



Meeting Places and Keeping Members Safe

Considering recent events, we know that many of you will be concerned about your unit meeting spaces and will be thinking about your risk assessments in order to keep everyone safe.

Unfortunately, as each venue is unique it is impossible to give a “one answer fits all” guidance on this, however, while we wait for more information from HQ, we have detailed below answers to some of the questions that we have been receiving that we hope will help. If you need further support, then please speak to your commissioner or contact us at northwesthq@girlguidingnwe.org.uk

FAQs

Q. Should we keep doors locked?

A. We would advise that where you can lock the doors, and keep the key somewhere safe, in the door, or by the door, or perhaps someone could be a designated key holder and have the key on them throughout the unit meeting, so that there can be an easy escape if needed. Essentially all venues and yourself as a unit leader must weigh up the pros and cons about keeping doors locked, so we suggest that you consider whether the risk of a fire and being unable to escape quickly because of having the door locked is outweighed by the risk of a stranger or someone wanting to harm members entering the building. Whatever you decide please detail this in your risk assessment and if you need to discuss this, please speak to your commissioner.

Q. What if the meeting place isn't owned by Girlguiding and the management are not happy with locking the doors.

A. If your unit meeting venue manager/warden is against locking the doors, then maybe you could join forces with other leaders/units that share the meeting place or other groups using the space and ask to speak collectively to the manager about wanting to lock the doors at the present time in order to keep members safe. Perhaps your district, division, county commissioner could help argue the case for you and together, if you think appropriate, you could speak to the venue manager/warden or whoever might be above the manager/warden. If that doesn't work maybe the voices of parents might help them understand the need to keep members safe, perhaps if the manager knew how concerned parents are, then they might be more willing to let you lock the doors.

Q. What if I am still not happy with the venue?

A. Ultimately if you are still not happy or comfortable with the situation and the venue is unwilling to change their policy on locking the doors, then you could consider one of the following:

- Having virtual meetings while the current tension situation calms down
- Sharing a venue with another unit which allows the doors to be locked
- Look for a different suitable meeting venue which allows you to lock the doors

Q. What if another organisation uses the same venue at the same time as my unit?

A. It is good policy to know who is in the building at the same time as you, this could be displayed on a notice board or you could be given the details in advance, some organisations DBS check their volunteers or staff too, so you could always ask if this is done. If anyone is in the building that you don't recognise, and you feel comfortable in challenging them, ask why they are there. Ensure that members of your unit don't wander off anywhere that they shouldn't do and that they let you know if they need to go to the toilet, so that someone can safeguard them.

Q. What if my unit uses an outdoor space, how do I keep that secure and members safe?

A. Identify in your risk assessment any risks that you might think need to be mitigated, ie:

- members of the public walking by
- no lockable gate
- cars using the car park

Then detail how you will mitigate the risk in your risk assessment. It is important that you also dynamically (as you go) identify risks every time you intend to use the space. For example, if there are strangers in the area, then you might want to change your plans for the evening and keep members inside.

Remember to include everything that you are doing to safeguard members in your unit meeting place risk assessment