



Campaign for Pubs

Promote, Support and Protect Pubs

Lorraine O'Donnell
Chief Executive
Cheshire East Council
Municipal Buildings
Earle Street
Crewe
CW1 2BJ

9th April 2021

Dear Ms O'Donnell,

Outdoors Only opening – Cheshire East Council's interpretation of the rule of 6 for pubs

We are writing as a matter of urgency as some of our members have contacted us about Cheshire East Council's interpretation of the rule of six for different households attending pubs, from Monday 12th April, when pubs are permitted to open outdoors.

Pubs and publicans in the Cheshire East area are dismayed to find that Cheshire East are interpreting the Government's guidelines to further suggest that a group of six from different households must socially distance.

The Government guidance allows 6 people from different households to meet outside (including within compliant structures), which is very important, indeed essential, to make outdoors only opening viable at all.

Yet we have been sent a letter which states that Cheshire East Council have stated, "where 6 people from different households meet outside (including within compliant structure) they must be seated in such a way that they are able to socially distance from each other."

This cannot be what the Government intends. This interpretation – and considerable additional restriction imposed by Cheshire East - will also actually make it unviable or indeed impossible for many pubs in the Council's area to open, especially smaller pubs, with smaller outdoors areas, pubs that have been amongst those that have suffered most from successive lockdowns.

We do accept that the Government have, with this and other issues, not been as clear as they should have been with guidance, and we do acknowledge that this does cause a problem for local authorities. However, in this case, we do not believe that your interpretation is reasonable or what the Government intended, and indeed any such additional rule means that in reality, people from different households cannot actually meet, as they would not be able to sit at the same table (and with mandatory table service, this is the only way they allowed to meet).

You must realise that there is an expectation that from Monday people can do what the Government has staged and can at last socialise with a group of up to six where pubs can and are serving outdoors. For Cheshire East to then effectively make this impractical (or actually impossible) is unacceptable, as well as unnecessary. The Council's interpretation also will lead to the likelihood of complaints and indeed confrontations as pubs are forced to try to explain that the Council (not the Government) has insisted that despite being supposedly allowed to meet in a group of six, that actually they cannot sit together at one table. This is an impossible, as well as a really unfair position, to put pubs and publicans in; publicans that have faced months without trade and mounting debts and considerable anxiety.

Campaign for Pubs, The Volunteer Arms, 5 Watson Street, Holgate, York YO24 4BH

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It is very important to state that many other councils have not interpreted the rules in this way and are not imposing this extra restriction on pubs. Doing so is unfair and actually makes it unable, if not impossible, for pubs in your area, that have spent weeks preparing to open, to do so at all.

So we urge the Council to rethink and to stick to the guidelines as envisaged by the Government, to allow people to socialise, outdoors, in a group of up to six.

We have also raised this with the Government, who we hope will clarify that their rules do *not* require an additional stipulation of socially distancing - and that people are permitted to meet in a group of six, without additional rules that then actually prevent that.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Mulholland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

Greg Mulholland
Campaign Director