

Reopening Your Pub/Restaurant When Restrictions Ease

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Introduction

At present, no decision has been made as to when the hospitality industry will be able to start opening up again.

However, in preparation for doing so, UK Hospitality has produced a draft 75 page document detailing specific guidance for hotels, pubs/bars and restaurants.

They are currently discussing these recommendations with Government, with a view to producing sector specific guidance.

The main aim of the recommendations will be to assist business owners to undertake their own risk assessments to minimise the likelihood of anyone working in or visiting their establishment contracting Coronavirus. You will already be familiar with the principles of risk assessment in relation to everyday health and safety issues. The same principles apply to Covid-19

In summary, you need to do everything you reasonably can to ensure that individuals remain at a safe distance from one another.

Government guidance to assist businesses with their Covid-19 risk assessments can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>. It is envisaged that the yet to be published guidance specific to pubs, bars and restaurants will be available via this link in due course. In the meantime, you can view the general principles insofar as they relate to takeaway premises, shops etc. that are already permitted to be operate.

As with many risks, it is not possible to completely eradicate the risks associated with Coronavirus. However, by making every effort to comply with social distancing guidelines, increasing the frequency of cleaning/hand washing and mitigating the risks using barriers, screens, reducing the items more than 1 person can touch and reducing the number of people each person is in contact with, the risk can be reduced to an acceptable level.

Pubs and Bars

You will need to assess the flow of staff and customers in your pub as part of the risk assessment. For bar orders, inform customers to keep the minimum safe distance from bar staff as well as from other customers waiting in a queue to be served e.g. directed by tape marks on the floor, signage etc.

Measures to consider will include managing the bar to create directional movement of customers ordering drinks at a till point, then moving to a second point to collect their drinks.

Consider opening a bar tab to ensure that customers only have to pay once using contactless payment.

Consider regular announcements to remind staff and customers to follow the control measures put in place.

Consider how best to maximise ventilation within the premises, including any sheltered outdoor areas.

Consider restrictions on customers remaining at the bar after ordering and getting their drink.

Advise that empty glasses will be collected from tables by staff, and customers discouraged from returning empty glasses to the bar, or move around the premises unnecessarily.

Beer gardens/outside areas: although easier to manage social distancing if there is a large outdoor area, there is a danger of groups forming. Consider this as part of your risk assessment. Regular patrol of outside areas, smoking/vaping areas, restrictions that may be required for children's play areas.

Toilets: as part of your risk assessment, have a plan specifically for customer toilets to ensure compliance with physical distancing rules and ensure all staff are aware. This will reduce the capacity of your facilities and increase cleaning frequency. If customers need to touch door handles on exiting the toilets after washing their hands, how can the risk of infection be controlled?

Customers are likely to let their guard down after several drinks. Bear this in mind as part of your risk assessment.

Casual Dining and Restaurants

Individually wrapped condiments and sauces should be placed with the plated food and not left on the table.

Cutlery should be brought to the customer with the food and condiments to reduce numbers of people moving around within the premises

Develop your table plans and arrangements based on social distancing guidelines. This is currently 2 metres.

Customer contact with commodities (e.g. menus, trays, napkins) should be kept to a minimum. Menus should not be left on tables for multiple customers to touch. Consider the use of single-use/laminated menus brought to the table or large chalk boards that can be read from afar.

Ensure that effective cleaning and disinfection regimes are in place for anything that customers touch including tables, non-disposable commodities such as crockery and cutlery, touch points including door handles, taps, flush handles etc.

Cleaning regimes for kitchens should reflect the need to reduce risk from coronavirus as well as maintaining high standards with regard to food hygiene.

Control movement of staff to maintain social distancing measures where possible i.e. include one person at a time allowed in the chilled stores or dry stores or the staff changing room.

Other Issues

It is essential that when businesses reopen, they do so safely. As well as controlling Covid-19, other risks need to be considered, especially after being closed for some time.

You will need to ensure that food preparation areas are in a hygienic condition and that cleaning and disinfection materials are plentiful. You must ensure that you have an adequate supply of hot and cold running water and that all equipment including fridges, freezers, oven etc. are working correctly.

Pests may have entered your premises during the period of closure, so adequate checks for any signs of infestation will be crucial.

In addition, if your water systems have not been used for a long time, you need to consider the risks associated with Legionella bacteria multiplying to high levels within tanks, cisterns and pipework.

Some food supply lines have been interrupted during the pandemic. As a result, your suppliers may be sourcing alternative products, rather than their usual brands. It will be essential to review the allergen information you provide to your customers to reflect any changes.

A wide range of information specific to reopening or adapting your food business is available at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/reopening-and-adapting-your-food-business-during-covid-19>

This includes a useful checklist for reopening, with additional links to Legionella information etc.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the specific guidance for pubs and bars etc. has yet to be produced. Please check <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19> in the coming weeks for updates.

Food Safety and Standards Team