

After Lockdown: Bates Wells Guide

To opening your office

At the time of writing the Government has just announced its phased strategy for a gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions. The proposed guidelines for the reopening of schools and some business premises have inevitably led to policies being drafted by organisations for the reopening of their offices.

In this guide we highlight some key points to consider. This guide focusses on tenants but many of these points will also be relevant for landlords.

Any return to work policy will focus on People and Premises. As with any change management strategy communication is key and a project team should lead the planning process. In larger organisations it can be helpful to have 'change champions' so consider asking for volunteers to champion the new working practices to help lead individual teams and ensure a consistent approach.

Health and safety of employees, clients and visitors must be paramount along with everyone having a level of confidence in returning to the office:

1. Should a maximum occupancy strategy be planned, implemented and clearly communicated? How will this be managed? A red card system, intranet updates? Will people be working from home and in the office in shift patterns? Is priority given to those not travelling by public transport? Close connection with the HR team is crucial – are some employees struggling with working from home?
2. Are there sufficient shower facilities for those running or cycling to work?
3. With mention of a new 'golden age' of cycling, does your building have sufficient cycle storage?
4. Visual floor markings added to maintain a one-way system and social distancing.
5. Consider the use of key touchdown or landing areas which are high risk:
 - A. Reception – is there a contactless signing in procedure and protection screens?
 - B. Meeting rooms – closely monitor occupancy and bookings, cleaning in between use?
 - C. Kitchen and WCs – Is there a permanent hand sanitizer? Touch free taps? Sensors for hand drying.
6. Enhanced cleaning – open the dialogue with other tenants and your landlord now.
7. Will there be PPE available?

8. Stricter desk use policy – desk cleaning, clear desk policy, no hot desking.
9. Access and egress – how will maximum occupancy, social distancing and hygiene be maintained for the use of lifts and stairwells? Consider emergency evacuation too. Be clear on the regulations.
10. Do you need to reconfigure your premises? Simple furniture layout changes may help e.g. implement a one-way system and enable social distancing. Are more significant alterations needed? Do you need your landlord's consent?
11. Is the air-flow adequate? Is an upgrade needed? Consider whether or not this is your responsibility or the landlord's. Consult early with the managing agent of your building.
12. Consider adapting your existing risk assessments to create a specific COVID-19 risk assessment. Remember the health and safety obligations on employers; do you need to implement risk assessments for home workers?
13. Consider your longer term property strategy as aligned with your business plan – do you have too much space if more staff are now working remotely? Can you make your premises an income generating asset by sub-letting? Review your lease now for key lease events e.g. rent review, break dates and where appropriate consider seeking variations to the lease terms or matters on which you need your landlord's consent.
14. Consider your training and supervision – can the needs of the team be met remotely on a longer term basis?

For more advice, please get in touch with our

[Real Estate team](#)



Mark Traynor

Partner
Real Estate

T: +44 (0)20 7551 7868
E: m.traynor@bateswells.co.uk



Karli Hiscock

Partner
Real Estate

T: +44 (0)20 7551 7601
E: k.hiscock@bateswells.co.uk



Will Scott

Partner
Real Estate

T: +44 (0)20 7551 7855
E: w.scott@bateswells.co.uk