



Professional Association of Self-Caterers UK COVID NEWSLETTER 31 December 2021 Issue 90

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General Information Section will be available again next week.

- INDEX OF PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER CONTENT **Can be found on Newsletter 17 Dec**
- Disclaimer

PASC UK SOCIAL MEDIA

Please follow PASC on Twitter @PascUK AND on Facebook @pascukltd
This is where the latest news between newsletters gets posted.

WHERE TO FIND PREVIOUS ITEMS COVERED IN PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS

These are now indexed at the bottom last week's newsletter and can be downloaded from
www.pascuk.co.uk

COMMENTARY

We were not planning on sending a Newsletter this week, however events have moved quickly, and we are getting hundreds of emails and calls about three subjects, restrictions, grants and what to do if guests get Covid whilst staying.

There should be considerably more information on Grants by Friday 7th January, and we will publish this in that newsletter.

Please, please keep watching our Facebook page, this is where any changes will be first notified. See here on Facebook @pascukltd

As always, we wish you all the very best, and wish each and every one of you a safe, prosperous and settled 2022.

Best regards Alistair

UPDATE ON COVID RESTRICTIONS.

Any changes will be posted up on our Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/pascukltd>

ENGLAND

There have been no further Restrictions brought into effect in England, so far none directly affect self-catering, bar the requirement to wear masks in reception areas.

The Westminster Government has brought in Plan B. Full details available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/hotels-and-guest-accommodation>

Accommodation Primary Guidance Updated

The primary guidance for accommodation businesses has now been updated regarding the wearing of facemasks in public areas. The guidance is essentially the same as when previous rules on wearing masks were in place, specifically this means:

- Staff and other workers must wear face coverings when they are working in any indoor area that is open to the public and where they are likely to come into contact with a member of the public.
- If there is a barrier, such as a screen, between workers and members of the public, staff behind the barrier or screen are not required to wear a face covering.
- Staff are not required to wear face coverings when they are in areas that aren't open to the public (such as a back office) or are unlikely to come into contact with the public (such as maintenance staff working in cordoned-off areas).
- Staff are not required to wear face coverings when they are in hospitality facilities (such as restaurants and bars), and other areas which are mainly being used for eating or drinking (such as a room or area hired for a drinks reception).
- A face visor or shield may be worn in addition to a face covering but not instead of one. This is because face visors or shields do not adequately cover the nose and mouth, and do not filter airborne particles.
- If any of your staff work in close contact with guests (such as massage therapists, security staff, beauticians), or work in contaminated areas (such as cleaners and housekeeping staff) you should also think about whether they need additional protection or personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- People can take off their face covering when they have a good reason to remove it (a 'reasonable excuse'). For example, people can take off their face covering when they are eating or drinking in any area. They must put their face covering back on when this reason no longer applies (when they have stopped eating or drinking).

And on a more general basis.....

- From Friday 10 December, face coverings will become compulsory in most public indoor venues, such as cinemas, theatres and places of worship. There will be exemptions in venues where it is not practical to wear one, such as when you are eating, drinking or exercising. For that reason, face masks will not be required in hospitality settings.

- From Friday 10 December, face coverings will be legally required in most public indoor venues, including public areas of hotels and guest accommodation facilities.
- From Monday 13 December, office workers who can work from home should do so. Anyone who cannot work from home should continue to go to the workplace.
- From Wednesday 15 December (subject to parliamentary approval) the NHS Covid Pass on the NHS App will become mandatory for entry into nightclubs and settings where large crowds gather, including:
 - Unseated indoor venues with more than 500 people
 - Unseated outdoor venues with more than 4,000 people
 - Any venue with more than 10,000 people.

SCOTLAND

Further Measures in Scotland.

Couple of points to note... self-catering and exclusive use accommodation does not need to implement 1m social distancing. On number of guests, three households is advice only advice...albeit strong advice. Sturgeon stated, "Although it is guidance, please do not think of it as optional." Quite how that works in practice is unclear.

We believe this will be in place for three weeks from 27 December.

Update to Restrictions and Guidance for Tourist Accommodation.

From 27 December, tourist accommodation (including hotels, hostels, boarding or guest houses, members clubs and bed and breakfast accommodation providers) and indoor tourist attractions will be required to:

- Implement one metre physical distancing between groups of customers in tourist accommodation and indoor tourist attractions. Business and premises should bear in mind that this may impact their capacity limit. Current guidance advises customers to limit their groups to a maximum of three households.
- Implement table service for food and drink in tourism accommodation and indoor attractions where alcohol is sold for consumption, or consumed, on the premises. Ordering at a bar is permitted if table service is not practical in the premises. In this case, a queuing system with physical distancing should in place and customers must return to their table to consume any food or drink. Table service does not apply where alcohol is not served or consumed on the premises. Buffet services in tourist accommodation for breakfast and other meals are permitted if a queuing system with physical distancing is in place and customers return to their table.
- Self-catering / exclusive use accommodation is not included in the requirement to implement physical distancing.
- A group is defined as two or more members of the same household, or of a group formed of more than one household attending the premises together. The strong advice is that people should not meet in groups of more than three households.
- Accommodation providers should take reasonable measures to ensure physical distancing between self-defined groups in spaces such as shared dining areas, lounges, shared kitchens, hallways / entrance areas and in the case of hostels - shared dormitory rooms.

In addition to the above, premises in the tourism and hospitality sector should continue to observe ongoing baseline measures, such as wearing of face coverings when not seated in hospitality, recording customer contact details and observing good hygiene practices throughout premises.

Read more here..... <https://bit.ly/3HnG3Mv>

WALES

Further Restrictions in Wales

The previous Alert Level 2 was for extended household and support bubble only – this has been removed.

Up to 30 people can stay in self-catering and a maximum of three households can stay at the same time in the accommodation.

The big distinction is it is guidance, not mandatory. This applies to SC businesses as well as for the home - so stated as a "rule of thumb" for people to follow.

What can open at alert level 2

- Schools, colleges and childcare providers.
- Higher education institutions (mix of in-person and remote learning).
- Licensed premises.
- Retail.
- Close contact services.
- Hospitality.
- Holiday accommodation.
- Entertainment venues.
- Visitor attractions.
- Leisure and fitness facilities, including gyms and swimming pools.
- Museums and Galleries.
- Cinemas.
- Theatres and concert halls.
- Places of worship.
- Community centres.
- Crematoriums.
- Libraries and archive services.
- Sport courts, golf courses.
- Playgrounds and public parks.
- Organised indoor activities (up to 30 people).
- Organised outdoor activities (up to 50 people).
- Weddings (ceremony limit set by venue).
- Wedding reception or wake (Limits to be set by venues when social distancing is taken into account, also you should take a lateral flow test on the day of the event).
- Ice skating rinks.
- Adult entertainment venues.
- Sporting events (not open to the spectators).

What you must do at alert level 2

At alert level 2 you must:

- Wear a face covering (unless you have a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering) in all indoor public places, including when not seated in a pub, café or restaurant.
- Meet no more than 5 other people at a café, restaurant, pub or other public premises (unless with your household or a larger number). This applies to both outdoor and indoor areas of the premises.
- Work from home if you can.
- Self-isolate for 10 days if you test positive for COVID-19. If you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive and you are aged 18 or over and not fully vaccinated, you must also self-isolate for 10 days.
- Not take part in an organised event indoors of more than 30 people or outdoors for more than 50 people. All organised events must be organised by a responsible body and have a risk assessment.

At alert level 2 you should:

- Follow guidance on limiting the number of people you meet who you don't live with
- 'Flow before you go'. Take a lateral flow test if you don't have symptoms before going out, especially when meeting others. If it is positive, do not go out and take a PCR test within 24 hours.
- If you meet people other than your household meet them outdoors wherever possible. If meetings indoors make sure it is well ventilated.

Full details here: <https://bit.ly/3FFtCLF>

What is the legal requirement on businesses, workplaces, public places and event organisers?

Regulation 16 of the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(No. 5\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) imposes obligations on people responsible for premises that are open to the public or where work takes place:

- to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus on the premises, and
- to minimise the risk of spread of coronavirus by those who have been on the premises.

This is to be achieved by taking the following steps, which are based on the "hierarchy of controls" principles (referred to above):

- step 1: undertake a bespoke assessment of the risk of exposure to coronavirus at their premises (and to consult persons working on the premises or representatives of those persons in doing so)
- step 2: provide information to those entering or working at the premises about how to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus. This includes, in particular, information to all those working on the premises about their risk of exposure to coronavirus identified in the bespoke coronavirus risk assessment and the measures to be taken to minimise this risk
- step 3: ensure that reasonable measures are taken to minimise risk of exposure to the virus on the premises

Each of the 3 steps is required to be taken. Further detail on each step is set out below.

What has changed?

The requirement to carry out a bespoke coronavirus risk assessment and to take reasonable measures has not changed. These requirements remain in place at Alert Level Zero.

There has however been a change to how those required to take reasonable measures determine what reasonable measures they should take, as well as a change in emphasis in what reasonable measures are necessary. The Regulations are now less prescriptive about exactly what measures must be put in place, enabling there to be more flexibility in what is done based on the levels of risk identified.

The specific requirements on licensed and retail premises are no longer set out separately in the Regulations. However, this does not mean those things are no longer considered 'reasonable measures' that may be required, rather that they are not legally required in all circumstances.

For example, table service in a pub has been required at all times. As a result of the change in the law, however, whether table service should be put in place will depend on the circumstances. In a pub that is very rarely busy or during the day where there are few customers present, table service is unlikely to be required as the risk is lower. But table service may well be a reasonable measure that should be taken on a busy evening, or if a pub was holding an event, as the bar area could become crowded.

In so far as the reasonable measures themselves are concerned, there has been a particular emphasis throughout on physical distancing, in particular measures to keep people 2 metres apart. Following the change in the law, physical distancing is still a reasonable measure that may be taken, and in many circumstances is likely to be required to be taken, however it is no longer given particular prominence. This means that where other measures can be taken to minimise risk, such as moving outdoors, requiring people to be tested or vaccinated, using screens etc., physical distancing may not be required or could be required to a lesser extent.

From 11 October 2021, certain venues have been required to put in place measures connected with checking evidence of vaccine or testing status (this will be done by means of the NHCovid pass) as a mandatory reasonable measure. This guidance has been updated to provide further information to enforcement officers relating to this new requirement of a Covid-pass.

This requirement will be further expanded on 15 November 2021 to include indoor theatres, cinema's and concert halls.

To whom does the legal requirement apply?

The requirement to take reasonable measures applies in a very broad range of circumstances, including every kind of workplace which is open. This includes for example; public services, health and social care premises, schools and childcare settings, higher education, further education settings (including training centres and adult learning), call centres, hospitality businesses, **travel and holiday accommodation**, voluntary services, commercial and industrial premises, construction sites and other open sites such as roadworks and outdoor places including livestock markets.

GRANTS IN ENGLAND

Leisure and Hospitality Grant Scheme

This looks to be very similar to the grant support schemes previously offered, with a grant determined by your Rateable Value. We are still awaiting the details and eligibility criteria for these grants, and whether self-catering can apply and if there are restrictions.

If they are applicable the support amounts are as follows:

Recipients must be solvent businesses, and ratepayers in the hospitality and leisure sector. For example, a pub; hotel; restaurant; bar; cinema; or amusement park.

Grants are per premises and the amount paid is varied by rateable value (RV) of each eligible premises, in three bands: £0-15k; £15-51k; and over £51k.

Rateable Value	£0-15k	£15-51k	>£51k
Value of grant available	£2.7k	£4k	£6k

This scheme will cost **£683 million**.

We would normally have got all the eligibility criteria by now, but all emails requesting information from local and national Government are being met with 'out of office' replies. We should have the full details by next week's newsletter.

When any more detail emerges about any of the above, we will publish it in the next newsletter and on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pascukltd>

Council Tax based Grants

This looks to be a repeat of the previous Additional Restrictions Grant, (ARG) which was patchy at best. This is a discretionary grant, so local Councils can determine the criteria.

Councils that have fully distributed previous ARG monies will be prioritised for the allocation, and those that have not fully spent their previous allocation (our own East Devon still has £1m still unallocated) will be expected to use unallocated amounts.

Over £100 million of discretionary funding for local authorities in England:

In addition, LAs in England will receive a top-up worth a total of £102 million to their ARG fund. Up to £250 million is still currently with LAs, which we expect them to distribute.

This £102 million top-up, combined with the £2 billion previously allocated to LAs, means that they will have received over £2.1 billion of discretionary grant funding to support businesses in their local area who are experiencing a severe impact due to the Omicron variant.

The ARG top up will be prioritised for those LAs who have distributed their existing allocation. Use of this funding is at the LA's discretion but is intended to support businesses who are impacted by COVID-19 but may not be eligible for the hospitality and leisure grant.

We would normally have got all the eligibility criteria by now, but all emails requesting information from local and national Government are being met with 'out of office' replies. We should have the full details by next week's newsletter.

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Covid Recovery grants

Some information coming through on these grants. They are very different from previous grants and will be extremely hard for most self-caterers to apply for. They are also only for 40% of the value of the proposed project.

They may though be of great interest to agents who missed out badly through the Grant eligibility criteria over the last 18 months.

Here are some of the key criteria and PASC UK Comments:

- **Businesses with a significant operational base and / or employees in (County)**

Significant operational base probably excludes a cosy sleeps 2 in Sidmouth but may not exclude a complex of sixteen cottages outside Keswick.

- **In any format (limited company, sole trader etc) set up for profit and registered to pay tax on profit**

This could be tricky for some..... FHL accounts showing repeated losses would probably exclude applications.

- **Able to demonstrate a significant adverse impact from Covid-19**

This one will be the killer for most I fear. The trading that many actually achieved in 2020 and 2021 was not significantly down on 2019, especially if they received grants, for many they have had their best year ever. If any got insurance (Cottagesure, NFU, Schofields) then they are pretty certain to have had two good years. Only the larger properties may be able to prove that they were seriously affected as they were limited on how many guests they could receive.

- **Able to outline a credible and costed recovery plan**

This requires the business owner to write and cost a credible business recovery plan, which again suggest that it has to show that the business can recover to at least pre-covid levels if not more, and how they would achieve that.

I think therefore it's likely that the vast majority of self-catering businesses would not be eligible on at least one of the above.

Self-catering agencies though might not be, as long as they are not home based (that is in the criteria), agents did not get grants, nor the reduction in VAT and very few got business interruption cover etc. They would need to clearly show impact of Covid on revenue and then I think agents would be able to apply. That could be for all sorts of things, with funding up to 40% of total (min council contribution £6000 max council contribution £20,000).

What the grants can be for is covered here:

1. Capital expenditure is eligible that:

- · Increases productive capacity i.e. quantity and speed.
- · Increases capability e.g., makes new products or increases the capability to design and prototype new products.

- · Improves product quality.
- · Improves productivity.
- · Reduces unit cost.

Revenue expenditure is eligible that:

- · Makes sense of, exploits or complements capital expenditure.
- · Helps the applicant access new markets.
- · Provides and embeds new skills.
- · Makes it easier to build relationships with customers e.g., via sales processes or customer service.

- · Provides quality assurance.

These are not exhaustive lists and the applicant might buy tangible things e.g., marketing collateral, or intangible e.g. consultancy to help implement (but not scope) a specific part of the recovery plan.

This is pretty comprehensive and probably means that new websites to help reach new markets, or new heating systems, or putting in a quality programme are all possible.

As always with any grant process the normal answer is 'it depends' as there are both eligibility criteria for applying, and eligibility criteria for the project itself and some Councils may not offer this scheme. Grants that require business owners to provide 60% and have to go through all the public scrutiny are always way less popular than fully funded projects.

When any more detail emerges about any of the above, we will publish it in the next newsletter and on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pascukltd>

Local Hospitality Support Grants

We have seen some of these which are being offered locally, they are however intended for businesses serving food and beverage. An example below from Somerset...

The Local Hospitality Support Grant scheme, which is offered exclusively by ourselves, aims to support businesses directly impacted by the recent guidance in the run-up to Christmas 2021.

Businesses with a business rates account deriving the majority of their income from serving food and/or drink in-house, may apply to the scheme.

The scheme will open to applications on or soon after 6 January. The scheme will offer between £1,000 to £5,000 depending on the rateable value of the business premises.

We will watch closely and see if there are similar local schemes that self-caterers can apply for.

When any more detail emerges about any of the above, we will publish it in the next newsletter and on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pascukltd>

GRANTS IN SCOTLAND

There are going to be some grants for hospitality business in Scotland. This is all we can find on Gov.Scot at the moment.

- Eligible hospitality businesses that previously received support through the Strategic Framework Business Fund (SFBF) will receive a top up payment and will be contacted directly by their local authority in January (23 December 2021)

The eligibility looks like it excludes self-catering.

See here: <https://bit.ly/3eAPeNk>

Here's what it says....

The December and January Business Support Top Up – Hospitality will provide support to businesses in the hospitality sector who have lost crucial bookings during this key trading period where they are registered as one of the following:

- public houses
- restaurants,
- cafes
- other licensed premises classed as hospitality
- nightclubs
- hotels with bars and restaurants

Any business not classed as one of the above will not be eligible for this funding. Awards are granted based on the primary function of the business. It is for a local authority to determine if a business meets the description and further information can be requested, where necessary, to determine eligibility of applications.

When any more detail emerges about any of the above, we will publish it in the next newsletter and on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pascukltd>

GRANTS IN WALES

No precise details are available yet, and the Eligibility Checker is not online yet. It is therefore unclear as to whether any self-catering will be able to apply

£120m financial support for businesses in Wales impacted by Omicron

Businesses in Wales impacted by the rapid spread of the Omicron virus will be eligible for emergency financial support under a new Welsh Government support package.

The Economy Minister, Vaughan Gething, has announced the details of the £120m funding which will be available for retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism business and their supply chains affected by the move to alert level 2, as announced by the First Minister on Wednesday 22 December.

Details here: <https://bit.ly/3pBHS2p>

Under the latest package, retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism business who pay Non-Domestic Rates will be entitled to a payment of £2,000, £4,000 or £6,000 depending on their rateable value. Businesses will need to re-register their details, through a quick and easy online process, with their local authority in order to receive their payments.

Registration will open via local authority websites from the week commencing 10 January.

The Welsh Government has decided to extend this support to non-essential retail so that smaller shops, and Travel Agents will be supported, and our high streets can continue to thrive. In England, support is not available to non-essential retail.

In addition, impacted hospitality and leisure businesses and their supply chains will be able to apply for top up funding from a new Economic Resilience Fund (ERF). Eligible businesses can apply for grants of between £2,500k - £25,000, with grants dependent on their size and number of employees. The application window for ERF will open in week commencing 17 January 2022 with payments starting to reach businesses within days.

Local Authorities will also administer a Discretionary fund for business and sole traders who do not pay rates. The fund will provide £500 to sole trader and freelancers and £2,000 to employing businesses in impacted sectors. Further details to follow on Business Wales.

An eligibility checker which will help businesses to gauge how much they can expect to receive under the new support package will be available on Business Wales by the start of 2022.

It will be here when ready: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice/>

When any more detail emerges about any of the above, we will publish it in the next newsletter and on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pascukltd>

WHAT TO DO IF A GUEST GETS COVID AT YOUR PROPERTY?

There are some key points here to enable full understanding of what we need to do and why.

1/ There is (unbelievably in our view) no requirement for the guest to notify us if they do test positive for Covid whilst staying with you.

2/ You do not need to tell guests that come subsequently that a guest tested positive for Covid. This has more logic as we should have carried out the Covid Cleaning Protocols which protect, as far is proportionate, subsequent guests.

3/ We do have to have a Covid Risk Assessment by law. This has been covered in many PASC UK Newsletters.

We have seen on hospitality forums lots of incorrect information about what steps we need to take. The most common is still to leave three days between bookings. This has not been necessary since we reopened in July 2020 if cleaning protocols are followed.

The key steps that we must take if we find out that someone has had Covid in the premises are as follows:

- The guest(s) should return home as soon as possible to get back to their NHS support area.
- This does not imply that they should get a refund. If they broke a leg, they probably would not even ask. We are not the insurance policy of last resort for every occurrence. Guests should consider Covid cover in their holiday insurance, it is a known risk. (You must be clear on this, in your communications and booking terms. If you are taking bookings through third parties their booking terms will apply).
- Either the owners or cleaning team should put on PPE and enter the building and open as many windows as soon as practical for as long as possible. Every piece of data suggests that ventilation is the key.
- After ventilation, and either before or on the changeover day, normal Covid cleaning should take place as per the updated Cleaning Protocols (see below).

NEW REVISED CLEANING PROTOCOLS V5

All three Country specific versions are available under the Covid-19 Tab on the new website. England, Scotland and Wales are covered.

Between the old website and the new website over 12,000 copies of the updated version have already been downloaded, taking the total in excess of 135,000.

It is a positive review with sensible changes and written in any easy-to-understand way. We strongly recommend that they are read in their entirety, so that the whole context and the necessity to write an updated risk assessment is fully understood.

We are providing a single document for **Self-Catering Covid Cleaning Protocols V5** in each of England, Scotland and Wales.

This includes

- The Cleaning Protocols
- The Risk Assessment
- Cleaning checklist
- FAQ's

As always with the Cleaning Protocols, these are free to all. Earlier versions have been downloaded from the PASC UK website over 120,000 times and have done much to convince Government of the sectors commitment to Covid security.

Some key changes:

- Owners should follow current Government guidance on issues such as physical distancing and face coverings
- Properties that have been cleaned and disinfected in line with the protocols should be available for immediate occupation, and there is no requirement for leaving properties fallow for 72 hours
- Individual operators should decide on whether guests should strip the beds / laundry themselves. If operators/cleaners remove them (following protocols on good handling of linen, not shaking, PPE if required), then it could be argued that this may actually be more “controllable”
- A common-sense approach should be taken to the washing of crockery/cutlery, based on what cleaners find when assessing property at changeover
- PHS does not recommend Steam/UV-C light/ULV fogging between guests as standard practice
- And much more....

The Protocols can be found on www.pascuk.co.uk

Wishing each and every one of you all the best during these trying times, and please Stay Safe.

Best regards

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DISCLAIMER

We are in completely uncharted territory here, and any suggestions that we make are merely that and you should carefully consider your own business policies, and if necessary, consult with your Professional Advisors. PASC is your lobbying Association, not a legal service. In addition, please be very wary of some of the advice given on internet communities, blogs and social media. There appear to be thousands of experts out there where my understanding is that there are very few.

To that end, any information you get from any source you must double check. I will always try and put the actual link to the information in the newsletters so that you can read and assess yourselves. These are unprecedented times, please take exceptional care.

