



Social **Farms**
& **Gardens**



Re-opening checklist for community gardens and city farms

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Introduction

This is a glossary of topics to consider as coronavirus lockdown eases. It is based on insights from Social Farms & Gardens members. This document is a suitable start for small and large projects, gardens and farms and food growing sites in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England.

It will help you think though:

- Whether to reopen your farm or garden fully, partially or not at all.
- What to have in place in order to reopen.
- What you may want to adapt.

Outdoor organisations have a great advantage over indoor-based spaces as coronavirus is less likely to be transmitted outdoors. We also anticipate more interest in local food supply, natural places, volunteering and outdoor education. **However it's important that you only reopen when you are ready, when you can afford it, and when you have assessed the risks of doing so.**

Decisions around reopening are likely to focus on finances, and your ability to deliver safely and communicate well. The core of your considerations are likely to be:

- Safety. Risk assessment.
- Your organisation's charitable and business aims.
- Your finances.
- Communications planning. How decisions will be made and agreed. How you will communicate internally and externally.

You will need to do more research about themes relevant to you such as:

- Your country's rules - always check with your local authority or relevant government department for what is permitted under COVID-19 rules.
- Rural and urban settings, especially in relation to travel.
- Food supply rules, such as cafes.
- Animals.
- Clients / supported volunteers.

This is a 'live' document. Please send questions, suggestions and feedback to amber@farmgarden.org.uk

Further sources of information

- National government
 - National Health Services
 - Care farming reopening checklist
 - Allotment safety advice document
 - [National Farm Attractions reopening guidance](#)
 - Charity regulators:
 - [Scottish Charity Regulator](#)
 - [Charity Commission](#)
 - [Charity Commission for Northern Ireland](#)
 - National councils for voluntary organisations
 - <https://scvo.org.uk/>
 - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>
 - <https://www.nicva.org/>
 - <https://wcva.cymru/coronavirus-statement/>
 - ACAS <https://www.acas.org.uk/>
 - Your local CVS
 - Your local chamber of commerce
 - Your local council
 - Your insurer
 - [Social Farms & Gardens coronavirus pages](#)
 - [Gardens of Sanctuary Resources pack](#)
- [Capital Growth](#)
 - [Institute of Outdoor Learning](#)
 - [British Safety Council](#)
 - Public Health
 - [Public Health UK](#)
 - [Scotland](#)
 - [Wales](#)
 - Advice for visitor attractions by [The National Museums](#)
 - [Handwashing ideas on Youtube](#)

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Reopening themes to consider

1. Animals

- How will you manage crowds around any animal enclosures?
- Does your fencing need any changes? How will you clean fencing?
- Who is allowed to touch the animals?
- How can you help people relate to the animals even if they cannot get close? For example viewing from a distance, taking part in video calls.

There is some evidence that animals can catch coronavirus. See the [World Organisation for Animal Health](#) for the latest information

2. Beneficiaries - see People

3. Businesses

- Have you gained all the business grants and loans you need?
- Some councils are changing their minds and granting money after being sent a sound business case.
- How will you manage demand for reopening by businesses based on your site?
- How will you manage tenants whose businesses run on your site, for example if they request rent holidays, or they need support with social distancing?

4. Capacity

- What capacity do you have when staff are on furlough?
- Can you make use of part-time furlough?
- Can you afford to open 'the gates' to the public at this time? For example do you have enough trained staff to ensure the site does not get too full.

- There may be circumstances when statutory services want individuals/groups to return but you do not have the capacity. There may be new ways to manage this. For example one London farm suggested that the council take over the booking system, which is working well.

5. Care Farms

- Please see this [Risk Assessment Checklist](#) for care farms re-opening, produced by Social Farms & Gardens' Growing Care Farming project. Care farming is the therapeutic use of farming practice.

6. Charitable aims

- Check your opening plans against your Memorandum and Articles or other formally agreed aims – what do you need to do to fulfil these?
- What do your funders need from you? Is there anything you would like to ask of your funders?

7. Cleaning and Hygiene

7.1 Face-coverings

- Face coverings are not PPE. See online guidance for their use. Would you provide face coverings for visitors and staff?
- There are also opportunities for local volunteers to sew face-coverings.
- Face-coverings are to stop you transmitting coronavirus to someone else, not to prevent you catching it.

7.2 Gloves

- Plastic gloves: Will you require staff, volunteers or visitors to wear plastic gloves? How often would they be changed?
- Gardening gloves (and aprons): Gloves will need to be washed to the same level as medical uniforms, which are washed at 30-60 degree Celsius.
- You may want to give your gardeners their own (labelled) gloves, especially if they may not be able to afford to buy them.
- How will you manage a person that refuses to wear gloves or brushes off the need for gloves?

7.3 Hands

The city farm standard for washing hands is: outdoor stainless steel sinks at various heights, with hot water, soap and (blue) paper towels. Hot water is not vital, but really helps encourage handwashing. Hand wash stations can be set up away from the mains by using tanks.

- Could you get a grant to pay for new hand-washing stations?
- [Clean hands toolkit](#)
- Can you ask volunteers to find creative ways to get people to wash their hands effectively?
- What soap and hand-drying method will be hygienic and fulfil your garden's approach?
- What will you use if you don't have access to tap water?
- Don't use water from water butts as this brings its own risks, such as legionnaire's disease.
- What is your approach to providing hand-sanitiser to staff / volunteers / visitors when soap and water are unavailable?

7.4 Tools

- How will you keep tools hygienic? Members are using 'clean' and 'dirty' tables, and buckets filled with cleaning fluid to leave used tools in. Think about rust and drying tools.
- Can people bring their own tools?
- Tools need to be cleaned between sites anyway, to prevent the spread of plant diseases.
- Members are leaving tools to 'rest' before cleaning, to minimise risk to the person cleaning them.

7.5 Disposal

- How will you dispose of plastic gloves, single-use products, paper towels, chemicals, water run-off?

7.6 Toilets

- [Draft guidance for reopening park toilets](#)
- Some members are opening toilets on request only, and cleaning them afterwards.
- Others are shortening volunteer sessions to minimise the need to use the loo.
- Will you ask your staff to clean their toilet after each time they, or a visitors, uses it?

7.7 Cleaning

- How will you record what you need to clean? For example fences, locks, taps, tools, clothing, indoor spaces?
- How will you clean? What products will you use?
- Who will clean what?
- [Calthorpe Community Garden cleaning guidance](#)

7.8 Cleaning products

- Where will you store products safely? Guidance here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/>
- How will you choose products? For example: Bar or refill soap. Bleach. Farm-grade may be needed. Pine or phenolic products may be suitable.
- How will you manage any increase in the use of plastics and non-reusable products – from a practical and communications point of view?
- How will you minimise harm to environment – you'll probably need to add a line on this in any environmental statements / impact assessments that you make.
- Is there funding that can pay for any extra purchases?
- For visitors it may be useful to be aware of the Hygiene Bank, which is like a foodbank for soap etc - <https://thehygienebank.com/who-we-are/>

7.9 Communications about cleaning

- See 'Communications' section.
- How will you manage questions about cleaning products from public and any authorities?

8. Closing (for another lockdown)

- What will you do if we all need to go into lock-down again?
- Who will make the decisions about closing, partially closing or staying open?
- How will you communicate this to your visitors and volunteers?
- What would be the impact on your organisation of another lockdown in the winter/summer?

9. Communications

9.1 Communicating your reopening

- People will want to know 'What are you doing to keep us safe?'
- People will want to see that you are following guidelines and being professional.

9.2 How will you communicate?

- On-site
- In person
- On-line
- On the phone
- To local media
- To your funders and donors
- With other local gardens and farms
- With local statutory services such as schools and doctors surgeries

How will people know they can come back to the site?

- If you are not fully open, how will you communicate who can come for sessions and who cannot yet?
- If people are reluctant to come back, how can you encourage them (e.g. phone call, buddy system, facts about the spread of coronavirus outdoors, addressing questions about using the loos...)

9.2 Communicating with staff

See 'People' section

9.3 Communications about cleaning

- How will you manage questions about cleaning products from staff, volunteers, public and any authorities?
- How will you make the most of the opportunity to communicate about your cleaning, to help people feel safe and looked after, and about the environmental impact?
- City farms have long been top of their game on handwashing, with the best sinks. This can be celebrated!

9.4 Signs and markers on site

- You'll probably need some new signs and route/spacing markers.
- And these may have to be bilingual and pictorial.
- Is there a way you can engage people in making this interesting and accessible?
- Many people cannot read including young children, and adults who would never tell you. People often ignore signs.
- Safety posters are available online.
- SF&G Scottish team have made some signs that can be used across UK sites, [download them here](#).
- Our Northern Irish members have made good use of painting on rocks.



9.5 Internet / Online

- How can you retain benefits you may have found through remote working and the online world?
- Many people are now more comfortable with online meetings. Will you make more of these rather than asking people to travel to meetings?
- Some of our members' sites, plants and animals are now real social media stars. And staff have delivered on-line classes and events. Are you able to keep up this level of online presence? Is there still the need to reach out to vulnerable people online? Can you engage a wider audience of potential donors? Can you get funding and advice on your digital presence – some funders offer this as part of their support.

9.6 Commissioners and councils

- We are all trying to work out the best new approach to safety. Commissioners and council officers have targets that your organisation may be part of fulfilling, and they also have a duty of care and a cautious legal department.
- It may be appropriate to take the time to put commissioners and other council officers in the picture about your track record on hygiene and safety, your understanding of your clients and volunteers needs, and the fact that you operate outdoors.
- There also may be opportunities you missed because your 'business' is a charity. If you have been denied a loan, grant or benefit do check with SF&G as we may have examples from other areas of these being granted to organisations like yours, or councils changing their minds about allowing people on-site. (Aiming for a win-win, where everyone is happy with the outcome.)

9.7 Communicating about funding, donations and services

- Many farms and gardens have joined together to let donors, funders and local and national government know that the virus has hit their finances hard. For example an open letter to government, and open letter thanking funders for their help and letting them know about current issues, individual letters to previous donors such as corporate groups, crowd-funder campaigns highlighting the unique value and issues faced by gardens and farms. Your local SF&G staff can help you link with other members to amplify the message.
- How might you let people know about the services you offer? For example HCGA do a monthly tour of their garden sites open to interested parties such as the council, local doctors surgery, potential corporate volunteers.
- Do communicate with your stakeholders, including funders and donors about your issues and achievements, to say thank you for previous donations and ask how they are getting on.

10. Finances, Fundraising, Furlough

- Be sure you can afford to open safely with enough people on site to manage the new rules you may need to implement.
- Will the part-time furlough rules be helpful to you?
- See our [Coronavirus COVID -19 website pages](#) for the latest funding opportunities
- See 'Insurance' section
- See 'Communications' section for keeping potential donors engaged.

11. First aid - see 'Illness' section

12. Food and Drink

12.1 Eating areas and equipment

- It may be useful to limit places where people can eat on site. All city farms, for example, have strict rules about where people can eat, and how far this can be from handwashing taps.
- It may be useful to limit who can use the kettle and other utensils.

12.2 Cafes

- How will you reopen a café?
- How will you communicate about leaseholders re-opening cafes onsite to seated guests?
- Will your cafes change what food and drink you serve and crockery you use?

12.3 Providing food and drink

- A shared lunch is often a focus of a day's work at community gardens and city farms. Will you be able to deliver this safely?
- You may need to consider minimising sharing of plates, glasses and cutlery.
- How will you dispose of food and packaging waste?

- Some gardens are doing shorter sessions so there is less demand for a shared lunch.
- Can you still provide lunch for volunteers even if you do not eat it together?

12.4 Hunger

- Poverty, isolation and illness will have left people malnourished. What can your organisation realistically do to contribute to nutrition and food information of your visitors, volunteers and staff? What would you like to do?

12.5 Foodbanks

- Many members have used their spaces as foodbanks. Is this feasible to continue if you are fully open? For example can you afford the space to be used for this? Does providing a foodbank fit with the aims of your organisation? How have you engaged the foodbank guests in the garden or farm?

12.6 New engagement around food

- There seems to be new interest in local food, sustainable food, shorter supply lines for food and growing your own food. How can you make the most of this, including those who have been involved in your project before, as well as new interest?

12.7 Food growing

- Many of our members say they are refocussing their growing areas to grow more food. If you do this, will it be as a teaching area to inspire people to grow more at home, or to supply people with food that is expensive to buy, such as spinach and salads?

13. Illness

Staff, volunteer and visitor illness

13.1 Covid-19

- How will you manage return to work for staff or volunteers after they have had Covid-19?
- How will you raise concerns with someone that seems to have Covid-19 symptoms?

- [What procedure will you use for cleaning and contacting people if a staff member has Covid-19](#)
- Covid-19 appears to have long-term health repercussions for some. How will you manage this from an HR point of view?

13.2 Hayfever

- People with hayfever sneeze! (see face-coverings)

13.3 First Aid

- Is your kit up to date?
- What will you do if first aid needs contact, such as if someone needs repositioning?
- What's your policy on resuscitation if you do have trained first aiders? [The latest government guidance is here](#)
- Where's your nearest defibrillator?

13.4 E-coli and zootropic illnesses

Just to say well done to city farms and care farms for managing this with great success for years. These skills will help manage coronavirus.
See 'Animals' section

13.5 Mental Illness

- How will you signpost and support someone experiencing mental illness who needs immediate or long-term mental health support?
- What's your duty of care to staff?

13.6 Public health

- What is the balance to consider in re-opening?
- Where does your organisation place itself in the wider public health agenda? For example as a place to exercise, relax, learn about healthier food. As a place to minimise the effects of anxiety and depression?
- Some members have found it is riskier for young people to be away from the site than to reopen, as they have been attacked on the street. What is riskier for your cohort?

14. Insurance

- What is covered by your insurance?
- Can you have a chat with your insurance provider?

15. Internet / Online - see Communications section

16. Learning

- What has your organisation learned from the coronavirus lockdown? What have staff, trustees, volunteers and supporters done well?
- Remember that 'only just managing' IS doing well.
- How will you keep a record of these interesting times in your organisation's history?
- Where/who would you like more support from/connections to if similar events took place in the future?

17. Opportunities

- What opportunities are there around reopening to...Engage donors, the health service, councillors, international on-line audiences, new people, using spaces outside the main site, etc.
- Are there new things you can offer – has there been a pivot in what you want your organisation to deliver?
- Or perhaps you just want to keep it simple, which is just as good.

18. People

18.1 Communicating with staff

- How will you welcome your staff back?
- How can you encourage wary staff members and let them know it is safe?
- How will you support any staff on furlough or shielding?

- How will you involve your staff in assessing risks, deciding about social distancing methods, cleaning products, fundraising?
- How can staff raise concerns?
- How much do you expect from staff in terms of managing other people who are not taking the appropriate precautions while on your site? Are staff expected to guide visitor's behaviour? Are they confident in this? Would you expect them to ask people to leave the site?
- Are staff ever expected to touch people using the service, such as if caring for a person that needs help putting on equipment? What are the rules about this and how do they feel?
- How will you respond to staff bereavement? How will staff support each other when supporting bereaved clients and volunteers?
- How will staff respond to the inequality shown and pain caused by the fact that Black and South Asian people, and men, are more likely to be affected by Covid-19?
- It might be useful to have a handout of services staff can signpost people to.
- You, your staff and volunteers are helping others through your farming and gardening roles. You may notice a higher level of need amongst volunteers and visitors including a desire to talk about problems. Unless your staff offer counselling as a formal part of their role, they should not counsel people. Their role as a gardener, animal worker etc is very valuable in supporting people to recover. Extra support to visitors, volunteers or clients is not part of their job.

18.2 Clients / supported volunteers

Deciding when to welcome back groups/individuals to take part in bespoke activity

- By clients/supported volunteers we mean people who are physically disabled and/or learning disabled and/or have long-term health conditions.
- Your approach to welcoming each individual back will need to consider the physical health risks of returning to your site, and the travel entailed, and the risks to mental health and general well-being of them not returning yet. The approach will be different for a young learning-disabled bike-riding adult, than an adult with multiple mental and physical health diagnoses.
- Remember that the risks for an individual of not returning to your site are more than just mental-health risks. Some young people, for example, are at higher risk of being a victim of a violent crime if not taking part in defined safe activity.

As individuals return

- How will you welcome clients / supported volunteers back when many will have been shielding and/or isolated from groups of people?
- (How) will you be staying in touch with people you feel it is too high-risk to invite back yet?
- What will be your approach to people that don't understand physical distancing?

- See general volunteer section.
- See more detailed guidance for clients that cannot social distance due to the activity (such as disabled teenagers abseiling).

18.3 Volunteers

- What might you need to change about your programme to open to volunteers? For example could you make sessions shorter to minimise risk, the need for lunch, the need for the loo?
- If you need to keep numbers down, will you prioritise some volunteers over others? For example those that can walk or cycle to the site, volunteers without underlying physical health needs, volunteers who will benefit most from being back?
- If you prioritise some volunteers how will you communicate with those you offer places to and those you don't?
- What will you do if volunteers turn-up unannounced?
- How will you manage requests from new volunteers? Do you think there will be more interest?
- Can you record any extra interest to use in a funding application?
- How will you manage a booking systems? – For example running your own, or asking the council to run a booking system for their clients that use your services.
- Will you provide food and drink, gloves etc?
- How will you encourage people back in?

18.4 Visitors / members of the public

- Is your site open access, but shut? That can be difficult. The flip side of local people being invested in your organisation is people with a sense of ownership over the site, who do not obey rules. There are probably as many ways to deal with this as there are people. How would you manage this?
- If your site is gated, how will you manage entry to the gate? Most sites will not have enough staff to count people in and out.
- You may want to put a 'yes we are open' or 'no we are closed' phone message and social media. It's quite easy to update the google info on your opening times too. You need 'ownership' of the info to do that, which is useful anyway.
- Many visitors to sites will be in a position to donate more money. Many will have much less money. How will you be inclusive if you want to raise awareness of the need to increase your income?

18.5 Trustees

- Any trustees who are reading this – many thanks!
- Remember to thank the trustees for their work during this time. Trustees – remember to thank staff and on-site volunteers.
- Is there a process for assessing and taking action (or not) on trustees ideas around the operational aspects of opening?

18.6 Children

School groups

- It looks unlikely that school groups will be reengaging with their local farms and gardens for a long time.
- However there may be scope for local schools and nurseries to use your sites to deliver their lessons. Is this a possibility for your garden space, or a marquee space?

Staff and volunteers' children

Can you accommodate the kids of staff and volunteers alongside their parents? Can you do this all day?

Ratios and safeguarding

- Do you have enough staff in to have safe ratios for supervision of any groups?
- See 'Safeguarding' section

Local children and families

- Some gardens and farms have made provision for local families to come and visit, during which time the kids are kept occupied and the (exhausted) parents get a break. Though this is aimed at the beneficiaries in the most difficult lockdown circumstances, they have also considered charging wealthier families for this.
- Many farms and gardens have kept children engaged with activity packs, online meet-the-animals activities and more. Will you keep up this kind of activity once open?
- See guidance for [children's parties from the national farm attractions](#).

18.7 Corporate groups

- Corporate groups bring in a vast amount of earned income to the sector. To bring them back, you will have to show that their staff are safe. Meanwhile keep in touch, keep your leads warm, and consider offering something online or socially distanced that they can spend their (probably) unused Corporate Social Responsibility budget on. Corporate policy may also pay more attention to the environmental bottom line. Local natural spaces, community gardens and farms are as important a part of this as green technology.

19. Plants

- How are your plants?
- What will you prioritise? High or low maintenance? Food crops? Trees? Plants to distribute / sell?

20. Risk Assessments

Safety is priority for your coronavirus risk assessment.

- This should be an easily-understood, widely-shared, live document and set of procedures that is updated as new risks and ways to manage risk emerge. It does not have to be a long document.
- You may want to update your environmental risk assessment with information about cleaning products if this has changed.
- Risks can be considered alongside the benefits of reopening to volunteers, clients and visitors.
- How will you involve staff in spotting and mitigating risks? Do they want to be involved?
- Check with your insurer about risks associated with coronavirus.

Examples

[Calthorpe Community Garden example](#)

[Calthorpe community garden coronavirus \(covid 19\) risk assessment example children](#)

[Holborn Community Centre Becoming Covid-Secure 1A \(1\)](#)

[Holborn Community Centre Becoming Covid-Secure Millman St](#)

21. Safeguarding and GDPR

You may need to take a fresh look at your safeguarding policy and procedures. For example:

- Can you maintain safe ratios to supervise children and vulnerable people?
- What's your agreed process if you notice child or adult abuse amongst returning visitors and clients. For example neglect or domestic abuse. Do your staff know how and who to raise this with?
- Are there any new things to put in place to mitigate any new privacy risks through people using new apps in their on-line communications with your organisation?
- Have any details been shared with you about local vulnerable people as part of your coronavirus response? If so, do these need to be stored / destroyed?
- There may be more need to have the phone numbers and other contacts of local people and those that care for them (to stay in touch if there is another wave of infection). How can you gather these in a way that makes people feel comfortable? How can you gather and store this information in a GDPR compliant way?

22. Spaces and Social distancing

- As primarily outdoor organisations, you may find that many of the community-spaces guidelines do not apply to you. This may mean you can open up when others cannot. But you may need to communicate this to local decision-makers, accompanied by a risk-benefit assessment. Infection transmission outdoors is understood to be lower/slower.

22.1 Cleaning – see 'Cleaning' section

22.2 Food, drink and café spaces – see food and drink and cleaning sections

22.3 Indoor spaces

There is lots of advice online about cleaning community spaces and social distancing methods such as one-way systems. For example this document by the [Holborn Community Association](#) look at risk assessments for indoor spaces.

22.4 Polytunnels, glasshouses and sheds

- Will these be open and cleaned to the level of indoor spaces?
- Will you limit people to those nominated to go in?
- Or will they be closed for the moment?
- What will you do in adverse weather?



22.5 Rain, sun, snow and wind

- Weather may affect your ability to conduct work outside. If people cannot be safely moved inside, can they work under a rain or sun cover? Or will sessions have to be cancelled/delayed? If so, how will you communicate this?

22.6 Outdoor spaces

- (How) will you rearrange the outdoors spaces or the way people move around them?
- How will you communicate new procedures?
- What will you do if people ignore the guidance, however politely?
- What will you clean and how often?

22.7 Key areas to think about

- Entrances and exits. Access points.
- Fences – if touched.
- Locks, keys and keyholders.
- Outdoor kitchens. Compost caddies.
- Seating - we hope it is easy for you to rearrange the furniture / logs for socially-distanced seating. Remember the virus can travel in all directions not just side-to-side.
- Taps. Hoses.
- Toilets - do these need to be socially distanced?
- See cleaning section.

22.8 Signs and guidance. See 'Communications' section

Staff – see 'People' section

23. Transport/Travel/Vehicles

- What is your approach to sharing vehicles with indoor spaces?
- How will you apply social distancing and face-covering use in vehicles such as cars and animal vans. What's your approach?
- What is your approach to staff and volunteers travelling in by public transport?
- What is your approach to people travelling by car if it means they can avoid public transport?



Social Farms & Gardens wish you the best of luck with reopening and staying solvent. We hope you stay well. Please stay in touch.

Text for this resource by Amber Alferoff, London Project Officer, Social Farms & Gardens, June 2020

Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together.

Find out more:

W: farmgarden.org.uk

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Twitter: [SFarms_Gardens](https://twitter.com/SFarms_Gardens)