



Guidance for community centres reopening in Wales

FOREWORD

This guidance is for community centres based in Wales to provide you with a brief overview of how to prepare for restarting your services when it is permissible and safe to do so.

At the time of writing this revised guidance there has been a rapid increase in the cases of coronavirus across some parts of Wales and the United Kingdom. It is important that we continue to do all that we can to protect communities from the spread of coronavirus including only travelling when necessary.

We now need to consider the best ways in which to carry out our activities. WCVA recommends that community centre managers should firstly consider whether an activity can be undertaken digitally or on the phone. If this is not possible, consider whether the activity can be held outdoors (weather permitting). If neither of these options are possible then considering the current risk to public health, if you are meeting indoors you should keep the session brief and involve as few people as possible.

The evidence remains clear that the most effective way to protect yourself and others from infection is to follow social distancing rules, avoid touching surfaces and your face, and wash your hands regularly.

Local restrictions, sometimes known as local lockdowns, are in force in some counties in Wales. Stricter rules apply; these may mean that people are not permitted to enter the area from elsewhere and therefore may not be permitted to attend a community centre. You must familiarise yourself with the changes and consider the impact they may have on the community centre and those attending the centre.

See gov.wales/local-lockdown for specific guidance, frequently asked questions and lockdown area maps.

There have been several changes to The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 since this document was written in July 2020. There will continue to be changes, it is very important to make sure that you are reading the most up to date version.

The key change made on 11 September 2020 is face coverings became a requirement in public premises from Monday 14 September 2020.

On 27 August 2020 the following changes were made and **still** apply:

- There are specific **obligations on persons responsible** for opening community centres
- There are specific **reasonable measures** that must be undertaken to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus including a requirement to provide information to those entering community centres
- There are **greater enforcement powers** which means enforcement officers may require improvements to the centres or close them if necessary
- Community centres **may only open for activities allowed** in the Regulations

The regulations impose a number of restrictions on businesses and other services and you must operate your organisation in a way that is compliant with these regulations, as updated or amended.

Written by Emma Waldron, Risk Procurement & Governance Manager, WCVA - 10 July 2020. Updated: 26 August 2020, 6 October 2020

This guide is correct at the time of publication and we recommend it is read in conjunction with government guidance, which you need to regularly review for updates. In Wales you can refer to these sites for guidance: [Welsh Government](#) and [Public Health Wales](#). You should also refer to guidance provided by the [Health and Safety Executive](#). For the regulation itself and any updates or amendments please see [here](#).

This guidance is not legal advice and WCVA accepts no liability arising from it and it does not constitute professional advice. WCVA recommends you perform your own research alongside this guidance to ensure you have taken all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of your premises, your staff, volunteers, customers and the community.

If you decide to open your community centre, you should only do so when it is safe and when you feel confident in your ability to protect users of the building. Until then your venue should remain closed.

Please consider whether local restrictions are in place and the potential for future local restrictions.

Remember that if someone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough; high temperature; the loss or a change in their normal sense of smell or taste, they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home.

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Welsh Government guidance on the safe use of multi-purpose community centres can be found [here](#).

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Please be aware that the regulations continue to change and you should ensure you check gov.wales/coronavirus-law for the latest updates.

Whilst some of the external references were created for different sectors and working environments they have been included because they also apply to your scenario.

INDOOR GATHERINGS

The general rule remains the same: no person may, without reasonable excuse (see below) gather indoors with any other person apart from— (i) the members of their household, (ii) their carer, or (iii) a person they are providing care to.

Reasonable excuse(s)

Notwithstanding the above, there are a number of ‘reasonable excuses’ (exemptions) for gathering together indoors (subject to social distancing requirements). These are [Permitted Activities](#) and include, for example, exercising with others, (in a community centre or similar venue) in a gathering of no more than 30 people. It is important to check what is permitted and what is not, see [here](#) for further information.

FACE COVERINGS

On Monday 14 September it became a legal requirement for face coverings to be worn in premises that are open to the public. Except where the person is aged 10 or under or where the person has a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering.

A community centre is identified as a premise in which, a person must wear a face covering.

Visitors at your premises may have some questions about the use of face coverings, the following information may be of assistance.

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A reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering is defined as, the person:

- is not able to put on or to wear a face covering because of a physical or mental illness, or because of a disability or impairment;
- is accompanying somebody who relies on lip reading where they need to communicate; or
- is escaping from a threat or danger and doesn't have a face covering

It is recommended that where possible the person carries information to demonstrate why they have a reasonable excuse such as a prescription or a hospital appointment letter. The person may also choose to wear a lanyard to show they are exempt from wearing a face covering, there are many of these products available online. However, the person should ensure they do have a reasonable excuse otherwise they risk being fined for not complying with the requirements.

Face coverings should be worn at all times and they should be worn correctly. However, the individual may have a reasonable excuse to **temporarily** remove the covering and some examples are as follows:

- to take medication
- to eat or drink
- to avoid harm or injury, either to the individual themselves or to others, such as alerting another individual to danger

Please note, for those community centres with exercise classes operating at the premises, the use of a face covering whilst exercising is advised against.

If using a face covering ([see Welsh Government guidance](#)) or mask, you must not take it off and leave it on surfaces and you must not leave a face covering/mask below your nose or hanging off your chin.

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You may wish to display [this](#) poster at your premises.

APPROVAL TO REOPEN

The regulations no longer place a requirement on you to notify the local authority that your community centre has reopened.

THE PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE

The regulations reference a range of responsibilities for persons responsible. For clarity, the regulations contain the following definition:

The 'person responsible for carrying on a business' includes the owner, proprietor, and manager of that business'.

It is important you note that the regulations apply to both the owner of the centre (hiree) and those undertaking the activity (hirer).

REASONABLE MEASURES

For the purposes of minimising the risk of exposure to or the spread of coronavirus, the persons responsible must comply with the requirements set out in the regulations. These are to take reasonable measures to:

- **ensure that a distance of two metres is maintained between any persons on the premises**, except where the persons are from the same household, or are a carer and the person being assisted by the carer
- **maintain a two-metre distance between persons where they are required to wait to enter the premises**, except where the persons are from the same household, or are a carer and the person being assisted by the carer

All other reasonable measures should be taken to **limit close face to face interaction and maintain hygiene**. Examples provided in the regulations include:

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- changing the layout of the centre including the location of furniture
- controlling use of entrances, passageways, stairs and lifts
- controlling the use of or access to any other part of the building
- installing barriers or screens
- providing or requiring the use of [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)

In addition, **information must be provided to those entering the community centres**, such as [safety and physical distancing signs](#).

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

In terms of the activities permitted, and in respect of indoor gatherings, nobody is permitted to gather indoors with another individual unless they are a member of their household, their carer or a person they are providing care to **or** they have a reasonable excuse. 14 (2) of the regulations set out 'reasonable excuses' and those relevant to the reader may be:

- work or provide voluntary or charitable services
- exercise with others in a gathering of no more than 30 people
- participate in a gathering of no more than 30 people to celebrate a solemnisation of a marriage or civil partnership that takes place on or after 22 August 2020
- participate in a gathering of no more than 30 people to celebrate the life of a deceased person whose funeral is held on or after 22 August 2020
- access or receive public services
- access childcare or participate in supervised activities for children
- access educational services (formal education)

Where an activity is permitted, it must comply with social distancing rules.

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HOUSEHOLDS AND EXTENDED HOUSEHOLDS

The concept of 'households' and 'extended households' (also known as bubbles) impacts upon the social distancing requirements; these require people who are not of the same household to keep two metres apart. A household is a group of people who live together. Up to four households may agree to form one extended household. It is a one-time choice and once a household forms an extended household with one group it cannot move around different groups. An extended household may comprise any number of people, however no more than six people from an extended household, not including children aged 10 and under, may gather together indoors at any one time.

Please note that where there are local restrictions, stricter rules apply and nobody is permitted to meet socially indoors with people outside their household. However, from Saturday 3 October 2020, a further amendment to the regulations were made for adults living alone, including single parent households. They are now allowed to visit or meet with one other household indoors. That other household must also live within the County Borough Council area.

For further information please see Welsh Government guidance:

- gov.wales/guidance-leaving-your-home-and-seeing-other-people-coronavirus
- gov.wales/guidance-extended-households-coronavirus
- gov.wales/local-lockdown

ENFORCEMENT

An enforcement officer is defined in the regulations as a constable or police community support officer or a person designated by the Welsh

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Ministers, a local authority, a National Park authority in Wales or Natural Resources Wales. The enforcement officer may:

- **Issue a premise improvement notice** where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting a contravention to the regulations
- **Enter the premises** where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting a contravention to the regulations
- **Issue a premises closure notice** where the requirements outlined in the compliance notice have not been met

For further information on enforcement, Welsh Government has published guidance for enforcement officers which can be found [here](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

Prior to reopening your community centre WCVA recommends that you undertake a specific coronavirus risk assessment in addition to any risk assessment you may already have in place. Your risk assessment should identify high risks and identify any mitigating actions you could put in place. You should consider implementing a timetable to ensure you can reopen safely. Guidance on coronavirus is evolving as new evidence emerges, so your plans should be flexible enough to be ready to adapt to any changes.

Publishing your plans and risk assessment may help to reassure staff, volunteers, the public and stakeholders and will clearly set out the changes and your expectations. For example, changing from booking in person to booking online and not accepting cash payments.

See [here](#) for a specific coronavirus risk assessment template and guidance published by the Health & Safety Executive. If you are unfamiliar with completing risk assessments please see [here](#) for examples.

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TEST, TRACE, PROTECT

To control the spread of the virus WCVA recommends that you keep a record of attendees at your premises to cooperate with Welsh Government's [Test, Trace, Protect \(TTP\)](#) strategy. You should also ensure those hiring the venue retain records for the same purposes.

Please note that Data Protection legislation (ie GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018) does not preclude the sharing of data where there is an overriding public interest. However, you must ensure that you make every effort to inform individuals how their data will be used. For example, plan for the likelihood that you may have to pass on their information to the Test Trace Protect scheme should they need their contact tracers to get in touch with the individual. We have been made aware of some instances where individuals leaving their details for Test, Trace, Protect have been contacted for other reasons, this is not permitted. It is important to leave the tracing aspect to the TTP team. Please ensure that personal details of individuals are not openly on display for others to see.

You should review your privacy notices to ensure they are still compliant given the changes in circumstances. If you need help on drafting a privacy notice, the ICO has created a template which can be found [here](#). To identify which lawful basis is applicable the ICO has published some information on this which can be found [here](#).

The ICO has also produced some useful guidance about collecting customer and visitor details which can be found [here](#). Also see [here](#) for Welsh Government's guide on Keeping records of staff, customers, and visitors.

NHS COVID-19 APP

On Thursday 24 September the NHS COVID-19 app was launched in England and Wales. Welsh Government encourages organisations to display NHS QR posters on entry so that those who downloaded the app

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can use their phones to check in. Further information from Welsh Government can be found [here](#).

To create a QR code for display at your venue see [here](#).

INSURANCE

It is very important to keep your insurance company informed of your activities. Your insurance company will require you to follow and adhere to all recommendations and guidelines issued by Welsh Government. You will need to inform your insurance company that you will be resuming services and discuss any new requirements you must consider to ensure you comply with your insurance policy.

Thomas Carroll insurance brokers have produced guidance for organisations resuming their services, which can be located [here](#) and [here](#).

PHYSICAL/SOCIAL DISTANCING

Physical/social distancing measures are actions taken to reduce interactions between individuals/households in order to minimise transmission of coronavirus. The current measures at the time of writing impose a strict two-metre distance between persons on your premises and grounds. Admitting people in smaller numbers may make it possible to maintain the distance.

‘Reasonable measures’ must be taken to ensure this and further Welsh Government guidance can be found [here](#), which includes examples such as staggering shifts and reducing the number of people in the premises at any one time. WCVA recommends that you retain details of the steps you have taken to ensure ‘reasonable measures’ have been implemented and details of the adjustments you have made to comply with this requirement.

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Changing the layout of premises, controlling use of entrances, passageways, stairs and lifts, toilets and kitchens, floor markings, one-way routes, removing or cordoning off furniture, setting out designated areas and safe queue management systems are some of the measures you could consider. Please note these are only suggestions of potential approaches and do not constitute a check list: each setting and scenario is different.

HYGIENE

You should make arrangements for enhanced hand hygiene to prevent the risk of infection. Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds will help to kill viruses that may be on your hands. In the absence of soap and water, you should provide alcohol-based hand gel/rub. Washing hands is particularly important upon entering or exiting the building, after the use of toilets and when moving within different rooms/locations within the building. Posters and signs should be used to encourage individuals to wash their hands. Instructions on how to wash hands could be positioned near wash hand basins, a variety of illustrations and posters are available for you such as [this](#). You should also ensure sufficient supplies and access to soap and water and should consider using lidded bins.

Good respiratory etiquette will minimise the transmission of coronavirus. 'Catch it, bin it, kill it' posters should be visible to remind individuals to continue good levels of hygiene. Bilingual printable posters available from the Public Health Wales website can be found [here](#).

TRUSTEES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Trustees have an important role to play and you must take action to minimise the potential for spreading coronavirus amongst individuals within your building and grounds. You must retain all documents on assessments made and minute all decisions taken. In terms of governance arrangements during this pandemic, trustees are advised to

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familiarise themselves with the guidance made available by the [Charity Commission](#), and keep abreast of changes and updates.

It may be that you must adjust the nature of your services due to the coronavirus outbreak. If so, refer to your charity objectives in your governing documents to ensure any new services are in line with your objects.

VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Employers are under a statutory duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees, as well as owing them a duty of care. It is important to note that during this crisis a significant proportion of your employees may be suffering with stress and anxiety at present and you should ensure support is in place. Public Health Wales' *How are you doing?* campaign provides some useful resources [here](#).

Some individuals may be worried that they are at a higher risk of developing more serious symptoms if they come into contact with coronavirus. In this case, WCVA recommends you undertake a specific risk assessment using this tool: [Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment](#). Although it has been designed for health and social care, it can be used in any workplace. It provides very useful guidance for both the individual and the employer. Further information about the tool can be found [here](#).

You should also be aware of those individuals identified as being at an [increased risk of coronavirus](#), as this group is advised to pay particular attention to the guidance on [social distancing and hand hygiene](#).

The Healthy Working Wales website contains useful information and advice to support employers and employees and can be found [here](#).

Welsh Government also encourages individuals to work from home where possible stating 'employees should not be required or placed under pressure to return to a workplace setting if there is not a clearly

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demonstrated business need for them to do so'. See gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-minimise-risk-exposure-coronavirus-workplaces-and-premises-open#section-47095 for further information.

VOLUNTEERS

Organisations have a duty of care to volunteers, who must be afforded the same level of protection as any employee. See [here](#) for further information from WCVA and this guidance on [volunteering after lockdown](#).

TAKING BOOKINGS AND CASH PAYMENTS

Where possible, you should endeavour to take bookings online or over the phone. Where this is not possible, you should avoid handling cash and consider contactless, card or online payments. If you must continue to take cash, then gloves should be worn when handling money.

SAFETY AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING SIGNS

Welsh Government has created several bilingual signs that be may be useful to you, see [here](#). These signs can be printed and displayed at your premises. There are other options available on signage, including a wide variety of posters, labels and floor signage: please email rpgenquiries@wcva.cymru if you require information on suppliers.

At present a two-metre distancing rule is in place: you should mark this out in places that individuals would normally congregate, such as the entrance to a venue.

CONTRACTS AND HIRING OUT CENTRES

It is important to consult with those hiring out your centre, particularly those that hire regular slots. It may be, for example, that they require a larger room than they usually would to adhere to social distancing measures.

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You should also consider whether it is a requirement of the hirer to clean surfaces and equipment or whether this is something you will control. You must be confident that the cleaning is undertaken to the higher level now required and that the individuals are undertaking the rigorous requirements and following guidance on cleaning.

It is recommended that you provide alcohol-based hand rub/gel/sanitiser at entrances/exits and in meeting rooms. You should also record the last time and date that cleaning was undertaken and consider displaying this to reassure visitors to your venue.

You should give priority to essential services during the re-opening phase. Where the centre has several bookings, you may need to leave a longer period of time between the bookings to allow cleaning to take place and to prevent bottlenecks in footfall as people enter and leave rooms/the premises. You should also ensure that supplies such as sanitiser and cleaning materials are replenished.

You should issue hirers with new conditions in light of coronavirus, in writing and attached to the usual hire agreement. The new conditions must be accepted by the hirer in writing (via a signature). WCVA is currently liaising with [Dolmans Solicitors](#), who have kindly agreed to prepare some draft terms and conditions for organisations to use. When this becomes available we will notify organisations through our COVID-19 newsletter: you can sign up to the newsletter [here](#). We will also publicise this on our website and social media when it becomes available.

You should provide your hirer with a copy of your risk assessment. In addition, you should obtain a copy of the hirees risk assessment.

Those hiring your centre should be encouraged to bring their own food and drink as opposed to making food and drink at the premises, reducing cleaning required in the kitchen. Hirers bringing in their own equipment should also be encouraged to use their own sanitiser and wipes.

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Ventilation in centres should be encouraged through opening doors and windows as opposed to mechanical ventilation but remember health and safety and security implications. Fire doors must remain closed.

Fans that circulate air should not be used, see [here](#) for more information.

CLEANING

It is highly likely that your building has been closed for some time and therefore you should undertake a general health and safety check before reopening. Legionella growth, for example, is an increased risk because water has been left stagnant. You should undertake a thorough deep clean and disinfection of the building before re-opening. Scouts Cymru has created a very useful checklist, which can be found [here](#) and may be used in conjunction with government guidance, not as a substitute.

Cleaning protocols should be put in place: you will need to decide how often cleaning/regular decontamination takes place and this will be based on your risk assessment. You should also record and display when cleaning has taken place. If the cleaning duties are not discharged to the hirers, you will need to ensure the individual responsible, eg the caretaker, has a clear schedule of hires and sufficient time is allocated to cleaning duties.

When considering your cleaning regime you should refer to the guidance available from the Health and Safety Executive, outlined [here](#). You should identify frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches, etc, as these will need more regular cleaning than usual as well as reminding people to wash their hands. The guide suggests two approaches to cleaning: deep cleans and periodic cleaning. It also suggests that you limit movement and reduce people's needs to touch objects and contains some helpful tips. Where possible, remove magazines and soft furnishings.

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Where an individual shows symptoms of coronavirus or has tested positive, waste must be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full, placed in a second bin bag, tied and put into a suitable and secure refuse container for at least 72 hours before it is collected along with usual waste.

Unless the individual shows symptoms of coronavirus or has tested positive, you do not need to segregate waste and may dispose of waste as you normally do.

Note that mobile devices must also be cleaned, see [here](#) for more information.

This guide on [decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings](#) provides further useful information.

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Inevitably your demand for cleaning products and hand sanitiser will increase. If your usual supplier is unable to assist you, please email rpgenquiries@wcva.cymru if you require information on suppliers.

For information on choosing surface disinfectants see [here](#) from the Health and Safety Executive.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) SUPPLIES

PPE consists of items such as facemasks, aprons, gloves, visors, shoe coverings, etc. Surges in demand for PPE since coronavirus has seen a huge amount of counterfeit and non-compliant products enter the market: it is vital that you only purchase correctly certified products.

Your organisation may not require PPE, and this should be determined through your risk assessment and the latest available guidance. Public Health Wales advises there is no requirement for the use of PPE, except when providing direct personal/clinical care within two metres or where

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being within two metres of an individual cannot be avoided. Further and more detailed information can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

If you conclude that PPE is a requirement for your organisation, it is important to note that in order for it to be effective, you must ensure you know how to use the PPE. It will only prevent the spread of infection if it is:

- Used and changed at the right time
- Accompanied by good hand hygiene and
- Respiratory etiquette is applied

If using gloves and aprons for example, they are single use items only. Hands should be washed or gelled between service users **and** after removing gloves.

Self-contamination is very common when removing (doffing) PPE. Guidance for donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) PPE is available [here](#).

WCVA is working with the National Procurement Service for Wales (part of Welsh Government), which currently sends regular updates on certified stock, availability and prices. This information is then passed on to an email distribution list specifically for the voluntary sector in Wales. If you would like to be added to this list, please email rpgenquiries@wcva.cymru. For public sector organisations please contact NPSCorporateServices@gov.wales.

EQUALITIES

Your strategy to resume services must recognise the needs and rights of individuals. For example, any new physical barriers that individuals may encounter, communication barriers, etc, should not impede the movement of people using walking sticks or wheelchairs, should be clearly visible and should not provide a hazard to people with sensory

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impairments. You could also consider, for example, providing a bag nearby for immediate disposal of tissues where individuals may need assistance with respiratory secretions.

WELSH LANGUAGE

Whilst the Welsh Language Commissioner acknowledges that during a national crisis, it is possible that some organisations are not able to offer a Welsh Language service in every situation, you must still comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Measures. Also, it is important to include this as part of your planning, for example, ensuring signs are bilingual. For information on Welsh Language services and offers, please see [here](#).

USING THE VENUE FOR CHILDCARE USE

Centres that provide childcare or nursery provision should follow the relevant guidance made available by Welsh Government [here](#).

SYMPTOMS

Please remember that if you develop one of the following symptoms:

- a high temperature: this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough: this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste: this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

You should follow the [self-isolation guidance](#) and apply for a [coronavirus test](#).

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FURTHER CONTACTS

There are different support arrangements available for each county. If you already have a liaison contact in your local authority and/or county voluntary council, we recommend that you remain in regular contact with them for practical support and changes in regulations and guidance.

Contact details are available [here](#) for local authorities and [here](#) for the local county voluntary councils.

This guidance has been developed by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) in consultation with Welsh Government, The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), One Voice Wales, Scouts Cymru and Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations.