

Hostel accommodation provider operational guidelines

HOSTELS - UNDERSTANDING A MULTI-BED ROOM ENVIRONMENT

Hostels are designed to accommodate like-minded individuals who are looking for a cost effective and social approach to sharing accommodation. Rooms are priced and beds are sold primarily on the basis that the more people sharing a dorm room, the cheaper the bed price. Guests are primarily younger than traditional Hotel guests and will range from School groups to those in their mid 30s. The configuration of hostel rooms will vary greatly between hostels but generally there are few Private / Single/ Twin rooms and most hostels offer a range from 4- bed to 12-bed Dormitory accommodation with a mix of ensuite and/or shared bathroom facilities.

Our core aim is to ensure all staff, customers and visitors are safe when returning to our businesses and to mitigate the primary risks within our premises.

The advice outlined here is the initial version following the initial consultation with the UKH working group looking at the hostel sector, and other relevant feedback. The Welsh Government's COVID-19 guidelines set out the standards to make your business COVID-19 safe. These can be found here <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

To do this, you need to complete an individual risk assessment for your premises and work activities outlining how you are meeting these guidelines and implementing them in your business to keep your staff and customers safe. An example risk assessment can be found at annex 1.

The sectoral advice in this section is a collation of good practice to inform **your** robust risk assessment and changes to **your** premises and operating plans, supported by individual risk assessments for each specific site as each hospitality business is different.

Staff return and fitness to work

It is recommended that businesses should carry out a return to work conversation, with staff. HSE has [guidance](#) on talking to employees about Covid-19. This should be carried out for all staff returning to work in the work environment, to ensure staff safety. Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals have been strongly advised not to work outside the home. Clinically vulnerable individuals, who are at higher risk of severe illness, have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and should be helped to work from home, either in their current role or in an alternative role. If clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to socially distance from others. If they have to spend time closer than the social distance to others, you should carefully assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk. As for any workplace risk

you must take into account specific duties to those with protected characteristics, including, for example, expectant mothers who are, as always, entitled to suspension on full pay if suitable roles cannot be found. Particular attention should also be paid to people who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

You should also provide support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. See <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

People who need to self-isolate

The current advice is that individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms and those who are advised to self-isolate as part of the government's test and trace program. Enable workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate. See current guidance for employers and employees relating to statutory sick pay due to coronavirus. See current guidance for people who have symptoms and those who live with others who have symptoms.

Hygiene

Good hygiene is vital to the reduction of transmission. All handwashing to always be in line with Government guidelines regarding method and length of washing. All staff should wash their hands when arriving at work, as well as before handling or eating food, or after blowing noses, coughing or sneezing, or going to the toilet.

Communications to staff should remind everyone to wash their hands or use a suitable hand gel at the start of every shift. Hand sanitiser could also be placed in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.

Advice for staff to take home

A general commitment to hygiene should be regularly communicated to staff, including transmission threats outside of the workplace, infection and quarantine guidelines, and actions to reduce risk of infection in the home.

Staff protection

All Government advice should be adhered to with regard to protection of staff from COVID-19 and actions to limit risk of transmission. This will include developing cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures and maintaining social distancing, where possible.

Below are some suggested control measures to consider as part of your risk assessment and development of risk management procedures. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

The most important thing is to remember the routes of transmission, and to work out what actions are most effective in **your** business.

- Heightened cleaning and disinfection to disinfect all frequently touched areas in staff areas such as tables, chairs, counters tills, card machines, etc.
- For staff break areas/canteens, stagger timings so that groups of staff have slots to come for their meals to reduce gathering.
- Encourage staff to take 'grab and go' lunches, buying food to be consumed away from crowded spaces.
- In office/admin areas, many people could be sharing the phone, keyboard, mouse, and the desk. If these items are shared, they should be cleaned using your usual cleaning products before being used, and cleaning products should be made available for this purpose.
- Make sure that the social distancing rule applies at lunch or smoking / vaping breaks
- Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest water setting and dry items completely. There is more control if laundry is carried out in-house or professionally, rather than staff taking it home.

Protective equipment

The Government advises that when managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE (beyond what you usually wear) is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE. Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

The Government advises that unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. Government guidance can be found here - <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

Waste disposal

Contact your waste contractor to advise them of any changes in your procedures, such as increased frequency of collections. Consider additional litter bins on your premises to encourage customers to dispose of their own waste, such as takeaway containers or wrappers. This will reduce the need for staff to touch items that have been left or touched by customers, as well as reducing littering on and around your premises.

Training

Training should be given to ensure that all staff understand the new risks, and should include details on social distancing requirements, routes of transmission and the importance of hand washing and surface disinfection at key times. All staff should be instructed about not coming to work if they have a high temperature, new continuous cough or the loss of taste or smell. They should stay at home and self-isolate according to government recommendations.

Advice to staff working in Kitchens

- As much as possible, staff should adhere to social distancing guidelines and be instructed as to what measures are in place if social distancing cannot be maintained
- As every hostel business is different, a detailed plan for the individual site and kitchen needs to be developed, reviewed and communicated to all staff.
- In kitchens, continue to use your regular cleaning regime as usual, and at the end of the shift you may want to go over all hand touch surfaces one more time before closing.
- You could include guidance regarding the number of people allowed in the chilled stores or dry stores at one time, keeping to social distancing requirements, or the changing rooms / staff toilet area
- Use a dishwasher (if available) to clean and dry used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them by hand using detergent and warm water and dry them thoroughly, using a separate tea towel.

Customer safety

- Information shall be made available to guests via pre-stay communications, as to the additional measures in place regarding COVID-19.
- Staff communication is key- regularly communicate your plan to staff.
- Customers should be able to sit and adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- Many Hostels operate guest kitchens and it is recommended that this facility is withdrawn from use until it is able to be managed safely.

Housekeeping of Rooms

There is a risk of contamination/transmission subsequent to hand contact surfaces in bedrooms, on linen

and towels. Staff should follow handwashing guidelines as per PHE guidance. Hostels will review the frequency of the cycle of cleaning and in-room services to take into account different lengths of stay.

- Room cleaning will be undertaken in the absence of the guest, due to the multi occupancy nature of the hostel it will be necessary to preclude access for an enforced period of some hours to allow housekeepers free and safe access to the rooms.
- The frequency of cleaning, requirement for the guest to vacate the room and any other relevant criteria shall be communicated appropriately, including in pre-arrival communications.
- Hand contact surfaces should be disinfected. Make a checklist of all the touch points which could include, but is not limited to, the following, all of which would - as a minimum - be disinfected during regular cleaning on a daily basis:
 - Light switches
 - Bedside tables
 - Remote control
 - Taps
 - Flush handles and toilet seats
 - Door handles - inside and out, and access control pads where fitted

- Electronic key entry system
- Ladders and Rails
- Safe buttons
- In Room Lockers
- Kettle handle and lid
- Heater and/or air conditioner controls.
- Room collateral should be kept to a minimum.

Shared Bathroom and Toilet Facilities

- In hostels many of the WC and Showering facilities are on a shared basis, in normal operating times customers can pick and choose which shower room or WC they use.
- Hand washing and sanitising posters/facilities should be in place at entrance/exit of the bathrooms
- In view of the rules around operating with COVID where possible best practice would be to assign one group of bathrooms to one sleeping dormitory or group of dormitories.
- The housekeeping of these areas will need to be increased during this period and the cleaning materials regularly used, in line with government guidelines.
- Also the provision of cleaning equipment could be made available to our guests so they are able to clean facilities before or after use.

Reception

Where appropriate and achievable, screens between staff and guests/visitors will be used in communal areas. There will be a reduction of collateral and complementary items to a minimum, in receptions.

- Communicating, though signage and/or other means, explanations of social distancing rules and additional hygiene measures are in place to protect guests and staff.
- Make clear in pre-stay communications the extra measures that are being taken, to offer reassurance.

- Staff will act to ensure that guests observe social distancing, for example, if there is a queue for the reception desk.
- Make sure all reception staff, guests and visitors have access to sanitiser at the desk and that staff use this between serving guests.
- Reception desks should be organised so that staff can be safely distanced away from guests as much as possible.
- Floor markings or other physical indicators, where implementation is appropriate and achievable, will be used to act as visible reminders of social distancing requirements.
- When guests sign documents and use the chip and pin machine, reception staff should step back to keep their distance. Any pens or machines that are used should be disinfected before the next guests, and staff should sanitise their hands.
- If staff help guests with luggage, they should keep a safe distance from the guests whilst collecting luggage and either take it to the room before the guest arrives or knock on the door, step back and leave the luggage at the door. After handling luggage, staff should wash their hands or use a hand sanitiser afterwards.
- Consider a central key card deposit box placed in the lobby for disinfection of room keys when guests check out.
- You could consider a welcome note/material including requesting guests recognise the importance of the local community, and respect social distance and good hygiene practice in all contacts and activities both inside and outside of the hostel.

Minimising lift usage from reception, and advice for safer use of lifts throughout the hostel, can be advised in pre-stay communications and in-building signage and staff communications. Follow Government guidelines on lift usage.

Locker Room and Luggage Storage

- Locker Keypads should be disinfected regularly
- Left Luggage/Items need to be disposed of safely Stored for 72 Hours before being removed
- After handling luggage, staff should wash their hands or use a hand sanitiser afterwards.

Other considerations

Air-conditioning:

- Consider air filtration - review latest guidance, keep spaces and rooms well-ventilated.
- Where possible and appropriate, natural ventilation solutions to be applied.

Suspected COVID-19 cases in your business

If a guest presents themselves with symptoms of COVID-19 in either a private room or shared dormitory or is asymptomatic but declares the need to self-isolate, they should be advised to self-isolate according to current government guidance. This will apply to all guests that were present in the room. If the guest shows acute symptoms has breathing difficulties or their life is at potential risk, seek medical help immediately.

Hostel cleaning after a suspected contamination

Whether an infection is confirmed or suspected relating to your premises, there is specific guidance here <https://view.publitas.com/ukh/coronavirus-advice-for-hotels-and-the-hospitality-industry-25-02-2020/page/15>.

Be aware that guidance is changing daily as more scientific evidence comes in, so always check the Government sites if a case arises in your business. It pays to make a plan for this eventuality before it happens and to make sure that you have the chemicals you need. You also need to make sure that your staff are trained on new procedures.

Public Areas

You will need to clean and disinfect all high frequency touch points in the public areas in the hostel: disinfect surfaces such as grab-rails in corridors and stairwells, door handles and lift buttons. Don't just clean the touch points on the floor level where the infected guest was staying, others may have picked up the virus and transferred it to other floors and areas. Dispose of any cloths, disposable mop heads by double bagging and keeping secure for 72 hours before disposing in the general rubbish.

If you can't isolate the room

If you can't keep the room unoccupied after an infected guest has left, Government guidance includes some of the following information and we have added more detail to help:

- Where there is evidence of bodily fluids, further personal protection may be needed according to the latest government guidance which can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/oce23.pdf>. Wear disposable or washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning. If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids, from a person with COVID-19, use protection for the eyes, mouth and nose, as well as wearing gloves and an apron.
- Don't shake laundry and bag up in double bags and leave securely for 72 hours before washing. Wash hands and disinfect any surfaces that may have been contaminated by the bags after taking to the secure place.
- Steam clean soft furnishings and mattresses only if you can guarantee that the steam cleaner actually emits steam when it leaves the machine.
- Using a disposable cloth, first clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water. Then disinfect these surfaces with the disinfecting / sanitising products you normally use.
- Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, in the room as listed above.
- After cleaning dispose of single-use protective clothing, cloths and mop heads and any other waste in the room by double-bagging, and then store securely for 72 hours then throw away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished.
- After cleaning and bagging up waste, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, and dry them with a paper towel. Dispose of paper towel appropriately.

Note

- Although not mandated, hostels may wish to use professional third party cleaning services but check provider's credentials to ensure that they are suitable.