

Changes to the way we work

Adjusting changeover processes in response to Covid-19



Introduction

As we prepare to reopen our doors following the easing of the lockdown restrictions, in order to best protect everyone from the risk of exposure to Covid-19, changes are necessary to the way we all work.

This document details the changes we recommend when changing over a property between bookings. It has been created in line with the relevant Government, Public Health England and Health & Safety Executive guidance and recommendations (where available at time of publish), and will continue to be updated as we are made aware of changes to Government Guidance and Legislation.

This document focuses on the normal servicing of properties. In properties where a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 is identified, additional measures will need to be taken to help minimise the risk to anyone subsequently entering the property. Separate guidance on this is available [here](#).

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1. Essential safety checks

1a. Legionella (flushing the water system)

⚠ Legionella Warning. In all properties where the water system hasn't been run for several weeks it is essential the water system is flushed to protect your guests.

Legionella is a potentially deadly bacteria commonly found in water. It can cause Legionnaires disease, a potentially fatal type of pneumonia.

Temperature control is the main form of Legionella control used in hot and cold water systems. Preventative measures can include running water through each outlet sequentially for at least 5 minutes and checking the temperature - cold water should be below 20 degrees and hot should be at 60 degrees

For further information please refer to the [Legionella risks during the coronavirus outbreak](#) guide issued by the Health & Safety Executive.

1b. Ensuring your safety certificates are valid.

To accept guests at your property it is a legal requirement that there is a valid, up-to-date **Gas Safety Certificate (if applicable)** and **Fire Safety Risk Assessment**.

Should these have expired they must be renewed in good time for any upcoming bookings at your property. Where these cannot be completed in time, you must contact us as soon as possible to enable us to arrange alternative accommodation.

Further guidance in relation to essential safety checks can be found in our [Health & Safety guide](#).

2. Decluttering your property

We recommend all non-essential, high-contact items that are impractical to clean are securely stored away or removed from properties to reduce the risk of viral transmission. These include, but are not limited to:

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- Books
- CD's
- DVD's
- Board/card games
- Toys
- Ornaments
- Leaflets and maps
- Guest books

If we manage your property we will be removing these items and where possible storing them in the property (or at our offices if this is not possible) to ensure a faster cleaning time, reduced costs and increased guest safety.

We also recommend minimising the amount of crockery, glassware, cutlery (retaining the amount equal to twice the occupancy of the property) and other kitchen utensils, to ensure that all kitchenware within the property can be cleaned each changeover.

3. Welcome packs

Welcome packs may continue to be provided, but consideration should be given towards the contents and packaging:

- Only pre-packaged products should be provided (homemade items should be replaced with pre-packaged products).
- All packaging should be wipeable.

If a welcome pack is placed in a property within 72hrs of guest arrival, new gloves should be worn and all packaging and other touchpoints should be wiped down with soap and water, or a suitable antiviral product.

4. Key safes

Key safes should be installed and used wherever possible to minimise key handling, person to person contact and support social distancing.

Where guests previously collected property keys from a TOCC office, key safe installation at the property will now be mandatory. Should this apply to your property, your local team will be in contact to discuss this new requirement.

Keys and key safes should be cleaned and disinfected as part of the changeover process.

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5. Working with our guests

Maintaining a safe environment for all requires guest cooperation. Separate guidance is being written for guests, requesting they take some simple measures, before and during their holiday to help support the safe and continued letting of your property, including:

Before their holiday

- The arrival and departure times have been changed to allow for increased cleaning in their holiday home. If cleaning is still taking place when they arrive, they are asked to allow the cleaners to finish before entering the property.
- Thinking about items such as books and games they might want to bring with them as there may no longer be any in the property.
- We will advise them that we have recommended owners leave disinfectant and hand sanitiser for guests use, but they may like to bring these with them to use during their holiday.

During their holiday

- Following government guidance on social distancing and regular hand washing.
- Contacting us if they become unwell and are advised to have a Covid-19 test, so that we can take appropriate action to protect staff, property owners, suppliers and future guests.

Prior to departure

- Place all personal rubbish e.g. tissues and face wipes into a plastic bag and then into a rubbish bag before putting into the wheelie bin/dustbin.
- Stripping their beds and placing all bed linen and towels into a plastic bag prior to departure
- Loading and starting the dishwasher where available.

6. Guidance for cleaning

The following guidance is suitable for anyone undertaking the cleaning of a holiday property.

6a. Clean, then disinfect high-contact areas

Regular cleaning plays a vital role in limiting the transmission of COVID-19.

Fortunately standard cleaning methods and products can be used and as such specialist cleaning is not required, however, there are a number of additional things which must be considered to ensure risks of infection is minimised.

We recommend that all high-contact areas and items - such as bathrooms, door handles, telephones, banisters and light switches - are cleaned and then disinfected.

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Please refer to our new [Cleaning Essentials Checklist](#) for full details of the additional cleaning measures we recommend are taken, plus other considerations for when performing changeovers.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants used.

6b. When to clean (changeovers)

We recommend commencing work no sooner than 3hrs after guests have departed. New check-in and check-out times (7pm and 9am respectively) have been established to help accommodate this and the additional cleaning required.

Changeover cleaning must not take place until all guests have vacated the property. This is essential to helping ensure that the property is cleared of all traces of the previous guests in preparation for the incoming guests.

6c. Mid-occupancy cleaning and maintenance

As much as possible, any mid-occupancy cleaning and maintenance tasks should take place whilst the property is empty.

Scheduling an arrival time with the guests, or calling prior to arrival, is highly recommended. Some guests will feel vulnerable having a 3rd party within the property, so unexpected visits, as always must be avoided.

Discuss guest cleaning requirements prior to arrival where possible; they may prefer a reduced service, such as the provision of fresh towels only, to avoid having a 3rd party present in the property.

If guests must remain at the property when you visit, request all windows and doors are left open and that guests are in a different room to where you are working.

For small maintenance tasks, consider whether it is possible to achieve a satisfactory result without attending the property, eg, would providing clear instructions (by phone or email) help resolve the issue?

6d. Preparations (including PPE requirements)

Ensure you are well hydrated

Drinking whilst cleaning poses a number of risks. It is recommended you do not eat or drink in a property.

Wash your hands thoroughly

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Hands should be washed for a minimum of 20 seconds, using soap before and after each clean. Alternatively, a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol may be used. Consult the product label for correct usage instructions.

Use the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 1) For a property check or visit (undertaking no cleaning or other maintenance work), it is recommended disposable gloves are worn.
 - 2) To undergo maintenance work, the following PPE is recommended
 - Disposable gloves or washing-up gloves.
 - Disposable apron.
 - 3) When cleaning the following PPE is recommended:
 - Face covering. This can be a cloth covering the mouth and nose. It is not a face mask used in clinical settings - these need to be reserved for key workers that need them.
 - Eye protection.
 - Disposable gloves.
 - Disposable apron.
 - 4) PPE should always be changed before handling clean items that will be left in the property, such as fresh linen for making up beds, or clean items from the dishwasher.
 - 5) Putting PPE on and taking it off in the correct way is just as important as wearing it in the first place. Once removed PPE should always be disposed of and never reused. Public Health England has published guidance and an informative video on how to do this, [here](#).
- Prior to returning to work, we recommend practicing the putting-on and removing of PPE at home.
- 6) Prior to entering a property and starting work, PPE should be put on.
 - 7) Used PPE should always be double bagged once removed, prior to disposal.

Gloves should be changed between properties and never reused. If you need to remove your gloves, replace them with a new pair. Hands should be washed as soon as possible, with soap and for at least 20 seconds, after gloves are removed.

Once a face covering becomes moist or wet it is no longer effective and should not be used. If using a disposable mask, discard it appropriately. For a cloth mask that can be reused or washed, carefully place it in a sealed bag to be washed and fully dried before reuse.

Ventilate the property

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Opening doors and windows prior to cleaning will help to improve ventilation and help fresh air flow through the property.

Splitting tasks (working with a colleague)

If working with a colleague to clean a property, social distancing should be maintained at all times.

Unless residing in the same household, you should travel to each property in separate vehicles. Each vehicle should be assigned to a single person, where possible. Full details of safer travel guidance for passengers from the Department for Transport can be found [here](#).

6e. Considerations whilst cleaning

Avoid touching your face.

To prevent the spread of germs, refrain from touching your face, nose, and eyes with unwashed hands.

Use disposable products where possible

All cleaning cloths, mops and other equipment should be changed and disposed of, or appropriately laundered/cleaned and disinfected between each clean.

Taking breaks

If you need to take a break, you should:

- Remove and bag all PPE worn.
- Wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap.
- Go outside to consume any food/drink you have brought with you.

When returning to work, hands should be washed and new PPE should be worn.

Mobile phones

Always remove any PPE and wash your hands prior to touching your phone.

6f. Bed linen and towels

New guidance for guests will request they bag used linen and towels prior to departure. In the unlikely event the guests have not been able to do this, the following procedure applies:

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- Once used linen has been bagged, gloves and apron should be replaced with new before putting clean linen on the beds and putting out fresh towels. The same applies to bath mats, tea towels, oven gloves and any other removable linen items.
- Do not shake dirty laundry. Doing so increases the risk of dispersing any virus particles into the air.
- As always, we recommend that pillows and mattresses have protectors on and are laundered between changeovers if there is visible need.

6g. Hot tubs, pools and gyms

If pools or hot tubs are being made available for use, all areas around a hot tub or pool should be suitably cleaned and disinfected between stays, paying particular attention to all touch points.

All facilities should be serviced by an approved contractor for maintenance, water quality and temperature control in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.

If gym equipment is being made available for guests to use, as with the rest of a property, all hard surfaces and contact points (handles, seats, mats, head rests, weights, weight pins etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected between stays. Equipment that cannot be suitably cleaned should be removed.

If any of these facilities are shared between different groups/properties, it may be necessary to take extra precautions in order to make these available for guests, such as:

- Assigning the facilities to one party for the duration of their stay.
- Scheduling the usage of the facilities, permitting only members of the same group/property access at one time, then cleaning and disinfecting all touchpoints between each usage.

We recommend that guests are made aware that they use facilities such as swimming pools, hot tubs or gyms at their own risk.

Monitoring the latest government guidance relating to the facilities at your property should help to inform your decision around opening them. We recommend incorporating these facilities into your risk assessment, and having a process in place to record the steps you are taking to prepare/maintain the facilities between stays.

6h. Provision of essentials (soap, washing up liquids etc)

Where possible, provide single use or miniature items which can be disposed of at the end of each stay. Where this is not possible, items must be considered high-contact and cleaned, then disinfected.

Any cleaning cloths, washing up sponges or other equipment left for guests to use during their stay should be disposable and replaced on each changeover.

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Provision of a suitable disinfectant and hand sanitiser should now be considered as essential items and left for your guests' use during their stay.

6i. When you leave

Things to remember before leaving the property:

- Empty the vacuum cleaner. You should clean and disinfect the outside of the vacuum cleaner as with all other reusable equipment.
- Ensure any maintenance items the next guests will require have been provided (bin bags, laundry bags, dishwasher tablets).
- Remove all waste generated from the changeover. Used PPE should be double bagged.
- Clean and disinfect all re-usable tools or equipment used.
- Use hand sanitizer when finished and before entering your vehicle.

6j. Cleaning Essentials Checklist

To support the practical completion of changeovers, we have created a checklist detailing the recommended additional cleaning measures that should be taken, plus other considerations for when performing changeovers. [View it here](#).

7. Revised check-in and check-out times

The time required to clean and disinfect each property will undoubtedly increase. To help manage this, a new check-in time of 7pm and check-out out time of 9am will apply to all properties. These changes will be communicated to all guests by email and text message prior to their arrival, and will be reflected on all property listings on our websites.

8. Maintaining guest confidence

It is important guests are aware that any new requests we make of them (such as bagging used linen) and changes to normal service (including revised check-in/out times) are essential measures, implemented to help keep us all safe.

We are working on new pre-arrival email and text messages for guests, in addition to information cards for placement within properties, which will explain the changes and express our appreciation of their support.

The cleanliness of your property is presently of heightened importance to guests; they need to feel safe and comfortable during their stay. In addition to ensuring high standards of cleanliness, we should all consider how else the current Covid-19 situation will affect our guests during their stay, recognising opportunities to go the extra mile.

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We recommend:

- Providing a good supply of essential items, such as toilet rolls and dishwasher tablets (where applicable). Guests will likely be spending more time than usual within the property, so extra supplies would be helpful.
- Providing additional cleaning products, including hand sanitisers where possible. Their presence will positively enforce our stance on cleanliness.
- Leaving a message explaining why items have been removed (decluttered) and how it is for the safety of guests. Suggested wording and inclusions for this will soon be shared with you.
- Respecting their space. Never entering the property (nor arranging for a 3rd party to do so) during a stay unless absolutely necessary, prearranged with the guests, or upon the request of the guests. Social distancing should be adhered to at all times.
- Whilst local attractions are closed, consider alternative ways to help your guests enjoy their stays. Recommend local walks, safe destinations and provide other local tips that would improve their experience.
- Whilst restaurants and cafes are closed, recommend great places for your guests to buy local foods, wines, cheeses etc, and perhaps even provide them with a few local or family recipes.
- It would be helpful to provide a list of restaurants, cafes, pubs etc that are providing a pre-order and collect or delivery service.

Whatever you do to improve your guests' stay, remember to do it safely. Any notes or additional information left should be laminated (or presented in plastic sleeves/wallets) for easy cleaning, or disposed of and replaced with each changeover.