Hotels and Tourism

Planning for Reopening in Response to COVID 19

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Authors

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The health and safety of hotel guests and staff members will remain the paramount concern as hotels and tourist attractions make preparations to reopen when current lockdown measures are eased.

It will be possible to reopen hotels, restaurants and other leisure facilities while adhering to social distancing restrictions and other Government guidelines designed to safeguard public health and safety, and minimise the spread of Coronavirus.

This document outlines some of the measures hotels and venues will be able to take to change their normal operations and protect the health of guests and staff members.

More detailed protocols have been worked up and these procedures will be shaped further by Government guidelines and regulations, and will continue to evolve in response to any changes in the medical advice.

Background: Hotels remaining open for key workers

A small number of hotels and guesthouses have remained open throughout the current Coronavirus pandemic, answering an appeal for accommodation to be available for NHS staff and key workers.

These hotels have been forced to operate on a very restricted, contact-free basis offering room service food and beverage only.

It has been beneficial to see how hotel services can continue to operate within these parameters and the experience will help the industry to modify our practices as we prepare to reopen.

These hotels have received positive feedback from guests including praise for the safety measures implemented from the NHS doctors, nurses and carers staying with them.

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Accommodation

Capacities will vary from property to property but most properties will need to reduce their occupancy levels substantially to facilitate social distancing in bars, restaurants, dining rooms and other public areas.

Pre-arrival

As far as possible, pre-arrival bookings and registration should include check-in information and pre-payment so that the physical check-in process on arrival will be as quick and seamless as possible.

Guests should be asked for an Estimated Time of Arrival when booking and allocated a Check In Time as close to that request as possible, to minimise the number of people arriving at the same peak times.

Guests would be required to complete a short survey, declaring their good health and absence of symptoms of the Coronavirus as a condition of their visit.

Check-in and check-out

Where possible, access doors should be clearly designated as Entrance and Exit to avoid two-way foot traffic and potential congestion.

If Government regulations consider it necessary, properties may need to install thermal cameras at access points to monitor for fever symptoms and prevent any guest showing a high temperature from entering.

Check-in queues will be minimal because of the pre-arrival procedures already outlined but social distancing lines should be clearly marked where small queues do form.

Adding perspex screens to front desks would create another barrier to minimise contact and protect guests and team members. All payments should be card only (no cash) and contactless where possible.

Some services such as valet parking and luggage drops to bedrooms will not operate because of concerns surrounding contact and contamination.

Some properties already offer express contactless checkout with secure dropboxes and this should be encouraged as the standard process. Only those querying charges should check out at front desk. Properties unable to offer express contactless checkout should be flexible with checkout times and consider creating checkout time slots to minimise checkout queues.

Social distancing between guests

Direct, person-to-person contact is the primary way in which COVID-19 coronavirus is spread, so it is essential all staff members and guests minimise their contact with others.

All guests will be advised on the need to practise social distancing from other guests and staff members throughout their stay. There will be reminder notices of this requirement in all appropriate places with the highest visibility.

Only the residents of one bedroom at a time will be allowed to travel in elevators. Disinfectant and wipe to be available to clean elevator buttons between usages.

Use of staircases will be encouraged as an alternative with separate staircases where possible for upward and downward travel.

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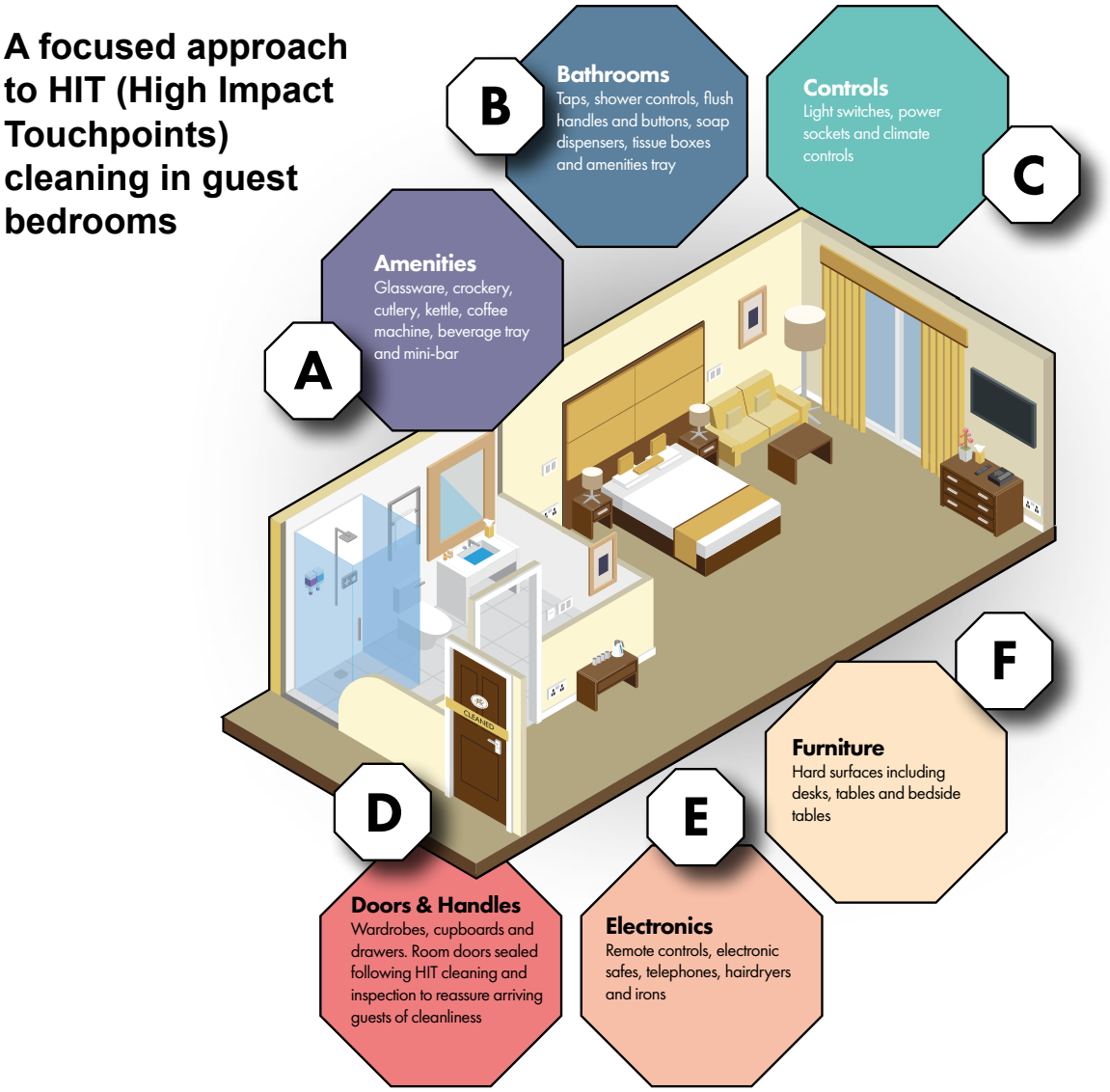
Cleanliness and hygiene

Cleanliness and hygiene has always been a priority for hotels and tourist venues but cleaning protocols in guest bedrooms and all public areas will be strengthened as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.



Guest bedrooms:

- All surfaces will be thoroughly treated with hospital-grade disinfectant.
- Removal of non-essential bedroom items such as bed throws, scatter cushions, notepads and pens.
- Hygiene welcome packs to be placed in guest bedrooms for arrival; these could include hand sanitiser, sanitising wipes, tissues and protective masks.

Public areas

- All surfaces will be thoroughly treated with approved disinfectant cleaning products.
- Deep cleaning will be performed with increased frequency.
- HIT cleaning will focus on the areas which are most frequently used and touched by staff and guests. Regular (at least hourly) cleaning of touchpoints identified in public areas such as door handles, lift buttons, switches and taps.
- Hand sanitisers at entry points, in public areas and at entrances to bars, restaurants and other facilities, with notices advising guests to use them.
- Where possible (and subject to fire regulations) doors will be left open or, if necessary, will be fitted with auto open/close mechanisms to ensure touch-free access.
- Public area washrooms to operate with a strict limit on maximum numbers to maintain social distancing, and a managed one in, one out system operated once maximum numbers were reached.

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Hotel staff

Team members will be health screened as a condition of returning to work.

Appropriate PPE including face masks and disposable gloves will be worn by all staff members based on their roles and responsibilities, and in accordance with Government regulations and guidance.

All staff members will undergo training on the new health and safety procedures and the implications of COVID 19, with constant refresher training courses to reinforce the message.

Team members will practise social distancing between themselves and their colleagues as well as guests. Office spaces will be reconfigured to allow this.

Bars and restaurants

Table service only - no buffet service in any restaurants, including breakfast service.

Where possible, clear routes in and out of restaurants will be established with one-way system minimising potential for contact between guests.

All bar and restaurant tables will be arranged to ensure appropriate social distancing, reducing restaurant numbers.

Guest tables will be doubled in size or side tables added to allow for food to be delivered safely to the side of guests, avoiding close contact.

Maximum 4 guests per table (all staying in the same room).

Reservation times introduced to breakfast service to control numbers, flow and social distancing.

Table service only in bars, no ordering or collection at bars.

Where possible, contactless room service food and beverage to be available to all guests.

Health clubs, spa and leisure

Reception desks operate with social distancing between guests and team members. Guests reminded on requirement to practise social distancing while using the club facilities.

Changing rooms likely to remain closed in the first instance because of social distancing. Hotel residents to change in their bedrooms before and after using health club. Members and day visitors to change at home.

Swimming pools likely to remain closed in the first instance because of social distancing and hygiene requirements.

Gym occupancy reduced and machines spaced within social distancing parameters.

Resistance training only, free weights removed.

Sanitising wipes available in all gym facilities and guests required to clean equipment after every use, this to be monitored and enforced.

Facilities to close every 4 hours to allow for a thorough 30 minute deep clean of all equipment.

Fitness classes capped to ensure social distancing with allocated spaces clearly marked.

Spa guests to arrive no more than 20 minutes prior to treatment times. Consultation forms to be completed online prior to arrival.

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Golf

Golf has reopened for play in other parts of the world and is expected to be one of the first outdoor activities to be permitted in the UK. Golf is the ideal sport for social distancing as you walk in hundreds of acres to play the game.

It is anticipated that the reopening of golf may not permit the use of locker rooms and pro shops in the first instance, allowing only limited clubhouse check-in and toilet facilities, but social distancing can also be achieved in these spaces when it is deemed safe to do so.

Changes to playing procedures will increase the safety of golfers and these can be further enhanced if required by Government regulations.

On course:

- Golfers are required to adhere to the 2-metre social distancing recommendation at all times with other players, including their own group.
- Flagsticks should be left in throughout the round even when holing out.
- Hole cups will be inverted, so that “hitting the cup” replaces “holing out” to allow easy retrieval of the golf ball without touching the flagstick.
- Bunker rakes and other course furniture have been removed. Bunkers can be smoothed by players using their feet following shots, and will be raked as frequently as possible by greenkeeping teams.
- Takeaway service only at Halfway Houses.
- Club cleaning and airblower shoe cleaning discontinued temporarily.
- Hire clubs and trollies wiped with anti-bacterial cleanser before and after play.
- Single buggies will be issued at no extra cost to prevent any need for buggy sharing.
- Sanitiser wipes provided on all buggies.

Clubhouse:

- Two metre social distancing spacing throughout Clubhouse, including between assigned lockers. Changing into golf shoes in car park to be encouraged where locker rooms lack space.
- All bar and restaurant tables will be arranged to ensure appropriate social distancing, reducing numbers.
- Shower facilities to be closed.
- Locker room and clubhouse cleaning to be strengthened and made more frequent.

Pro Shops & Driving Ranges:

- Hand sanitisers at entry to Pro Shops.
- Card payment only and contactless where possible.
- Limited number of shoppers to promote social distancing.
- Driving ranges already allow for 2-metre gaps between bays.
- Ball baskets to be sanitised before issue.

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Events

Organised events are very different to outdoor events, festivals and other mass gatherings and can be organised to maintain social distancing and other safety measures, meaning they do not have to be limited to small numbers.

Conferences, exhibitions and business meetings know their attendees, can communicate with them in advance, and can track and trace them if necessary. Steps that can be taken when hosting events to help safeguard public health from the continued spread of Coronavirus include:

Health screening of attendees: Venues would work with event organisers to ensure attendees are required to declare their good health and absence of any symptoms before attending an organised event. If Government regulations consider it necessary, venues may have to install thermal cameras at access points to monitor for fever symptoms and prevent any guest showing a high temperature from entering an event.

Online pre-arrival registration: Most events already use online registration tools and these would be strengthened to minimise any registration process at the event. Attendees would also be sent in advance a designated arrival time to prevent the majority of people arriving at the same time – typically 30 minutes before the start of formal proceedings. A welcome address could be repeated in two or more sessions to help facilitate this, and reassure people they are not missing out or being made to wait unduly.

Social distancing throughout the event: Two-metre social distancing could be maintained throughout the event with the required spacing between meeting room chairs and place settings. Social distancing can also be upheld between exhibition booths and for B2B appointments that are essential to many business events. Larger conference venues have the space to provide this but the impact of reduced capacities could again be addressed by repeating sessions and running them in tandem so that set groups of attendees all participate in the same sessions, albeit in a different order.

Catering: The same principle as above would be applied to divide and limit numbers at refreshment and lunch breaks where seating plans could again incorporate social distancing, utilising all spaces within a venue and outside, if weather pemits. The typical event buffet lunch brings issues of social contact and contamination of materials, so would be replaced by a pre-ordered ‘bento box’ service collected from a designated collection point at a designated time, again with managed queueing to maintain social distancing at all times.

Sanitary measures: Increased sanitary measures such as hand sanitisers in all areas and at all access points to meeting rooms, tightened catering procedures and increased cleaning protocols would be implemented. Sanitary facilities would be disinfected on a more regular basis and all meeting rooms and public areas would be cleaned more frequently during events. Washrooms would operate with a strict limit on maximum numbers to maintain social distancing, and a managed one in, one out system operated once maximum numbers were reached.

Technology: Video link could be used to broadcast a session to more than one meeting room if social distancing and time constraints meant that was the best way to reach all attendees at one time.

Operations and logistics: Social distancing would also apply to staff and logistics such as deliveries arriving at the venue, which would also to have follow strict health and safety guidelines.

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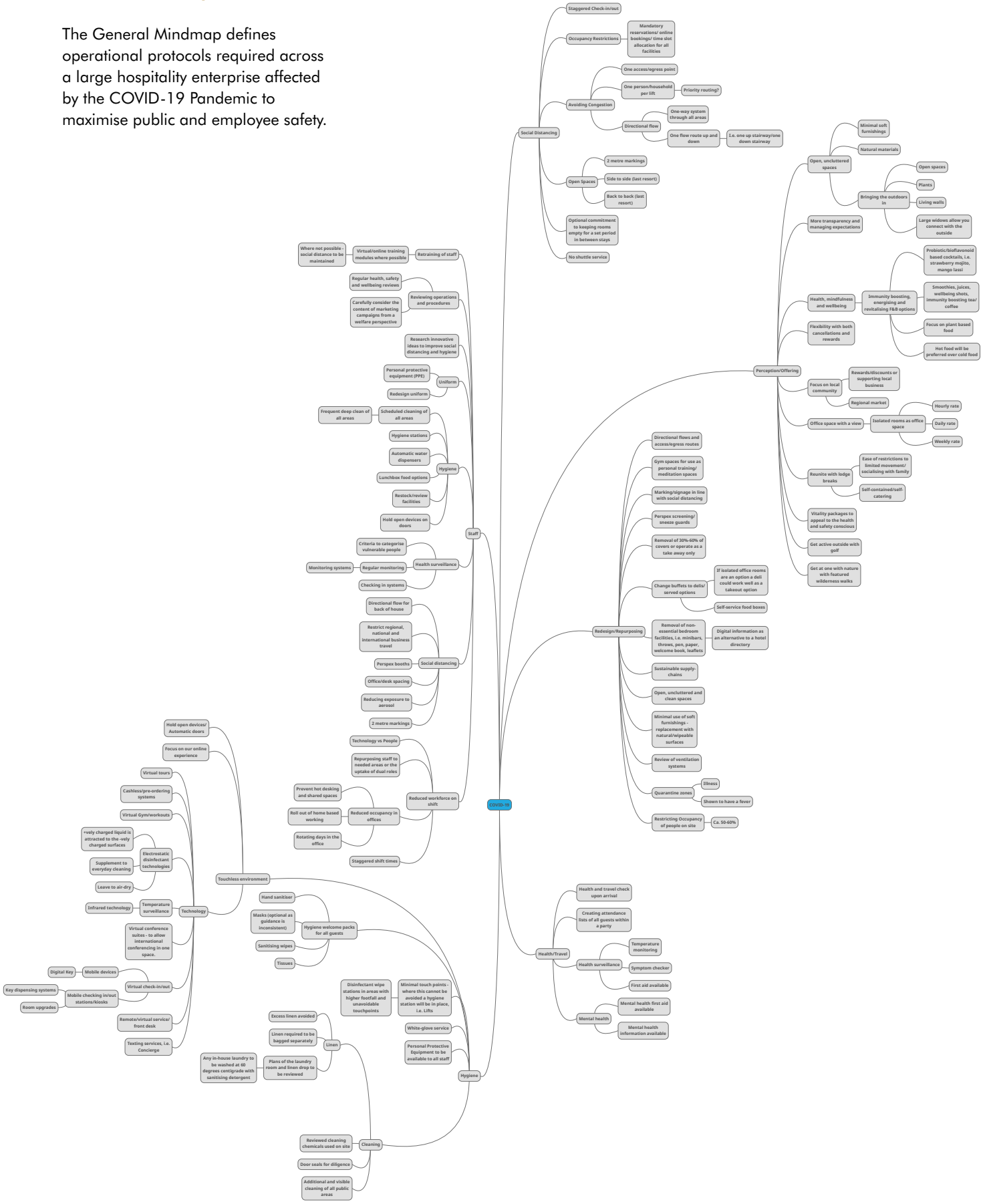
Appendix

Operational Mindmaps & Author Biographies

General Mindmap

The General Mindmap defines operational protocols required across a large hospitality enterprise affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic to maximise public and employee safety.



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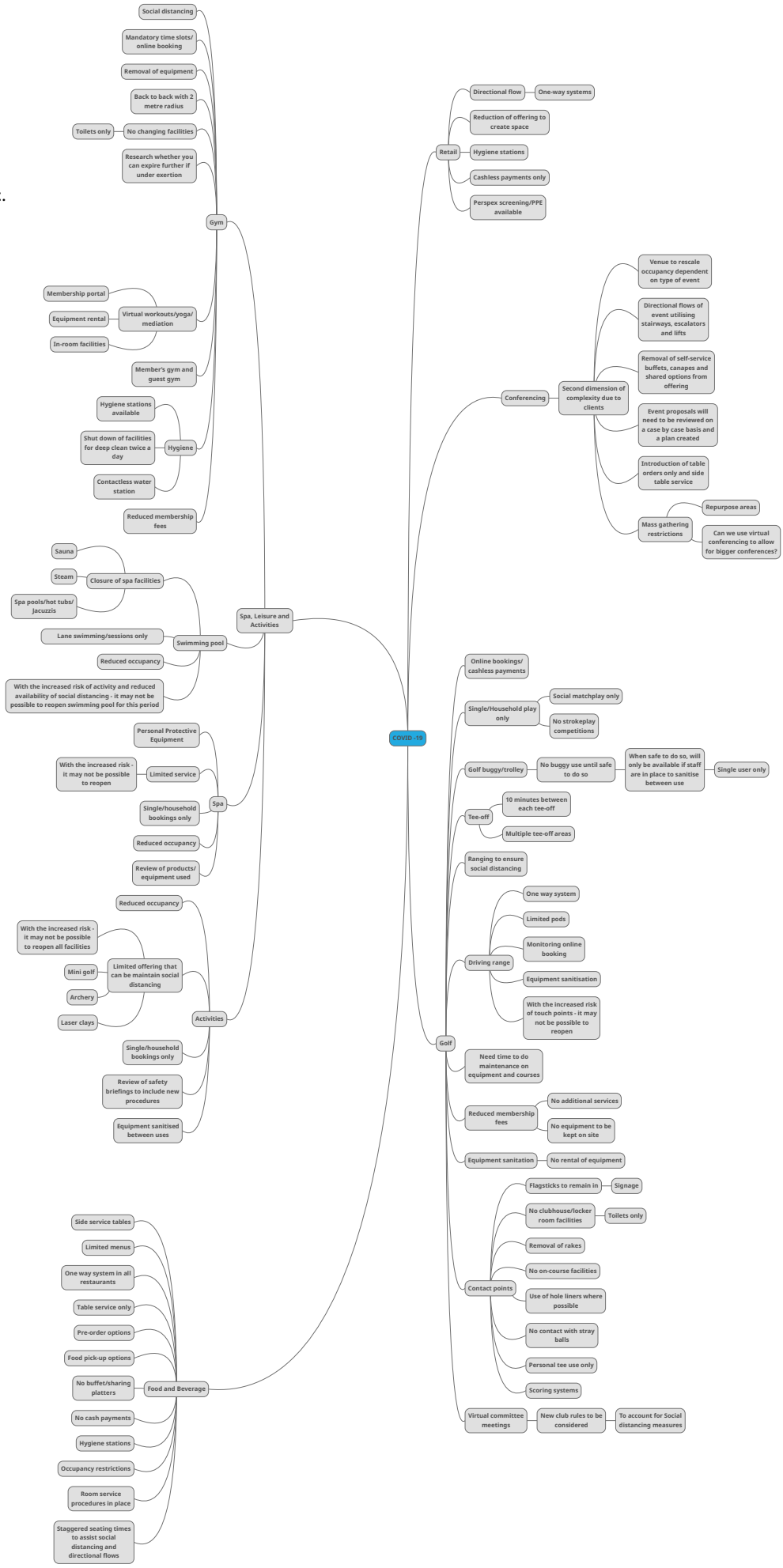
Departmental Mindmap

The Departmental Mindmap provides a breakdown of each function. It also applies to stand-alone businesses offering services to the public. e.g. Golf, Spa, Gym, Food and Beverage, etc.



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Author Biographies

Prof. Simon J. Gibson, CBE, DL
Chairman of the Alacrity Graduate Entrepreneurship Foundation and Chief Executive of Wesley Clover Wales.

Before joining Wesley Clover, he was co-founder, President and CEO of Ubiquity Software Corporation, a pioneer in the development of media protocols and service platforms for the internet. Simon is Chairman of a number of technology companies and a non-executive Director of the Celtic Manor Resort. He is a Regent of Harris Manchester College at the University of Oxford and a Professor at the Swansea University School of Management. He is an Honorary Fellow of Cardiff University and the University of South Wales. Simon has a long history of advising Public bodies. He is currently Chair of the 5G advisory Panel of Wales and a Trustee of the Newbridge Charitable Foundation.

Simon was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his services to industry and to the community in South Wales in the 1999 Queen's Birthday Honours list. In the 2018 New Year's Honours list he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to the economy of Wales.

He is a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Gwent.

Ian Edwards
Chief Executive, ICC Wales and The Celtic Collection

Ian Edwards took over as Chief Executive of the Celtic Manor Resort in 2014, having returned to the five-star golf, leisure and business resort as Chief Operating Officer in 2008.

In 2017 he also assumed the dual role of Chief Executive of International Convention Centre Wales, an £83.7m events venue in the grounds of Celtic Manor which opened in 2019 and is capable of hosting more than 5,000 delegates at a time. In 2019, Ian also oversaw the acquisition of a fifth hotel within the Celtic Collection and the launch of a new Tŷ Hotel brand.

He had previously helped to launch the Resort Hotel at Celtic Manor in the role of Convention Centre Manager in 1999, before leaving to take up management posts at hotels in Cardiff and London. In all, he has more than 30 years' experience in the hotel and hospitality industry and a thorough understanding of the tourism business.

Ian headed up the resort's delivery of two major global events - the 2010 Ryder Cup and the 2014 NATO Summit - and was named Hotelier of the Year at the 2015 European Hospitality Awards. He is now driving considerable expansion as the resort has evolved into the Celtic Collection of five hotels with another, Tŷ Hotel Newport, opening in 2020. The Celtic Collection will also make a new departure into managing hotels for other owners.

Ian is the Welsh Government representative on the Visit Britain Board and he is Chairman of the Board of St Joseph's Hospital in Newport. He also sits on the Welsh Government Tourism and Marketing Board, Newport Economic Network, and is a Visiting Professor at the University of South Wales. In 2019, he was made a Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality.

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