Dear customers,

For all of us, we are adjusting to new ways of delivering services and in our day-to-day lives under the strict social distancing measures. There’s no doubt that this is a difficult time for all parts of the NHS and that now more than ever we must work together to support you in delivering excellent patient care.

As I’ve done over the past few weeks, I’m writing to you to keep you updated with how we’re responding to the coronavirus pandemic and how our services are adapting. We anticipate, in line with government guidance, that the next few weeks and months will continue to be tough for the NHS. [Last week I outlined](https://www.property.nhs.uk/media/2430/coronavirus-update-2-april-2020.pdf) how we have adapted our operations to meet the huge increase in demand for our services whilst continuing to make sure customers, patients and our people are safe.

As we approach the Easter weekend, we will be supporting a number of sites that will be opening for additional hours and ask that if you require our support to contact our Customer Support Centre.

As ever you can find out the latest information from NHS Property Services at our dedicated website hub at [www.property.nhs.uk/covid19](http://www.property.nhs.uk/covid19).

**Repurposing space**

From early March onwards, we have identified opportunities to create additional bed capacity to support the response to the coronavirus. At present, we are working across 60 sites to create approximately 1,400 beds, and liaising closely with STPs, ICSs, commissioners and providers to best match this additional capacity to local demand.

The first 14 sites have already been made ready for occupation, with seven of these sites now operational with over 280 beds available for providers for additional local capacity and flexibility, including step down care.

Our estate is also being adapted to provide additional primary care capacity, or to provide flexibility of how GP services are provided to treat both COVID19 and non-COVID19 patients. We are pleased to be supporting commissioners and providers to rapidly find solutions to a high volume of individual space enquiries, and over 100 of these have already been handed over, with our Facilities Management services adapted to meet the changing operational requirements.

**Our guiding principles**

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.

Please contact our Customer Support Centre on 0800 085 3015 or on [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) if you wish to discuss any of the items raised here, I’m keen to here your feedback on how we best support you going forward.

Yours sincerely,

**Martin Steele**

Chief Executive Officer

NHS Property Services