

Guidelines for Returning to Meetings After Lockdown

We at the Heart of England Intergroup realise that many of you will be delighted by the prospect of returning to face-to-face meetings and we want to ensure that every consideration has been taken to address this possibility in light of our Government guidelines for our current Covid-19 status whilst also observing our OA Traditions and any new practical issues.

“The Twelve Traditions are to the groups what the Twelve Steps are to the individual. The Twelve Traditions are a means by which OA remains unified in a common cause. They are suggested principles to ensure the smooth functioning, survival, and growth of the many groups which comprise Overeaters Anonymous.”
(Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know.)

Our Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.

Any decisions with regards to a meeting's format need to be discussed during Group Conscience.

Questions to consider:

Do we need / wish to go back to face to face meetings, stay online or move to a hybrid meeting to include new members who joined during Lockdown?

How do we include in our group conscience those members who cannot access virtual meetings?

Can we be flexible in case we have to go back into Lockdown?

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Where is our Higher Power in our decision-making process?

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.

As each OA meeting is autonomous, and varies in its make-up and circumstances, we can decide what is right for our own meeting based on location, size, new members etc.

7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

We need to consider what costs may be involved in a new meeting format e.g. continuing with virtual meetings is likely to mean ongoing Zoom fees. If meetings return to face-to-face there will be some costs for sanitization cleaning products, I.T equipment e.g. a dongle if there is no wifi at your venue, costs for laminating OA readings, etc.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

With Covid-19 still being a live issue, we need to incorporate a Track and Trace process for face-to-face meetings. Those who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 can advise a designated fellow anonymously that they are Covid-19 positive.

Track and Trace details must be kept securely and confidentially and destroyed after 21 days to protect anonymity.

Have we checked the latest government guidance? Have we checked for any local lockdown requirements? How are we going to make sure we keep up-to-date with this?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-restrictions-areas-with-an-outbreak-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

Additional Questions for Meetings to Consider regarding Face to Face meetings

1. Have we spoken to our venue about returning to Face to Face meetings, the capacity each room can now hold based on social distancing guidelines, what risk assessments they have in place?
2. What arrangements has the meeting made for a risk assessment? (See sample risk assessment for OA meeting.) *
3. How will we manage maximum meeting numbers?
4. How will the group manage social distancing?
5. How will the group ensure masks are worn where appropriate?
6. How will the group manage new sanitisation procedures before and after each meeting?
7. Will your group be asking that fellows carry out temperature checks before each meeting?
8. Will your meeting provide sanitising products for each meeting?
9. Does your group have a complete contact list for all meeting fellows?
10. Will your group be coordinating a Track and Trace system to communicate any newly identified cases?
11. Who will hold the list? Will this be anonymous? How will information be communicated to other members? When will this information be destroyed and how?
12. If contact tracing is necessary, how will your group help local officials with contact tracing? *Note: Anonymity does not have to be broken when contact tracing. Members can say they were meeting friends or at a spiritual gathering.*
13. How will physical OA materials be handled in meetings? What about set-up and breakdown of each meeting? Will virtual materials be needed instead?
14. How will Seventh Tradition contributions be collected? Will an electronic account be needed going forward? Some groups are using contactless card readers. If cash is to be reintroduced, it will need to be disinfected at the end of each meeting.
15. Will your group eliminate tea/coffee/water? What rules are there for drinks in meetings?
16. What guidelines will you follow if a fellow is openly sick in a meeting e.g. coughing, feverish?
17. Does your group have insurance cover? Is it needed? (Heart of England Intergroup has insurance which covers all our meetings. However, this may not cover Covid-related issues.) What is covered by the venue?

Please note this list is not exhaustive. It is intended as a guide to get each meeting talking about everything that needs to be considered when/if returning to face-to-face meetings.

Additional Questions for Meetings to Consider regarding Hybrid meetings?

1. Does our current venue have wifi/broadband/other technological requirements?
2. What equipment do we need to access broadband? How much will it cost? Do we know how to use it? Television, laptop, ipad, phones, microphone, speakers? What platform to use? (Zoom, Skype, FreeConferenceCall, Jitsi, Microsoft Teams)
3. What new service roles do we need?
4. What if nobody turns up face-to-face? Safety issues with only one person in venue.

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