

I NEED TO BOOK A HALL BUT ... I'M NOT SURE WHAT THE SYSTEM IS



COMMUNITY MATTERS
BRIEFING PAPER



This research came about as a result of one of us trying to write a business plan for a community centre and, in doing so, researched the hire fees charged by a number of halls. The result was a real mixture of figures, requirements, variations and arrangements. One of the beauties of the community buildings sector is its sheer diversity and the way in which each community centre and each village hall reflects the neighbourhood in which it sits. These briefing sheets are in no way trying to standardise the provision made, and thereby lose the local nature of each building, but aim instead to share good practice and highlight some issues you might like further advice and training on.

Firstly, the results of the survey

.....the response was impressive with 201 representatives of community buildings taking the trouble to respond, representing buildings across England and Wales as follows:

South East	39
Yorkshire and Humber	32
East Midlands	30
London	23
North East	18
South West	17
West Midlands	15
East of England	15
North West	9
Wales	3

The annual financial turnover ranged from 18 with between £1,000 and £5,000 per annum, to 4 with in excess of £1,000,000 per annum – see table below.

£1,000-£5,000 p.a.	18
£5,001-£20,000 p.a.	50
£20,001-£50,000 p.a.	57
£50,001-£100,000 p.a.	32
£100,001-£500,00 p.a.	31
£500,000-£1m	4
Total	201

The majority of respondents (56) had two rooms to let but the table below shows the wide variation in provision made.

1 room	36
2 rooms	56
3 rooms	38
4 rooms	21
5 rooms	22
6 rooms	6
7 rooms	7
8 rooms	4
9 rooms	3
10 rooms	3
11 rooms	1
14 rooms	1

We asked what charges you make for the largest room you have available and the smallest room you have available and the table below shows an analysis of charges made by region.

	Largest room	Smallest room
South East	£21.20	£11.67
Yorkshire and the Humber	£22.83	£8.98
East Midlands	£15.39	£10.08
London	£35.75	£17.15
North East	£14.72	£9.70
South West	£21.12	£10.91
West Midlands	£21.56	£12.19
East of England	£27.61	£14.75
North West	£20.65	£8.66

We also asked what, if any, discounts you offer, and this was split roughly half and half.

109 of you do not, 92 of you do.

- Some offer discounts for the type of event – special functions and funeral teas, for instance.
- Some treat regular users more favourably.
- Voluntary organisations and small community organisations often featured among those given a discount. At least 17 respondents stated that they give registered charities special treatment – see advice note below.
- Local residents also featured among the favoured groups, as did people who were members of a community association running the centre, or certain fundraising events.
- Some new groups, or groups that were struggling, were sometimes offered favourable treatment.

An exemplar of charges was provided in this one, charging:

Local community groups	£12 per hour
Community groups and local authorities	£10 per hour
Businesses	£20 per hour

Advice Note

Differential rates for voluntary and community groups.

Most community buildings (not all) are charities, either registered or unregistered. If they are, their resources must be used primarily to meet their charitable objects, generally relating to providing recreation and leisure time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of life for local people.

This obviously has to be balanced with ensuring you have enough money coming in to pay the bills. It is therefore appropriate to offer your rooms free or cheaply to local groups starting up or trying to raise funds, providing your bank balance allows. Non

charitable bodies, such as local authorities, health authorities, and particularly businesses, should be expected to pay more. It is always useful to have a scale of charges publicly available.

Registered charities

Beware of requiring groups to be registered charities though, as small charities with an annual turnover of less than £5,000 are neither allowed nor required to register, so you may be disadvantaging your local garden club or toddler group who may have charitable objects but a low turnover

82 groups/organisations offered discounts to local groups and people.

35 respondents made different charges for different times of the day.

Only two varied their charges at different times of the year.

52 respondents had a minimum charge, mostly one hour's rental.

One hour's rental	16
Two hour's rental	6
Three hour's rental	2
Four hour's rental at a weekend	1

.....with a whole range of variations.

Advice Note

Minimum charges

The purpose of having a minimum charge is to:

- a. Make sure the booking is viable for you, so you can cover your costs of paying the cleaning and caretaking.
- b. To ensure hirers book all the time needed for setting up and clearing up, so that hirers following on are not delayed, or people using the building beforehand are not feeling under pressure to get out.

One hour as a minimum seems a little low and we would recommend one and a half hours to provide a buffer between lettings.

Hire of Kitchen

115 respondents charge for the use of the kitchen, 86 do not.

Advice Note

Hire of kitchen

While you would not want to deter users who simply want to make a cup of tea, bear in mind the costs of keeping the kitchen to proper hygiene standards and replacing breakages ... and all those teaspoons that seem to go missing from community building kitchens...

Formal Letting Agreements

176 of you have one.

25 of you do not.

Advice Note

Formal agreements

Community Matters Yorkshire can let you have a sample lettings agreement. It protects you as trustees, by ensuring all hirers know what is required of them in terms of payment (how much and by when), cancellation policy, maximum room occupancy, reporting and dealing with damage, and any particular requirements in terms of respecting neighbours, whether animals are allowed, etc. It gives you a basis on which to argue should things go wrong.

Returnable Bonds

65 respondents charged them.

136 did not.

Advice Note

Returnable bonds

Again, a returnable bond protects the building's trustees should damage take place (which probably rarely happens). This can take the form of a cheque which is only banked if necessary, and returned intact otherwise, or a bank transfer, which can be transferred back after inspection of the building.

Respondents were asked what documents they required from hirers.

32 required nothing.

Of the remainder, some required one document and some several. The documents requested included public liability insurance (39), a specific risk assessment (19), evidence of safeguarding arrangements where children and vulnerable adults were involved (13), and similarly, proof of DBS checks (19). Others required included:

- Governing document
- Proof of PAT testing
- Hygiene certificate if using the kitchen
- Music licence, if applicable
- Insurance for bouncy castle, where applicable
- Proof of identity
- Proof of charity registration
- Third party licences and agreements for anyone engaged
- Headed notepaper

Proof of public liability insurance

Where a hirer is introducing hazards that are not already covered on your organisation's Public Liability insurance they must provide an appropriate level of cover (and competency) to ensure they will take responsibilities for any claims against them and keep people safe. If someone is holding a straight forward committee meeting it would be reasonable for this to be covered on your organisation's insurance (but do check with your insurers!), however anyone giving instruction such as dance or exercise classes must provide this cover. At the point of all bookings you should be clear who is insuring an activity and hirers should provide a copy of their insurance certificate which you should check in in date and valid. If in doubt speak to your insurers.

Safeguarding

Trustees must keep everyone who comes into contact with their charity safe from harm – read more here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-for-charities-and-trustees>
It is worth being aware of contextual safeguarding, read more here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCFZQcagDM>

Hirers bringing their own electrical equipment

There are times when people may wish to connect their electrical equipment to the power supply in your building; such as staff/hirers and other visitors charging phones or laptops to playing music or contractors carrying out repairs using power tools or charging batteries. In the event of any of these items being faulty there is a risk that they may 'trip' your circuit meaning that the supply to that part of your power system will go off. If your electrical system is in good working order this will not cause any electrical damage, however the loss of power will impact the rest of that circuit which may mean impacting other hirers, so it is wise to test any equipment (or see evidence that an item has been recently tested, usually a sticker) prior to allowing an item to be connected to your electrical supply. Read more here;

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm>

Playing and performing music and showing films

Music and films have been created and are therefore owned by someone, so please ensure that you have permission to use these in the public areas of your building, for exercise and dance sessions and for shows. Read more here for music; <https://www.gov.uk/licence-to-play-live-or-recorded-music> and read more here for films; <https://www.filmbankmedia.com/>

Bouncy castles, other inflatables, fire walks and similar

Hirers continue to be ever more creative when thinking what activity they want to use your space for so amongst your other booking requirements always consider;

- Who is responsible – Insurance/competency
- Site pre checks – Before anyone puts anything the ground (such as stakes for tents/inflatables/marquees) make sure they carry out a utilities check, so they can avoid damaging your electrical/gas/water/telephony supply
- How long will it take/how much space will you really need? – to avoid double bookings be clear about how long the hirer has the space for and check whether a large vehicle will need to access your site to drop anything off
- Leave the space as you found it – some activities can create a lot of waste or leave you with something difficult to remove, so go through any plans in detail, for a walking on hot coals event a good provider will protect the surface the event will be carried out on and remove any hot coals from your site so you wouldn't know they've even been on site (they will also need a quiet space to prepare people for the activity)

Community Matters offers the following resources and support:-

- Provide a range of over 150 help sheets and templates which are regularly updated to support the running of community organisations and buildings.
- Provide email advice and support to not for profit organisations and community buildings.
- Provide access to a range of specialist quality improvement tools.
- Provide access to a range of specialist support providers who are able to offer more in depth work on a wide range of issues.

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