at Leeds Playhouse, have found ourselves in a surprisingly positive position with our Partner Schools. Our Partner School scheme, launched two years ago to help deliver arts in an ever-squeezed curriculum, continued to gather momentum and success this year, building on firm foundations to create new opportunities for us to work safely within schools.

Each partnership is tailored to the individual school and – even without the added burden of Covid-19 – each requires a serious commitment of time and money. Our facilitator artists run weekly sessions throughout the year at our partner schools, ensuring that every child has the chance to take part in a series of drama workshops and to perform. As well as providing valuable creative experiences for young people, we are also providing professional development opportunities for teachers.

When schools reopened in September after the lengthy lockdown, we restarted our work with our three Partner Schools, leading around ten hours of weekly arts-centred activity at each venue. Practically, we have had to adapt the sessions, focussing less on group work and more on individual or paired work (using school-identified learning partners), and cutting out resources that would normally be passed around the group. Our facilitators, who are all equipped with PPE and plan sessions with teachers in advance via email and zoom, position themselves in 'teacher boxes' – a taped space

that students and school staff are not allowed into. We also allow more time for students to move around the school, and for cleaning between sessions.

We are, inevitably, learning and developing as we go, with facilitators reporting back after each session so we can monitor any issues that arise and work out new strategies. We are also enjoying even more contact with each of the schools, working closely with staff to ensure the success of the new systems and adapting when necessary. We collaborate on Risk Assessments, share information, and have revised our Partnership Agreements. This has all led to a deeper sense of camaraderie with our Partner Schools – an unexpected yet gratifying side effect of the current situation.

It seems that, despite the strict Covid-19 procedures, our Partner Schools are more eager than ever to work with us to ensure that students enjoy some variety, excitement and empathy in their school lives. When restrictions mean that Year 2 and above are expected to work at their desks – and even drama lessons are desk-bound – teachers and students are increasingly looking towards the arts and cultural sector to provide the variety that used to be part and parcel of their day. There is also now a premium on young people being given space and time to explore their own feelings, sense of identity and ability to empathise.

It will be a while before we know the full impact of the global pandemic on the education and mental health of our nation but, right now, it is deeply gratifying to be able to offer a creative outlet to children and young people, and to support teachers in their continuing battle.

Amy Lancelot, Creative Education Manager at Leeds Playhouse

Checklist of questions

Numbers in brackets refer to sections in the document

General – organisations

- Have you read, and do you refer regularly to, the HM Government advice pertinent to your organisation? (Section 1.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5)
- Have you considered getting the Visit Britain Good to Go kitemark for your site or service?
- Have you considered your Covid-19 interventions in relation to your organisation's environmental policy – how green are your proposed solutions?

General – freelancers (section 1)

- Have you updated your Risk Assessments to be Covid Secure?
- Have you asked any employer(s) for their enhanced Risk Assessments around Covid-19 – including any new templates you may need to complete?
- Have you asked what guidelines are in place to inform activity planning and delivery (e.g. does the organisation have a stance on whether/what PPE is mandatory, and whether you may need to provide your own)?
- Are you aware of and have agreed any changes in your employers' freelancer cancellation policies?
- Are you aware of any additional Health & Safety measures that may be in place for you to comply with – and those already in place to protect you?
- Does your public liability insurance cover you for risks related to Covid-19?

Workforce safety and wellbeing (section 1)

- Have you added Covid-19 to your current learning service Risk Assessment?
- If relevant have you added Covid-19 to your online safeguarding policy and offsite working policy? (5.7)
- Have you completed an access and inclusion audit to ensure all your Covid-19 interventions are compliant, and updated your policies accordingly? (3.5, 4.4)
- Have you consulted your workforce, including freelancers, casual staff and volunteers, on your plans – and communicated them clearly?
- Have you considered what new training may be needed for your workforce, and the cost/resource/timing implications? (1.2)
- What is your freelancer cancellation policy in the context of Covid-19 and have you made your freelancers aware?

Adapting – your buildings and learning spaces (section 2)

- Have you made plans to reconfigure learning spaces (layout, furniture, etc.) to fulfil social distancing?
- Have you audited your furniture, fixtures and fittings to look for any Covid Secure additions, adjustments or solutions?

- Have you reconsidered your signage to ensure that visitors will move through your site in a safe, socially distanced way?
- Have you consulted – and as regularly as may be appropriate – your building manager/operations team?
- Have you considered in particular issues of ventilation?

Adapting – your processes (section 3)

- Have you considered how and when learning service visitors will enter your site, while maintaining social distancing?
- Have you considered use of toilets/lunchroom facilities for each group visiting in terms of both social distancing and hygiene?
- Have you implemented a cleaning policy/schedule for learning spaces, fixtures and fittings?
- Have you consulted the appropriate colleagues or experts about mitigating the impact of any cleaning and sanitising products on collections and interior fixtures and fittings?

Your audiences (section 4)

- Have you considered the specific learning and access needs of identified groups in your Covid-19 planning?
- Have you considered how any paperwork for visits can be transferred to online channels?
- Have you considered making an orientation video for audiences, so it's clear what to expect when they arrive?
- Have you thought about joining with other local venues to ensure your communications about Covid-19 are consistent?

Delivering activities – including blended learning (section 5)

- Have you thought about what outdoor spaces you have available on or around your site, and what opportunities they may represent in taking activities outside?
- Do any outdoor spaces you may use require additional Risk Assessment, safeguarding and Health & Safety considerations?
- Can you programme workshops so that practitioners work with as few different groups, and in as few different spaces, as possible – including reducing group sizes in line with HM Government guidance?
- Have you considered how you will ensure there is sufficient space for the facilitator and participants to practise social distancing from each other or between bubbles and the facilitator – including adapting activities to reduce physical contact?
- Have you considered if additional measures such as face coverings can or should be deployed if you can only keep the 1m+ distance between facilitator and participant bubbles?
- Have you provided cleaning/sanitising stations to ensure participants wash their hands or use hand sanitiser upon entry and exit?

- Can you avoid or reduce the shared use of objects, resources or props and ensure that any which are used are cleaned in between groups (and/or quarantined for 72 hours between uses)?
- Will you have interactives in your galleries, and if so, have you considered how will you manage the risks associated with any touch-based interactives?
- Have you considered issues of supervised object handling or art-based activities?
- Are you offering blended learning?

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