CAMBRIDGESHIRE ACRE COMMUNITY ACTION

Prevent considerations for community buildings

A guide

A proportionate approach to venue hire enquiries and decisions

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About this guide

Community buildings should be welcoming places where people can meet, celebrate, learn and take part in local life. Most bookings are straightforward. Occasionally, however, a booking may not be what it first appears to be, or may create concerns about safety, safeguarding, discrimination, hate or extremism.

This guide sets out a practical and proportionate way to consider those risks. It is not about treating every hirer with suspicion. It is about asking sensible questions when a booking is unfamiliar, unusual or unclear, checking what you have been told, and recording how you reached your decision.

Use a proportionate approach
Routine bookings from known local groups will not normally need extensive checks. Apply more scrutiny where the hirer is unknown, the booking is made for another person or organisation, the event involves external speakers, or the purpose and audience are unclear.

The three-step process

Step	Purpose	What this means in practice
1. ASK	Understand the booking	Gather enough information to know who is hiring, what is planned and who is involved.
2. CHECK	Confirm the information	Carry out reasonable checks using reliable sources and, where appropriate, references.
3. DECIDE	Reach and record a decision	Consider the evidence, the venue's policies and any practical measures needed to manage risk.

Step 1: ASK

Start by building a clear picture of the proposed hiring. Explain that these are standard questions used to help the committee manage the building responsibly.

About the hirer or organisation

- Full name and any other names used by the person, group or organisation.
- Address, telephone number and email address.
- Whether the person is booking for themselves, their organisation, or on behalf of someone else.
- Names of any partner organisations involved.
- Website and relevant social media account names.
- Company number or registered charity number, where applicable.

About the event

- Event name, purpose, theme, agenda and planned content.
- Date, times, expected attendance and intended audience.
- Whether the event is public, invitation-only or ticketed.
- Names of speakers or contributors, including anyone joining remotely.
- How the event will be promoted, with copies of publicity where available.
- Whether media will attend, or whether the event will be filmed, streamed or recorded.
- Why this venue has been chosen, particularly where there is no obvious local connection.

About speakers and contributors

- Names and any other names they use publicly.
- Relevant organisation, website and social media details.
- Their role in the event and the subject they will cover.
- Whether they are local or travelling specifically for the event.

- Links to previous talks, articles, blogs, books or other published material, where relevant.

- Organisations with which they hold an active role or close affiliation.

Agreement to your conditions

- The hirer has received and agreed to the venue's hiring agreement and booking conditions.

- The hirer understands that discriminatory, threatening, hateful or unlawful activity is not permitted.

- The hirer has provided all requested information and will notify the venue of material changes.

Pause if the answers are vague
Evasive, inconsistent or changing answers do not automatically mean that a booking is unsuitable, but they are a reason to ask further questions before confirming it.

Step 2: CHECK

Check enough information to confirm that the proposed booking is as described. Keep the checks relevant and proportionate, and distinguish verified facts from opinion, allegation or speculation.

Confirm key details

- Check company or charity registration details against the relevant public register.
- Check that websites and social media accounts belong to the person or organisation concerned.
- Where appropriate, request a reference from a venue they have used previously.
- Compare the information supplied with the event publicity and advertised speakers.

Look for relevant concerns

- Review recent website, social media and published material for messages promoting hate, intolerance, violence or unlawful activity.
- Check credible news coverage and information from trusted organisations.
- Consider whether previous events involving the group or speaker have led to disruption, safety concerns or serious complaints.
- Check relevant affiliations and whether the proposed topic has previously generated hostility or a risk of disorder.
- Record the source and date of information relied upon, particularly where it may change.

Be fair and evidence-led

Do not rely on a single social media post, an unverified allegation or personal disagreement with a viewpoint. Consider the source, context, date and relevance of the information, and give the hirer an opportunity to clarify significant discrepancies where appropriate.

Step 3: DECIDE

Bring together what the hirer has told you and what your checks have established. The aim is not to find a perfect or risk-free answer, but to reach a reasonable decision that can be explained and evidenced.

Questions for the decision-maker

- Is the person or organisation clearly identified?
- Is the purpose and content of the event sufficiently clear?
- Has the hirer been open, consistent and truthful?
- Does the proposed activity comply with the hiring agreement and the venue's policies?
- Does the event fit the building's charitable or community purpose?
- Could the event create safeguarding, public safety or serious community cohesion concerns?
- Can any identified risks be managed through proportionate conditions?
- Would the same approach be taken to another hirer in comparable circumstances?

Possible outcomes

Outcome	When it may be appropriate
Accept	The information is clear, checks raise no material concern and the booking meets the venue's conditions.
Accept with conditions	The booking can proceed if specific, practical measures are agreed and documented.
Decline or defer	Material concerns remain, the proposed use conflicts with the venue's purposes or conditions, or insufficient information has been provided.

Examples of proportionate conditions

- Named event organiser present throughout and available to venue representatives.
- Final speaker list and publicity supplied by an agreed date.

- No change to the stated purpose, speakers or format without the venue's written agreement.
- Clear attendee numbers and suitable arrangements for admission, stewarding and emergency evacuation.
- Compliance with safeguarding, equality, health and safety and acceptable-use requirements.
- Permission for an authorised venue representative to attend or monitor compliance with the hiring conditions.
- A refundable deposit or additional security arrangements where objectively justified by the identified risk.

Important
A booking must not be refused simply because of a protected characteristic. Apply your policies consistently and base decisions on the proposed activity, reliable evidence, your governing document and legitimate risks. Seek advice where the legal or safeguarding position is unclear.

Record your decision

A short written record makes the process more consistent and helps the committee explain why it acted as it did. Keep the record securely and only for as long as it is needed under your data protection arrangements.

Booking or event	
Hirer or organisation	
Date considered	
Information requested	
Checks completed and sources	
Key findings	
Risks and mitigations	
Decision and reasons	
Decision made by	

Strengthen your booking arrangements

The process works best when it is supported by clear documents and agreed responsibilities. Your committee should:

- Use a written hiring agreement (use Cambridgeshire ACRE's model document) and booking form.
- Include clear conditions on discriminatory, threatening, hateful and unlawful activity.
- State that bookings may be declined or cancelled where information is misleading, material details change, or hiring conditions are breached.
- Identify who can approve routine bookings and who must consider higher-risk or unusual enquiries.
- Agree an escalation route for safeguarding, safety, legal or Prevent-related concerns.
- Train everyone who handles bookings to apply the same process fairly and keep appropriate records.
- Review the approach after a difficult booking or incident and update documents where necessary.

When to seek further advice

Seek advice before making a final decision where there is a credible concern about terrorism, radicalisation, safeguarding, serious disorder, unlawful discrimination or immediate safety. Follow your safeguarding and emergency procedures. If there is an immediate risk of harm or a suspected crime, contact the emergency services or police as appropriate.

Useful resources

- ACRE Model Hiring Agreement, including suggested clauses that community buildings can adapt. Please contact Cambridgeshire ACRE's Community Buildings Advice team.

- Prevent duty guidance on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales-accessible

- Prevent information and local contacts on the Cambridgeshire County Council website: https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/safer-communities/preventing-radicalisation

- Your venue's governing document, hiring agreement, safeguarding policy, equality policy and data protection arrangements.

Final checklist

- We know who is making the booking and on whose behalf.
- We understand the purpose, content, speakers and audience.
- We have checked relevant information using reliable sources.
- We have considered the venue's charitable purpose, policies and identified risks.
- We have applied the same fair and proportionate approach we would use for a comparable booking.
- We have recorded the decision, reasons and any conditions.
- The hirer has received written confirmation of the outcome and conditions.