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Covid-19 Supplementary Q&A – Hospitality Sector

This Question and Answer document is aimed at providing further clarity to hospitality businesses following publication of Scottish Government [sectoral guidance](#) and the reopening of outdoor (6 July) and indoor (15 July) areas. It is not separate to government guidance but designed to complement it and further the understanding of what businesses need to consider and do to ensure they are operating safely and within the legal requirements.

As we move through Scotland's route-map, guidance is having to be regularly reviewed and updated. It remains a gradual process and while the hospitality sector has made significant progress to date with reopening outdoor and indoor areas, and with reduced physical distancing to 1m, it is not yet business as usual. A high level of caution and awareness is essential in order to avoid any set-backs. Government does not want to keep restrictions in place a moment longer than is necessary, but safety must come first. Businesses are therefore requested to maintain the excellent work that has been undertaken so far and to continue working with authorities to build on that progress.

The following has been prepared in cooperation with Environmental Health Officers, industry and the Scottish Government. It will be updated as more information becomes available.

Remember – continue to record customer contact details to support Test and Protect.

1m Physical Distancing

Q: Does the exemption from 2m to 1m physical distancing in bars and restaurants also apply to staff only areas such as kitchens and, if so, what mitigation measures are required?

A: The exemption applies across the premises. The legislation requires that businesses take all reasonable measures to ensure that physical distancing is maintained. A risk assessment should be undertaken to ensure that suitable controls are implemented. These issues should be discussed with employees as detailed in the Scottish Government Sectoral Guidance – available [here](#)

Q: I want my business to operate with physical distancing of less than 2m, what do I need to do?

A: In order for the physical distancing requirement to be reduced to 1m businesses must be able to demonstrate that they have implemented additional mitigation measures over and above what would be required to operate at 2m to minimise risk. The additional measures must be in place prior to the distancing requirement being reduced. The Scottish Government has published guidance to help you carry out the necessary risk assessment – available [here](#). As a reminder, the legislation requires that businesses take all reasonable measures to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.

Q: Would this apply to my external area too?

A: Yes, provided that similar additional control measures are in place within the external area.

Q: What kind of additional mitigation measures would be acceptable?

A: By carrying out a new risk assessment process you, as a business, will be able to identify additional mitigation measures that can be applied to your premises. The focus must be how you ensure 1m physical distancing is maintained in all areas, as well as additional protections for staff. Examples of measures that would be deemed to be acceptable include;

- Increasing the frequency of air changes within the ventilation system and open windows/doors where possible
- Review layouts, including installation of physical barriers (perspex screens etc.) where 1m physical distancing cannot be met
- Face coverings for front of house staff

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- Requiring customers to remain seated whilst on premises with no standing at bar areas
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements (require to be documented)
- Measures to reduce noise to avoid the raising of voices (a recognised risk factor in the transmission of coronavirus) and ensuring TVs and music are reduced to ambient/low levels

The above list is not exhaustive. A number of the measures above may need to be combined, depending upon individual premises. The decision-making process should be documented and retained on site.

Should you wish to discuss a specific proposal further you should contact your local Environmental Health Service for advice.

Q: Can my customers queue at the bar?

A: Queuing at the bar should be discouraged, however, where this is not possible patrons within the queue must adhere to the physical distancing requirement and your risk assessment should identify how this can be achieved. The queue should not encroach on seating areas and will require to be managed effectively by management to ensure that distancing requirements are adhered to. This will be easier within larger premises. Where customers are to be permitted to order at the bar only one individual per table should approach the bar at a time. Customers should be directed to return to their seat and not to drink at the bar.

Q: Can my customers sit at the bar?

A: Sitting at the bar should be discouraged. The placing of patrons at the bar increases the likelihood of your staff, and other customers, becoming exposed to the virus and mitigation measures will require to be implemented to reduce this to an acceptable level, such as screens. Where patrons are sitting at the bar there is also the requirement for them to be physically distanced from others in the vicinity. It will also be necessary to ensure that there are adequate cleaning arrangements in place for high contact surfaces in this area when patrons leave the premises.

Where a decision is made to seat customers at the bar it is recommended that this area be reserved for individuals rather than groups.

Q: My restaurant has booth seating in place. Can I safely use all of them or do I need to alternate their occupancy to maintain distancing?

A: Where booth seating is fixed and individuals from different parties are seated back to back there is no need to alternate occupancy. It may be necessary to modify the height of the seat backs to above head height, this will provide additional screening. Movement within premises should be minimal and customers should adhere to government guidelines on physical distancing and respiratory etiquette whilst on the premises.

Q: I have put in additional mitigation measures necessary to reduce physical distancing in my premises to 1m. Is it possible to have tables located at 1m apart provided that customers are seated back to back or do I require to put in screening?

A: Where possible some form of separation should be put in place, this could be in the form of a screen or a planter. The purpose of this being to prevent one table encroaching into the space of another. Another alternative would be to increase the distance between tables to 1.5m which will allow for the customers to move in and out of their seats without bothering neighbouring tables. In any arrangement it must always be possible for everyone to maintain 1m physical distance.

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Where installing physical separation measures, such as screens, care should be taken to ensure that these items do not become a hazard in themselves. Screens should be securely fixed in place to ensure that they cannot fall over. Where fixing items to the floor these should not present a trip hazard. It is also very important to ensure that emergency exits and escape routes are kept clear and free from obstruction.

Q: Do I need to display a sign notifying customers they are entering a 1m Physical Distancing zone?

A: Yes, this should be displayed clearly at entry points and throughout the premises – signage should state that *"this is a 1 metre physical distancing zone – follow the advice of staff and observe physical distancing"*

Q: My premises covers multiple floors. Can I have one floor where 2m distancing is maintained and the other with 1m?

A: This is possible as long as the appropriate measures are taken in line with [guidance](#) for operating at either 2m or with the 1m exemption.

Physical Alterations

Q: If I am modifying my premises to include screens, how high do these have to be?

A: There is no minimum height required, however, when installing consideration should be given to whether customers will be seated or standing in the areas where the screens are to be located. The installation of a screen is to act as a physical barrier between individuals therefore it is important to ensure that it will extend to a sufficient distance in all directions. Where the installation is in addition to additional mitigation measures (facial coverings, visors for staff etc.) it may be that smaller screens can be installed.

It is strongly advised that the decision making process be documented.

Sanitary Facilities

Q: Do I need to reduce the number of toilets/urinals in use within my premises?

A: The provision and use of sanitary facilities within your premises will require to be risk assessed. If, as a business, you wish to retain use of all urinals within the premises the following requires to be in place and evidence available to demonstrate the steps are in place;

- Increasing the number and frequency of air changes in the ventilation system
- Enhanced programme of cleaning and replenishment
- Regular monitoring of capacity within toilet facilities
- Where 1m cannot be maintained then screens should be provided

In all other circumstances physical distancing must be maintained.

Q: The toilet cubicles within my premises have full height partitions and mechanical ventilation – can these continue to be used as normal or do I need to close some off?

A: Where cubicles are fully enclosed and there are sufficient air changes per hour they can continue to be used as normal provided that there are enhanced cleaning arrangements in place.

Bookings

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Q: How do I ensure that my customers are following government guidance when booking tables for groups?

A: Where a group booking is taken customers should be reminded of the current Government Guidance and reminded that where individuals are not from the same household that physical distancing must be maintained whilst on the premises. It is recommended that this be documented within your procedures. Current limits for meeting people is (outdoors) up to 15 people from 5 different households and (indoors) 8 people from 3 different households.

Queuing

Q: What measures should I put in place to make sure that customers queue safely outside my premises?

A: External queuing should be organised in a way that facilitates physical distancing. The use of markers either on the wall or ground identifying where an individual should stand is encouraged. Where family groups are waiting together they should try not to encroach on others within the queue. It may be necessary that family groups take up two spaces within the queue to ensure sufficient distance is maintained from others.

Should queuing become problematic and block the footpaths or cross neighbouring premises consideration will need to be given to the implementation of an alternative arrangement for example; taking a contact number and calling when a table is available.

The maximum number of people attending in groups should be in accordance with the Scottish Government guidance.

Sport and Entertainment

Q. Can I show sport or other programmes on TV?

A: Sporting events can continue to be shown on televisions within licensed premises, however the showing of sport should not be an "event". Where high profile sport is to be broadcast it is recommended that this be risk assessed and sufficient controls implemented to ensure that customers do not gather around televisions or congregate in areas of the premises. An example of a possible control would be to turn off the commentary and display subtitles.

Raised voices, along with the likelihood of people having to get closer to one another to be heard, present an increased risk of transmission and must be avoided. It is advised that TVs should be either at a very low level, on mute and or with subtitles turned on.

Q: Can I turn on the jukebox on the premises?

A: As with TVs, noise levels is a key issue, as well as the risk of frequent touching of hard surfaces by multiple people. For the time being, and for these reasons, the use of jukebox machines by customers is advised against. If the jukebox is the sole means of background music in the premises and can be controlled by management at low level then this will be acceptable.

Q: Can I play background music from staff controlled devices?

A: Low level background music is permitted but should not be played at such an elevated level so as to force staff or customers to have to raise their voice to be heard, thus increasing risk of transmission.

Q: Can I turn on the fruit machines on the premises?

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A: It is not possible to use gaming machines at this time. These devices are not unique to bars and are currently under consideration for safe use in other settings such as betting shops and amusement arcades. It is therefore necessary to take a consistent approach and ensure they are not used in any setting for the time-being.

Q: My pub has a gaming machine, do I have to remove this?

A: There is no requirement to remove gaming machines from your premises. It must however be switched off for the time-being.

Q: Are customers allowed to use games tables i.e. pool?

A: The use of games tables presents risks from touching hard surfaces and people standing in groups thus making physical distancing difficult. Cleaning of things like pool balls is also difficult with automated mechanisms meaning they cannot be cleaned easily between the last and the next person touching them. Cues and other hand held equipment can also be high risk if shared without being cleaned. For these reasons the use of games tables is advised against until further advice is available on their safe use.

Q: Are customers allowed to play games like dominoes and darts?

A: These are advised against for the time-being. Activities that require customers to move around the premises, group together and or touch hard surfaces that cannot be easily cleaned before being used by others present an increased risk of transmission.

Q: We are famous for our quiz night, can we still host this?

A: Absolutely, although it may need to take a different form than before. For example, picture rounds could be shown on the television rather than providing teams with a sheet, participants encouraged to bring their own pen and papers returned at the end of the quiz rather than at the end of each round as this will reduce the need for customers to move around the premises.

Q: We host a weekly bingo night, can we reinstate this?

A: At the moment, bingo halls are not permitted to re-open it is therefore advised that bingo be suspended at this time.

Q: We have a selection of books and toys available for children to use whilst on the premises. Can we no longer offer these?

A: There is no requirement for children under 12 to physically distance from one another, however, objects such as toys and books could present a vector for infection, therefore provision of such items is discouraged. As an alternative, colouring sheets, pencils or crayons could be made available on request. Where toys are to be made available it is recommended that these be made of plastic or other readily cleanable materials and that they be included on the cleaning schedule for the premises.

Q: My business is operating with an extended external area, can we bring in a DJ to play music within this area?

A: It is not possible for this sort of outdoor event to take place at this time. Further advice will be available as Scotland's route map develops.

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