

Update from NHS Property Services: Message from CEO Martin Steele

Last week's government announcement to introduce stricter measures across the country has seen major changes in how we all operate. At NHS Property Services, we are adjusting how we run our organisation as we respond to the demands that the coronavirus has brought and is likely to bring in the coming months.

As we anticipate the next phase of the coronavirus, I wanted to update you with how we are responding to this challenge and to renew our focus on ensuring we continue to support the NHS and patient care.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen a huge increase in demand for our services, both for facilities management and strategic asset management. This is testament to the many cleaners, engineers, porters, receptionists and others that we employ across the country, working with you to enable delivery of vital services and I am proud of how our colleagues are helping during this time.

Helping the NHS: our guiding principles

Like many other organisations across the country and in all sectors, we are having to make difficult decisions about how best to support customers, patients and our people.

We're working to support the NHS in whatever way we can, locally and nationally alongside colleagues in NHS England and Improvement and our suppliers.

Our focus remains on keeping buildings safe and enabling patient care but unfortunately, we're not able to service every request we receive. We are prioritising resources and other requests to be able to deliver where needed most and to do so for longer. Our guiding principles during this time are:

- **Existing commitments:** we are committed to service our existing customers as priority across our facilities management and asset management services. This will help us to focus our efforts on delivering essential work, safely.
- **Additional requests:** where able to, we are helping more parts of the NHS with extra requests (such as cleaning) and will monitor these according to demand and resources available. This may change as we progress with the effects of the pandemic and we will continuously monitor our ability to support more of the NHS.
- **Working nationally:** we have a national role, working alongside NHSE/I and we're supporting STPs and ICSs with space to meet new demands, such as by freeing up vacant space for clinical use.

We ask that you speak to your local contact where there are special requests and we will do our best to review these as quickly as possible.

Supporting our customers: how we're responding

With these principles in mind, we have made some important changes to how we operate so we can continue to deliver services where they are needed most. We will continuously review these and communicate to you again if more changes are needed.

1. Prioritising FM jobs: we're only accepting *emergency or urgent jobs* that could stop a building from operating or endanger patients or NHS staff. By doing this, we can focus our efforts where they are really needed and for longer.

2. Resourcing: we are prioritising resource requests. Like all organisations, we are experiencing challenges with resourcing as our people are required to self-isolate. To

manage this challenge, we have established a specialist resourcing team to oversee resources locally and nationally; and we're working with our suppliers to ensure we have resources available.

3. Repurposing space: our specialist strategic asset management teams are helping to repurpose space, recommission vacant space and reconfigure sites. This has already created hundreds of extra beds in the system. In particular, we are keen to help with solutions to accommodate 'hot' and 'cold' sites and plan for the estate changes these will require – please involve our local team (Regional Partnership Director) at the earliest opportunity to ensure we have the best chance to support your need.

4. Safety as priority: we're reviewing the services we deliver to make sure we comply with government guidance and reduce unnecessary risk wherever possible.

- Construction and refurbishment sites are likely to stop works to safeguard customers, colleagues and patients. Some sites may continue, especially where there will be extra clinical capacity created. We are reviewing on a project by project basis in full liaison with customers to arrive at a mutually agreed decision.
- We're working with suppliers to ensure our staff have the right equipment and PPE.

5. Supporting colleagues and the community: in line with government policy, our car parks will be free to use for NHS staff. We've introduced wellbeing support to help our people work safely. I'm delighted to see many in our organisation have joined the NHS Volunteers scheme, as well as our own volunteer programme 'Helping Hands'. And we are recognising the work of our people.

This is a fast moving, evolving situation and we will continue to work with you to review and refine our approach. You can keep up to date via our website at www.property.nhs.uk/covid19 which contains further information, past communications and relevant documents or call our helpdesk on 0808 196 2045 to discuss further.

Martin Steele

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