

## Webinar Q&A: Safely reoccupying a NHS Property Services (NHSPS) building

### Contacting NHSPS

#### **Q1: What detail do the customer service staff need from us regarding our plans to return to the building please?**

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As soon as you start thinking of reoccupying buildings, let the Customer Support Centre (CSC) know on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk). The sooner we know of your plans, the quicker we can support you and start understanding your needs.

#### **Q2: Do we still need to contact NHSPS if buildings have remained partially occupied throughout the pandemic?**

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There is still a need to conduct a risk assessment of the operation of the building and make arrangements to provide a COVID-19 secure environment. Please contact our Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) if you plan to reoccupy space in an NHSPS building fully or partially.

#### **Q3: Does each site have their own property service manager as a point of contact?**

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Every customer has a dedicated Facilities Manager who will be able to provide support and assistance. If you're not sure who this is, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk).

## Risk assessment

### **Q4: Where can I access the risk assessment and certificate?**

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We regularly update our COVID-19 webpage [www.property.nhs.uk/covid19](http://www.property.nhs.uk/covid19) with helpful guides and information. Specifically, you can download:

- Guidance to reoccupying a NHSPS building – [download](#)
- Risk assessment checklist – [download](#)
- COVID-19 Secure Certificate - [download](#)

### **Q5: Who does the risk assessment?**

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As an employer you need to follow the guidance issued by the government that requires all employers returning to workplaces (or occupying a workspace if the area has not been vacated) to do a risk assessment on the return to work process. This will ensure that all reasonable measures to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace have been identified and implemented.

For each property you occupy, you will need to complete a simple assessment which will help you identify what you need to put in place to protect your employees, visitors and contractors from potential exposure to COVID-19. You can find a risk assessment checklist [here](#).

### **Q6: When does the risk assessment need to be completed by?**

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The risk assessment should be completed before you allow your employees to return to a building as many of the risk mitigation requirements may restrict the number of employees who can return.

If you did not vacate part or all of the building, you still need to do a risk assessment as soon as possible so you can introduce appropriate social distancing measures, especially if services are being reintroduced.

### **Q7: What do I do once I've completed the risk assessment?**

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Once you have completed your risk assessment, implement any actions required to ensure your staff, visitors and patients are as safe as possible.

Should you require any extra services, you should also share it with your local NHSPS Facilities Management team to discuss requirements. If you do not need any extra services, there is no need to share it with the NHSPS team.

Once you are satisfied your building is safe for people to return, display the [COVID-19 Secure Certificate](#).

### **Q8: Once we've submitted the risk assessment, how quickly are you able to help us?**

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We aim to help you as soon as possible. Our intention will be to action based on priority based on what the risk assessment. We thank you for your patience during this process as we ensure that we manage this safely and appropriately for all properties.

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**Q9: We have already completed our own risk assessment; do we need to do yours too?**

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No. The risk assessment is your responsibility so if you have done your own already or would like to use your own, you do not need to do ours as well. For those that haven't done their risk assessment, we would encourage you to use for consistency as that is what we will be using to risk assess common spaces in multi-occupancy buildings, but it is your decision.

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**Q10: Who is responsible for risk assessing shared bookable space?**

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Risk assessment on shared space in relation to COVID-19 secure is the responsibility of the organisation that controls it. For space/rooms that are part of the NHS Open Space scheme, NHSPS is responsible for completing the risk assessment on the space/room.

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**Q11: How do we submit the risk assessment if we only use bookable rooms on a sessional basis? Do we have to still carry around the certificate in that case?**

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The risk assessment on shared space should be completed by the organisation which controls it – it will identify which controls need to be observed when using the space. As a user, you need to conduct a risk assessment for the activity for which the space will be used.

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**Q12: Who is responsible for risk assessing common space, when will it be done, and how will we be informed?**

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NHSPS is responsible for conducting risk assessments in shared, common spaces and understanding what the requirements are needed for safe access to those areas.

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**Q13: If there is a dispute in a multi-occupied facility regarding its use e.g. following risk assessment and mitigation, allowing patients back into a clinic. Who has the final say?**

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NHSPS will liaise with all occupiers of a building to come to an agreement and ensure all areas of a building are safe for re-occupancy and in line with government guidelines.

Should there be a situation where occupier requirements are conflicting, then we would escalate to the responsible Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to help navigate the issue.

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**Q14: Do risk assessments have to be completed for buildings that have stayed open during the pandemic – whether that is with full or reduced staff?**

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Yes, all buildings where staff will be working should complete a risk assessment in order to comply with government guidance.

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**Q15: How often does the risk assessment needs to be carried out?**

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You should undertake the risk assessment as soon as you decide you would like to reoccupy your building. NHSPS monitors government, NHS England and Public Health England guidance very closely so that we can ensure that the risk assessment and guidelines you are following are still in line with guidance and legislation. If there are any changes, we will let you know as we may need to re-assess depending on the changes.

## Certificate

**Q16: Are we to be given the certificate once we have proved to you that we are complying with all five and will you be carrying out spot auditing?**

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No, once you have completed the risk assessment and are confident that you are in compliance with all five steps, please [download](#) and display the certificate.

**Q17: Where do we need to display the certificates e.g. in a public area or staff only area?**

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The [COVID-19 Secure Certificate](#) should be displayed in public area so it is visible to all the users of the area that the certificate covers. NHSPS will display the certificate for common areas near the entrance to the property or at the reception desk.

**Signage, access and maintaining social distancing****Q18: Do we need signage throughout our building?**

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If you need signage, please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

**Q19: Will there be a cost implication to occupiers for extra "COVID-19" related services/consumables? If so, will this be itemised as such so we can apply those costs to our COVID-19 cost centre?**

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All incremental costs related to COVID-19 for facilities management services linked to recommissioned space and/or additional cleaning/PPE will not be charged to occupiers in Q1. The treatment of incremental COVID-19 related costs in Q2 is under discussion with NHS England and Department of Health and Social Care and expected to be confirmed soon.

**Q20: Are NHSPS providing a central catalogue for all occupiers from which to purchase signage, screens, floor stickers etc?**

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There will not be a central catalogue so please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

**Q21: Is signage in the offices which we occupy in a shared building our responsibility?**

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NHSPS manages common areas and will be responsible for putting in place any signage that is required. Signage for demised areas will be the occupier's responsibility.

**Q22: We need flooring changed in clinic rooms. Will we have to pay for this or NHSPS?**

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If you need to change flooring, please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

**Q23: Where we have already installed signage in common areas, can we be reimbursed from NHSPS?**

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We expect all COVID-19 related costs to be captured within the NHS, and as such do not believe a reimbursement within the system will be practical.

**Q24: Do we need to wait until NHSPS have completed the signage/changes for communal areas before we re-occupy? If so, how long can we expect that could be?**

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Once a risk assessment has been completed and all measures have been implemented, only then should you reoccupy. At this stage it is not possible to say how long it will take NHSPS to complete all actions, however it is a top priority and we will make sure we manage this safely and appropriately for all properties.

**Q25: As a non-NHS occupier, can we use our signage in our space or do we need to do this through NHSPS?**

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Signage within occupied areas is the responsibility of the occupier and you are free to procure your own signage.

**Q26: How do we implement a one-way system to the kitchen/toilet facilities in our multi-occupied property as our surgery shares the building with other services which are on the first and second floor?**

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Where this cannot be managed, we advise limited access only and a local solution will need to be explored. Please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

**Q27: The nature of the area we occupy does not lend itself to any reasonable steps for 2-meter distancing e.g. corridors are too narrow. What do we do?**

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Where this cannot be managed, we advise limited access only and a local solution will need to be explored. Please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

**Q28: Will you be proposing the one-way routes within clinical areas?**

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It is the occupier's responsibility to identify any one-way routes needed as part of your risk assessment.

**Q29: Can we look at opening fire exit doors to allow the flow of people to be one way?**

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Fire doors should remain closed to maintain the fire integrity of the building.

**Q30: The government is considering changes to the 2-meter rule, are we expecting to keep to the 2-meter rule in the long run?**

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NHSPS is following the social distancing rules set out by the government and will review how social distance is conducted in the common areas in line with government guidance as it evolves.

**Q31: If you do not put the 2 meters on signage, this is different to what other NHS landlords have already done which is confusing for staff across sites.**

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NHS England guidance advises against the use of signage specifying a distance and signs should be placed at a distance determined by the guidance in operation at the time.



**Q21: Will NHSPS assist in physically undertaking some of the changes like marking off desks and removing desks etc?**

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We do not anticipate providing services to mark up desks within an occupier's demised area. If portering services are required, a job can be logged with our FM Helpdesk at [www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest](http://www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest). It may be that marking up desks will suffice, and furniture removal is not required.

**Q33: How will the signage that is being used in multi-occupancy buildings be shared with occupiers who are planning their own signage for their demise?**

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NHSPS will provide signage to all common areas. Occupiers are required to provide signage for the areas that they occupy exclusively.

**Q34: Can the 'shared' doors be adjusted so that we can push the door open from either side to save having to touch door handles?**

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Wholesale replacement of doors, including hinges, is unlikely to be practical or cost effective.

**Q35: Who will decide how many chairs should be in a waiting room for each service? How will the building manage this when there's multiple services on the same session?**

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People waiting will need to observe social distancing guidance. Services must consider how their appointments will impact on all building users, and you will need to co-operate with all occupiers to prevent over-crowded waiting areas.

**Q36: Would you supply signage outside the building as different service providers use different entrances?**

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Signage should cover all entry and exits of the building that are used by colleagues and the public. NHSPS will provide signage to all common areas that we are responsible for, if you require more signage, please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

**Q37: Does the guidance extend to admin, open plan offices and guidelines for meetings / meeting rooms, e.g. max sizes / PPE requirements in an enclosed meeting space, e.g. it could only take 1 person to cough etc?**

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The guidelines do extend to open plan administration spaces, where social distancing measures will need to be put in place.

**Q38: Will NHSPS install screens for general practice reception areas?**

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If your risk assessment highlights the need for screens, let your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk)

know so that we can discuss your requirements. Where screens are required for common areas, this will be highlighted within the risk assessment and we will look into how to implement those as a control measure. Where NHSPS provide reception staff, requirements will be highlighted in the risk assessment and we will take care of the fitting of screens.

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**Q39: Do you have any guidance surrounding desk screening within an open plan office?**

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If your risk assessment highlights that you need a screen as a control measure, let us know by contacting the Customer Support Centre (CSC) on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss this requirement with you.

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**Q40: Who is going to manage the entry into the building in a multi-occupied building as the guidance states everyone should be checked before they enter a building to make it COVID-19 secure?**

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NHSPS will put signage at the entrance of multi-occupied buildings. It is not our intention to check everyone before entering the building. People should follow social distancing guidelines as displayed.

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**Q41: Are NHSPS assessing goods coming in and out where applicable to minimising transmission?**

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No, handling of goods in and out of the space forms part of your COVID-19 risk assessment.

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**Q42: How will you assist primary care to unlock extra space in the buildings?**

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If you have a requirement for extra space, please get in touch with our Customer Support Centre (CSC) 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk), who will ask one of the NHSPS Asset Management team to get in touch with you to discuss options.

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**Q43: What happens if the space we already using is extremely limited, would there be an opportunity to have extra rooms as opposed to sessional spaces?**

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If you have a requirement for extra space, please get in touch with our Customer Support Centre (CSC) 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk), who will ask one of the NHSPS Asset Management team to get in touch with you to discuss options.

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**Q44: Would you assist in moving internal doors to support other service providers that are within the building but require patients to come i.e. pharmacy?**

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Please speak directly to your local Facilities Manager or contact the Customer Support Centre on 0800 085 3015 or [customer.service@property.nhs.uk](mailto:customer.service@property.nhs.uk) so that we can discuss your requirements.

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**Q45: We need to move heavy furniture around so we can distance in reception and the office, will someone be able to help us with that or do we get external help?**

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If portering services are required, a job can be logged via the FM Helpdesk [www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest](http://www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest)



## Cleaning

### **Q46: Where cleaning is included in our tenancy, will cleaning arrangements be altered to meet new COVID-19 requirements (e.g. more frequently and focus on "high touch" areas)?**

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Occupiers need to complete the risk assessment for their demised space to identify whether cleaning arrangements need to be adjusted. The results of the risk assessment must be discussed with their local Facilities Manager who can discuss any changes to cleaning arrangements as required.

### **Q47: Will arrangements be made automatically, or do we need to request these?**

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Arrangements in the space you occupy exclusively won't be made automatically as each occupier's need will be different dependant on the outcome of the risk assessment. Any required changes need to be discussed and agreed with the local Facilities Manager before any changes to the cleaning arrangements are implemented. Within common/shared spaces that NHSPS is responsible for, NHSPS will implement revised cleaning frequencies and processes automatically.

### **Q48: What are your intentions regarding the 'enhanced cleaning' regimes that are recommended in shared spaces such as receptions, toilets etc.?**

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Cleaning arrangements that are currently delivered to the 2007 and/or 2010 National Specification of Cleanliness in the NHS already deliver the required cleaning frequencies to minimise the spread of infection. Therefore, there is no intention to change cleaning regimes in these areas unless the occupier's risk assessment states otherwise and then we can discuss.

Within office/admin properties and common/shared spaces, a revised cleaning schedule and guidance has been developed to increase the cleaning frequencies of certain elements in line with the [Working Safely during Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance](#). For example, sanitary, showers and changing areas and commonly touched surfaces.

### **Q49: Staff kitchens are a big concern for cleaning as obviously microwave use etc is constantly being touched by different people but no cleaning in between. Have you got any advice?**

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Staff kitchens will be cleaned daily as per the cleaning schedules. People using microwave ovens need to ensure that they are wiped down between uses.

### **Q50: Will we be given a cleaning plan for each site/practice?**

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Cleaning schedules are already in place and where cleaning arrangements have been revised, new cleaning schedules have been developed and will be displayed.

### **Q51: Who is responsible for the deep clean necessary if the building has been used by the NHS for COVID-19 testing?**

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NHSPS can provide full cleaning and decontamination of any areas for properties that have been used for COVID-19 purposes. Any cleaning requests should be made via the FM Helpdesk [www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest](http://www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest).

**Q52: We haven't closed completely, only to patients, and minimal staff are still coming into our building. Should we have a deep clean prior to redeployed staff coming back into the building?**

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If routine cleaning has continued during the partial closure, an additional 'full clean' should not be required, however if you feel this is necessary this can be requested via the FM Helpdesk [www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest](http://www.property.nhs.uk/newrequest). If routine cleaning has not been undertaken, it is recommended that a full clean be completed prior to reoccupation.

**Q53: Where NHSPS undertake the cleaning in clinical venues, will you be ensuring that your staff have adequate PPE, including wearing face masks if the COVID Secure Certificate isn't displayed?**

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NHSPS follow the government/Public Health England advice and guidance on the use of face masks and has advised that all NHSPS colleagues should wear a face mask whilst at work if required under the guidance. This PPE will be provided by NHSPS and will be reviewed regularly in line with government/Public Health England advice.

**Q54: Are the domestic teams cleaning to IPC guidance and is there any formal assurance on this?**

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NHSPS processes and procedures are in line with the National Specification of Cleanliness in the NHS 2007 and/or 2010 standards. NHSPS have also been working very closely with NHS England and Improvement to develop standard operating procedures for cleaning in COVID-19 areas. NHSPS teams have also recently been trained on infection, prevention and control measures that need to be followed during a pandemic.

## Hygiene

### **Q55: We're struggling to get hold of hand sanitiser; will you provide this for us?**

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No, occupiers need to provide it for the space they occupy exclusively, unless we already provide it to you. We unfortunately cannot take any additional requests for hand sanitiser.

### **Q56: Will you provide hand hygiene stations at the entrances to the building, and if so, will we have to pay or will costs be absorbed by NHSPS?**

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We will put hand sanitising stations at the entrances to our buildings where we have common, shared space, and reception desks for which we are responsible.

### **Q57: Who is responsible for supplying face masks to patients and visitors on arrival at building – is that something NHSPS get involved with?**

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NHSPS will not be issuing face masks or coverings to visitors to buildings but will endeavour to ensure all NHSPS colleagues and those that visit a building on our behalf have been issued with the appropriate face mask and instruction to wear it.

### **Q58: Do purely office buildings i.e. non-clinical buildings have a requirement to wear face masks, as hospitals management are being asked to do?**

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The requirement for face masks is only in buildings that provide health care services. Purely office buildings that are not patient facing do not require the wearing of face masks however they must be risk assessed and controls will need to be put in place to make them COVID-19 secure.

### **Q59: Clinical waste facilities aren't always in tenancy agreements but indications that wipes should be disposed using clinical waste bins. What options to provide this please?**

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Where there are suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, waste should be disposed of as infectious clinical waste. All other non-COVID-19 areas, these items should be disposed of as general waste.

### **Q60: If showers are required for dental services in common areas of buildings how will you deal with this?**

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This will be covered in NHSPS's COVID-19 secure risk assessment for the common areas of the building and you'll be notified of any arrangements.

### **Q61: Where shower facilities are available in multi-tenancy buildings, but these have not been available as part of exiting tenancy, will they now become available to allow for minimising use of public transport by e.g. cycling more?**

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If the showers are in common areas, we will consider this as part of our COVID-19 secure risk assessment.

**Q62: Are you working with the DHSC on the community services standard operating procedure re how clinical services operate in building as well as in peoples' home?**

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No, this is a clinical responsibility rather than a property issue.

**Q63: Is there any national guidance about what time frame organisations should currently be planning for in terms of maintaining the measures that are being put in place?**

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No, there is no set time scale for how long the current [COVID-19 Secure Guidance](#) will be in place. NHSPS reviews all updates and new guidance as it is released to ensure we continue to work to the direction the guidance sets.