



Safely reoccupying buildings

Guide to reoccupying
NHS Property Services
buildings

May 2020 v1

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Reoccupation of buildings

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Key things to know

Start your risk assessment

Risk assessment and actions

Building name.....

May 2020

Risk assessment

This document accompanies a risk assessment and actions checklist which can be downloaded at www.property.nhs.uk.

Please complete this risk assessment to start the process to reoccupy buildings.

[Download a copy](#)

Certificate

Once you have implemented any recommendations from the risk assessment, you can display the government certificate to show you're safe and compliant.

Find out how to do this on page 5.

[Review government guidelines](#)

Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

We confirm we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

FIVE STEPS TO SAFER WORKING TOGETHER

- ✓ We have carried out a **COVID-19 risk assessment** and shared the results with the people who work here
- ✓ We have **cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures** in line with guidance
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **help people work from home**
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **maintain a 2m distance** in the workplace
- ✓ Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to **manage transmission risk**

Employer _____ Date _____

Who to contact: _____ Your Health and Safety Representative
(or the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk or 0300 003 1647)

Introduction

Your guide to safely reoccupy a NHS Property Services building

As a result of the current pandemic and following government guidelines, many health and supporting buildings leased or managed by NHS Property Services were vacated, closed or saw a change of use to support patient care. Many occupiers have moved away from the traditional office space and are now working at home.

Following the government's recent announcement regarding the easing of lockdown restrictions, a series of guidance measures have now been published to ensure that where organisations are returning they do so in a safe and consistent manner. This guide outlines how to safely return to an NHS Property Services leased or managed building and how we will support you to do this.

Supporting you to reoccupy

NHS Property Services is an important partner in how you approach reopening your building and ensuring this is done safely. We want to support our customers as best we can over the coming months.

As part of our responsibilities, we must ensure that buildings which have been vacated, 'closed down' or had a change of use, are safe for occupiers to return. As an employer of frontline staff, we also need to review the safety of our colleagues and minimise any risk to them. As an occupier of our buildings, you also have responsibilities to ensure your staff are safe and to complete a risk assessment.

Please advise us if you are intending to reoccupy a currently vacated building – either in part or in full – as soon as possible so we can begin the work to get your building back in action. Please log your request with our Customer Support Centre on 0800 085 3015 or customer.service@property.nhs.uk.

It is essential we have time to ensure the building is safe, fully prepared for your reoccupation and that we are able to complete all the checks required to provide a smooth return for your people. If you have specific requirements, such as reopening only part of a building, we can help advise on the best way to do this

Want to find out more?

We continue to publish updates on our website at www.property.nhs.uk/covid19 where you can find detailed guidance and updates.

Responsibilities of NHS Property Services

How we will help you reoccupy buildings

As the owner and manager of your building, we are responsible for a range of activity at your building. Please refer to the [Occupier Handbook](#) for an overview.

For returning to empty buildings, our approach will generally be tailored to how many occupiers there are in each building - please see below the relevant guidance for your situation – and wherever possible tailored to the particular requirements of that building.

Single occupied buildings

If you have vacated or closed your building, wards or offices during the past few months of the pandemic and are now intending to reopen your building, then you must advise us that you wish to return. This will enable us to plan with you a phased return for your employees so that we have sufficient time to undertake all the building safety checks we need to do. We have a standard process which will ensure that the building is compliant and safe for you to return.

To do this we ask you to contact our Customer Support Centre on 0800 085 3015 or customer.service@property.nhs.uk who will record your request and work with your local NHS Property Services team to plan effectively. You may still be developing plans and these may evolve over time but do let us know your intentions as soon as possible so we can adapt our services as required.

Multi-occupied buildings

For our buildings which are ‘multi-occupied’ we will assess and implement requirements to provide safe access to and from your occupied areas. As soon as we are assured all required checks on the building have been completed and it is safe to be re-occupied, we will inform you so you can plan your return to work.

- **Common areas and signage:** We will provide signage in ‘common areas under our control’ based on our assessment of need. Signage in other areas is the responsibility of the occupier to identify. A general clean of all common areas will be completed.
- **Meeting rooms and lifts:** the use of shared facilities such as lifts, meeting rooms and welfare arrangements will be outlined for discussion and agreement with all occupiers. These plans will be shared with you and based on your proposed occupation level.
- **Welfare Facilities:** Arrangements for the use of kitchens and rest rooms will be developed dependant on occupancy levels and also on allocation of washrooms / toilets where possible.

Occupied space in other buildings

In cases where NHS Property Services holds the ‘head lease’ (i.e. we rent this on your behalf) for the building you are occupying, we will request information from the landlord with regard to ensuring the building is safe to reoccupy. We will also require knowledge of what arrangements they are making for common areas where they are responsible for their management. In some cases the responsibilities for common areas will rest with NHSPS.

Your responsibilities

What you need to do as occupier and employer

If you have vacated or closed down your building during the pandemic and now wish to start to reoccupy, then you must inform us of your intention to return. You can do this by calling our Customer Support Centre on 0800 085 3015 or customer.service@property.nhs.uk.

Once the building safety check has been completed we can then work with you to ensure that we fulfil our responsibilities and offer support to ensure that your return to work goes smoothly.

As an employer you also need to follow the guidance issued by the government that requires all employers returning to workplaces 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.

Your risk assessment will cover things like how many staff you can bring back into the building and maintain a 2m distance; whether you need to operate a two team approach; how you will bring patients into the workplace by appointment; what signage would work to reinforce the message on social distancing and good hand hygiene; and one way systems in corridors.

Completing your risk assessment

For each property you will need to complete a simple assessment which will help to identify what you need to put in place to protect your employees, visitors and contractors from potential exposure to COVID-19.

The government has provided guidance and identified five steps to help you demonstrate that you have complied in implementing their guidance.

These are:-

- We have carried out a [COVID-19 risk assessment](#) and shared the results with the people who work here
- We have taken all reasonable steps to [help people work from home](#)
- We have [cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures](#) in line with guidance
- We have taken all reasonable steps to [maintain a 2m distance in the workplace](#)
- Where people cannot be 2m apart we have done everything practical to [manage transmission](#)

This has been taken from the Government 'working safely' documents dated 11 May 2020 and is subject to revision should any further guidance be provided. www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19

Your risk assessment will cover things like how many staff you can bring back into the building and maintain a 2m distance; whether you need to operate a two team approach; how you will bring patients, visitors or contractors into the workplace by appointment; accommodating 'face 2 face' meetings; what signage would work to reinforce the message on social distancing and good hand hygiene; one-way systems in corridors and increased high contact items cleaning regimes, as examples.

Checklist and assessment

Our facilities management team has produced a detailed checklist for each of the areas you need to consider and solutions that can be introduced.

We have developed a simple assessment form which can be used to demonstrate your compliance with government guidance. It will also identify what you need to do and this can be shared with your local NHS Property Services team to identify extra services that are needed to keep your staff, visitors and patients as safe as possible.

Once your risk assessment has been completed and the actions required have been implemented you can display the certificate to inform your employees, visitors and contractors that you have complied with the government guidance.

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