



**Association of
Independent
Museums**

Helping Heritage
Organisations Prosper

A CHECKLIST FOR REOPENING YOUR MUSEUM

MDN

Museum Development Network

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INTRODUCTION

This checklist has been produced by AIM and the Museum Development Network to be used in conjunction with the Coronavirus Covid-19 NMDC Good Practice Guidelines on the Reopening of Museums after July 4, 2020 (hereafter *Guidelines*).

It has been written to help museums take a strategic, well informed approach to making decisions on reopening and implementing a safe and effective plan in conjunction with the national guidance for museums.

It does not tell you exactly how your reopened museum should operate; individual circumstances will vary enormously. This checklist is intended to help you develop your reopening plans and provides you with a methodology to follow.

Depending on the nature of your operation, you may also look to draw on other government guidance. The *Guidelines* reference other guidance relevant to museums, including that for heritage, workplaces, shops and accessing green spaces.

Read the guidance!

The *Guidelines* is a comprehensive document. It should be read first and used as the basis for your decisions around when and how to manage the safe reopening of your museum. This checklist sits alongside the *Guidelines* to offer you further support when you are making your own plans.

In England¹, the earliest museums can reopen is in Step 3 of the government's Roadmap on 4th July but you do not have to open on this date. You must decide on the best timing for your museum's particular circumstances.

Remember! Things will change.

It is important to note that any guidance for the safe reopening of museums will inevitably change over time as the situation with Covid 19 changes. Be sure to check you are using the latest sector guidance. Use this checklist to create a record of your decisions. This will be useful if things do change or if you have to take steps back (including closing again). It will also enable different members of the team to see what has been decided.

¹ Separate reopening guidance is being produced for museums in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Coronavirus Covid-19 NMDC Good Practice Guidelines on the Reopening of Museums after July 4, 2020 were developed by the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) Planning and Remobilisation Group with support from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and contributions from across the museum sector, including AIM.

It is intended for use by museums in England.

Principles to inform decision making

1	Government has clearly announced that Museums and Galleries can reopen
2	Security of workers, the public and sites can be sufficiently maintained in light of any operational challenges for CV-19
3	Workforce safety and wellbeing can be supported
4	Public safety can be assured
5	Buildings and processes can be adapted to support reopening
6	The business case supports reopening
7	Museums are confident that visitors will return, and they can provide services in keeping with their public purpose
8	Transport systems can support museum visitors, workers' travel and supply chains while noting adaptations to normal practice may be required based on available evidence at the time of opening.
9	Local context including location, museum offer, constitution and business model permit.

READY TO REOPEN?

Principle 1 must be met i.e. The government has clearly announced that museums and galleries in your part of the UK can reopen.

You will need to explore the other principles (especially no 6 on there being a business case to support reopening) by working through the steps below to determine the viability and safety you can offer for your workforce and visitors.

WHEN TO REOPEN?

The decision on timing is yours, as long as it complies with the current advice in your part of the UK (i.e. meets Principle 1). Some museums may open in July, others later in the summer, others may delay opening for longer.

REOPENING YOUR MUSEUM CHECKLIST

1. Consult

It is important to consult with Trustees, staff and volunteers to get their views on whether safe reopening of your site is possible, what form it might take and the adjustments they think are needed to ensure a safe working environment and a worthwhile experience for visitors. If there are union representatives at your museum you should consult with them too.

Encourage the people you consult with to read the *Guidelines* to understand the considerations that need to be addressed.

Section 3.3 of the *Guidelines* 'Equality in the workplace' reminds employers of their legal responsibilities not to discriminate because of a protected characteristic, to be mindful of the particular needs of different groups or individuals and to be aware of particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new and expectant mothers. Use the steps outlined to inform your consultation work.

Find out what safety concerns people have and discuss what steps can be taken to address them. Many museums are dependent on volunteers for their day to day operation and will need to assess whether enough volunteers are likely to be available to work safely. You might look to do this through group (virtual) meetings of your volunteers, one to one discussions, a survey or a combination of these.

2. Assess Risk

Risk assessments of your activities must be used to underpin any new ways of working to ensure the safety of the public, staff and volunteers. The museum must assess and manage the risks of Covid 19 in line with existing Health and Safety legislation. This is dealt with in detail in Section 2 of the *Guidelines*, which also includes practical ideas for how you might manage risks. Use your regular health and safety risk assessment template to develop approaches that minimise the impact of any risk. The Health and Safety Executive have guidance on both consultation and risk assessment. www.hse.gov.uk/news/working-safely-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm

Employers have a duty to consult people on their health and safety, and the people carrying out work on a regular basis are best placed to advise on potential risks and how they could adapt to work safely.

The guidance highlights the government's five steps to working safely that businesses should take www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely

1. Carrying out a Covid-19 risk assessment
2. Having cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance
3. Taking reasonable steps to help people work from home
4. Taking reasonable steps to maintaining social distance in the workplace
5. Where people cannot socially distance, doing everything practical to manage the transmission risk

3. Check whether it is financially viable to reopen

The financial viability of reopening your museum will be a determining factor in the decision to reopen. What will your revised operating (or business) model be? You might consider varying your opening hours and adapting the type and extent of what you offer visitors. You need to factor in staff costs in line with bringing people back from furlough, and the changing contributions you will be expected to make.

To help assess costs create a revised budget. This might include, for example, increased staffing costs, site adaptations, increased cleaning costs, reduced visitor income, reduced commercial income, new grant income and an updated cashflow. Predicting visitor numbers will be hard, so you should model using a few possible scenarios.

If reopening does not look like a viable financial option at this stage, you may need to look at delaying reopening until it is.

Section 7 of the *Guidelines* includes more detail on elements to be considered for a new operating model.

4. Get your plan together

Once you have formulated a business model for reopening you can start to put a reopening plan together.

- a. Form a **working group** with people taking responsibility for different areas of operation e.g. front of house, collections, visitor experience, education, maintenance etc.
- b. The plan should be based on **risk assessments** of each area of activity, the mitigation put in place (e.g. how to manage visitor numbers) and include detail of the resources (e.g. people, costs, adaptations, training, time) to implement them.
- c. The plan should include an **action list** to make changes needed - starting with preparing the building for reopening (see Section 6 of the guidance for ideas).
- d. A **timeline** for reopening, considering staff and volunteer availability, time for training (especially if staff and volunteers need to be ready for revised roles and new procedures), building adaptations and new procedures and systems (e.g. contactless payments, enhanced cleaning of high use surfaces). This will need to be used to inform ending or adapting any current furlough arrangements for staff.
- e. The **cost** of implementing the plan should be reflected in your revised budgets and cashflow.
- f. **Test** the reopening plans.
- g. Be ready to **review** on an ongoing basis based on staff, volunteer and visitor feedback. This will be a learning process for everyone and requires effective communications.
- h. You may need to **lockdown** again at short notice so remember to include steps for this possibility in your plan.

5. Communicate with your staff and volunteers

Effective communication with staff and volunteers is essential. You will need to maintain regular and meaningful communications with your staff and volunteers before and during reopening so that everyone is aware of how you are working, and everyone has the chance to feed back on their own experience. You also need to think about maintaining effective communication with staff or volunteers who are working from home or who are unable to return to the workplace. Use existing communication methods (e.g. newsletters, email groups) and look at developing new ones - e.g. digital methods.

6. Check in on your staff and volunteer wellbeing

Take account of staff and volunteer wellbeing. These are uncertain and challenging times for us all, especially if you are returning to work where there are new ways of working, safety concerns and potentially anxious visitors who are also adapting to a changed museum experience. Ensure that people are trained for any new ways of working and that you have considered whether you need to allocate more staff to certain areas to implement your new visitor experience safely (this should have been identified in your risk assessment). Ask people how they would like to be supported as part of the consultation phase. You will also need to consider how you can support the wellbeing of staff and volunteers who continue to be away from the workplace; this brings its own challenges to maintaining wellbeing.

7. Tell your visitors what is happening

Communications with potential visitors about your museum reopening need to be carefully planned. Museums will open at different times so you need to let people know when your museum will reopen. If you are not reopening yet - let people know why. If you are planning your reopening people will need to know that you are open and what they can expect from a visit. Visitors will need to be reassured that you have taken steps to ensure their safety and should be given clear information on what to expect, how to plan a visit (do they have to book?) changes they should be aware of - e.g. changes from cash to contactless payments, changes to accessibility, areas of the site or café that are not available or changed or new initiatives you are offering. You could provide pictures of what to expect on your website so people have a better understanding of how visits will work and what is available. FAQs may help here - how can I pay? Will there be social distancing? Can we use the play area? Don't forget to include information about factors outside your control, e.g. public transport.

If you have limited control over your communications (e.g. you are part of a larger organisation) think as far as possible in advance how this might be overcome.

Clear onsite communications are also essential for smooth reopening e.g. via signage for one-way systems, to promote handwashing and social distancing or in person by staff or volunteers.

8. Work your local network

Work with other local organisations to share knowledge, advice and experience - other local charities, visitor attractions and businesses may have the best understanding of what is working well locally and be able to signpost suppliers and expertise that you may need to draw upon. Understand what neighbouring museums are planning so you can coordinate your communications if that is helpful. There may be local or national tourism or cultural marketing campaigns that you can be part of to market the museum. Investigate what is open to you and what might work best.

9. Draw on your museum networks

Draw on your museum networks for knowledge, advice, and experience too. Some museums will be reopening earlier than others and there will be opportunities to learn from their approach, share information on suppliers, plans etc. South East Museum Development has put together a toolkit of reopening resources that you may want to draw upon southeastmuseums.org/resource-library/advice-on-reopening-museums-reopening-museums-toolkit.

Your local Museum Development team may also be able to signpost further resources for you to use. AIM, Museum Development teams and specialist networks (along with many more) will be developing further resources to assist and will be ready to help you navigate the road ahead.

10. Be flexible

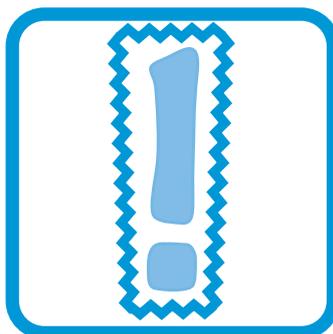
Be prepared to be flexible and update your plans. This might be through testing, through feedback and in response to changes in government guidance, e.g. easing or strengthening lockdown measures.

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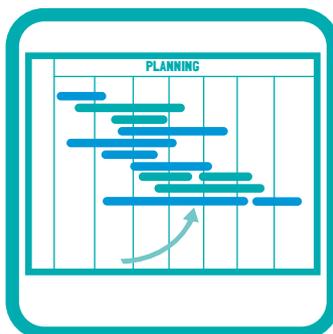
1 CONSULT



2 ASSESS RISK



3 CHECK FINANCIAL VIABILITY



4 PLAN



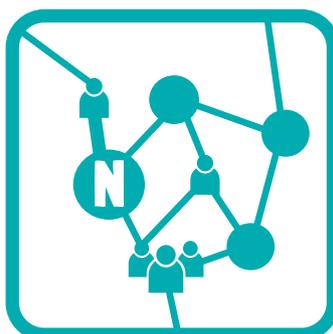
5 COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF



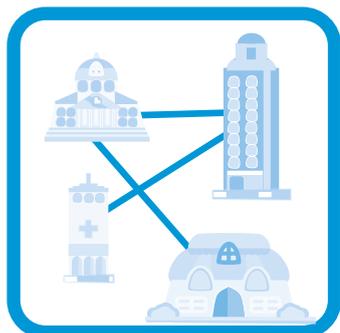
6 CHECK IN ON WELLBEING



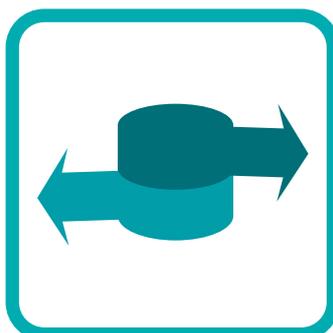
7 COMMUNICATE WITH VISITORS



8 USE YOUR LOCAL NETWORK



9 DRAW ON MUSEUM NETWORKS



10 BE FLEXIBLE