



## Framework for re-opening UK pubs as corporate meeting spaces post the emergence of COVID-19

Interim Guidance: July 2020

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## Purpose:

**The purpose of this document is to define a structured framework and outline key considerations for UK pubs to reopen for corporate meetings after the emergence of COVID-19.**

- Pubs & bars, as part of the UK hospitality industry, pledge to collaborate to ensure the health and safety of all participants to corporate meetings.
- As of 17th July 2020 the appropriate authorities allow corporate meetings (max 30 people) to be permitted based on the assured implementation of agreed health & safety standards and Track & Trace compliance
- Corporate meetings will drive economic revitalisation.

## Advocacy Narrative

### People and business

- Face-to-face interaction is a critical part of a successful business model
- Impactful training, project management, negotiations and information sharing are all enhanced when employees, team colleagues and customers can be brought to a shared location
- Personal interaction improves levels of trust & transparency and allows ideas to be shared and built upon – meetings should bring people together to do business, to learn, to inspire and to connect.

### Changing role of office space

- Working from Home and Socially Distanced offices will reduce the time that colleagues get to spend together in the workplace. Meetings spaces, within the office environment, will have capacity restrictions imposed
- Visitors to offices (customers, suppliers and partners) will be required to adhere to more stringent controls and restrictions
- Businesses will need to identify alternative venues where their employees can safely meet and work together

### Small meetings to drive recovery

- Organisations will need to resume business activities in a way that puts the health and safety of their people at its heart
- Smaller gatherings will allow a re-introduction of human interaction whilst adhering to social distancing requirements
- Small meetings will be vital in bringing remote workers together, re-training teams and sharing plans for how organisations will be approaching their own, unique challenges
- Limited capacity gatherings will permit the resumption of face-to-face customer presentations, demonstrations and negotiations – critical for businesses across all sectors and especially vital for SMEs

### Pubs as meeting venues

- A pub can, potentially, offer a more controlled and safer environment for a small meeting than a large hotel or conferencing facility
- Typically, a pub will only have one bookable meeting space so delegates will not be required to share communal areas with visitors from other organisations
- Business meetings often occur at times when the main trading area of the pub is very quiet (or even closed)
- Pubs often have adjacent car parking capacity and can offer delegates exclusive use of secondary entrances that are not shared with other visitors

### Additional environmental controls

- Pre-meeting communication and registration can ensure delegates are aware of processes in place for their protection ahead of their event
- Trained and allocated team members can ensure delegate / pub team interactions are kept to a minimum (This can be reduced further with ordering apps and digital messaging)

### Industry's Pledge

- To honour this responsibility to economies and societies, as an industry we stand ready to open the door to meetings as quickly as possible
- We are committed to striking the right and secure balance between public health in times of COVID-19 and the economic health of societies and nations.

## Contributors to this framework

This framework has been prepared in consultation and with the support of all parts of the UK pub and corporate meeting industries, including pub companies, meeting bookers & organisers, venue finders and associations. *(As this document develops from draft to sign off a full list of contributors will be added to the appendix).*

The framework established here will be used to produce documentation and resources to support the delivery of best-practice business meetings in pubs for the various areas listed in the framework below (*Section 4*).

# 1. Introduction – the importance of the meetings market

As citizens are permitted to move around the country and meet with a wider circle of people the ability to conduct safe and socially distanced business meetings will become more important. Employers will need to balance the responsibility for their employees' health and wellbeing with a requirement for them to attend business gatherings in order that the organisation can function effectively.

Business leaders across the hospitality sector have identified that off-site meetings for their own teams are a post-COVID-19 priority and with the increase in home working the ability for colleague groups to gather away from their office will drive demand for safe meeting spaces.

Pre-COVID-19, the UK business market was estimated to be worth £18bn per year with 95 million people attending 1.5 million events. 70%+ of all meetings are for under 30 delegates. The meetings industry will reconnect and rebuild businesses, industries and economies following this unprecedented period of industrial and economic stagnation.

The resumption of small business meetings within the UK is one part of the UK hospitality industry's response and recovery phase to the COVID-19 crisis and will be delivered in line with domestic government direction. This framework serves as an addition to existing health & safety processes & regulations and should be read in conjunction with the general advice on the public health aspects of operating a Hospitality and Visitor Economy business in the UK (see References for details)

## 2. The value of business meetings to UK Pubs

Pubs already have a share in the UK corporate meeting market but at a low level (it is estimated that only 2% of business pre-booked meetings are conducted in the country's pubs & bars). The quality of meeting space has improved in the last decade with substantial investment in the rooms, equipment, and the marketing & delivery of the meeting experience. In addition, extended opening hours (especially pre-noon) has seen many pubs become players in the drop-in / informal meetings market.

As pubs and bars face up to the commercial pressure of operating with reduced capacities the ability to drive revenue from their secondary trading space will become more important. Potential restrictions around drink-only visits and bar service will also drive a need to maximise trading levels at traditionally quiet periods to compensate for reductions in peak time volumes.

Smaller meetings & events offer a potentially significant revenue opportunity for pubs. Just one small meeting (15 delegates) per week could drive a pub's revenue by over £25k pa. Meeting revenue is, typically, a high margin opportunity with delegates consuming higher than average GP% food & beverage and revenue coming from the rental of the room – an existing asset of the business.

Many of the UK's best pubs are well positioned to increase their share of the domestic small meetings market. In the post COVID-19 landscape there is the opportunity for pubs to offer safe & socially distanced meeting space and begin to build their presence in this market. Much of the infrastructure to develop revenues from small meetings is already in place in UK pubs. Booking systems, Wi-Fi, and food & beverage can all be appropriated for smaller corporate gatherings. The 7-days-a-week trading of most pubs also means that they can react quickly to last minute meeting requests.

### 3. Timescales

The UK government has confirmed that pubs can now hold meetings for up to 30 persons using the guidance laid out in the updated Visitor Economy guidance and referring to the risk assessment for meetings.

In addition to pub openings, the meetings market will also need to take into account rules and restrictions around domestic (particularly public transport) and international travel.

### 4. Framework recommendations to operate pub-hosted business meetings in a safe environment

Note: The measures listed in this framework are all aimed at holding small meetings in a controlled and safe environment. They are to be considered, adapted, and implemented by industry stakeholders alongside the guidelines for the wider UK Hospitality and Visitor Economy industries

Considerations from this framework should be added to individual business's Risk Assessments, operational guidelines, and training materials.

#### 1. Ensure personnel and personal safety

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Perform Risk Assessment (and be prepared to share with bookers) • For the venue • For each event	✓	✓	✓
Manage use of prevention materials (e.g. provide masks, disinfectant gel, disposable tissues).	✓	✓	
Service team to follow social distancing during set up and breakdown	✓	✓	✓
Agree set up / break down rules with bookers and their suppliers: • Use of correct entrance • Correct PPE • Sign in for tracing • Confirm equipment has been cleaned before delivery	✓	✓	✓
Eliminate (or minimise) the need for service team to handle delegate equipment (e.g. display materials, registration info, POS etc)	✓	✓	✓
Use screens around registration or food & beverage service stations	✓	✓	✓

## 2. Enable physical distancing

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Eliminate the need for bookers to visit the pub pre-meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build end-to-end booking journey online</li> <li>• Allow instant booking via live availability</li> <li>• Ensure all venue details are presented online</li> </ul>	✓		
Re-configure room layouts & capacities, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove banqueting or cabaret seating plans (whilst 2m rule is in place)</li> <li>• Ensure new layouts are on venue website</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Mark floor distances around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign-in or registration areas</li> <li>• Tables and chairs</li> <li>• Presenter areas (Inc. projectors, screens etc)</li> <li>• Food &amp; beverages service areas</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Offer exclusive use of secondary entrances (if appropriate and safe to do so) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep entrance doors open where safe to do so</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Ensure clear signage from car parks and entrances to the meeting space	✓	✓	
Restrict, control or eliminate (depending on venue) any pre or post networking areas	✓	✓	✓

## 3. Increase health and safety measures

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Manage cleaning, sanitation and disinfection regimes of meetings areas (as part of the COVID19 procedures).	✓	✓	✓
Provide sanitising gels and anti-bacterial wipes (and a bin for their disposal) for delegates. Advise delegates on 'High Touch Points': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Door handles</li> <li>• Switches</li> <li>• Keyboards, etc</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Remove all self-service Food & Beverages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffet breakfasts and lunches</li> <li>• Tea &amp; Coffee stations</li> <li>• Large water bottles and jugs</li> <li>• On-table sweets, snacks and biscuits</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Remove items that can be touched or shared: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate baizes</li> <li>• Paper &amp; pens</li> <li>• Flipchart paper</li> <li>• Name cards</li> <li>• Wi-Fi or projector instructions (make them available online)</li> <li>• Cutlery, sugar spoons, milk jugs &amp; condiments</li> <li>• Bottle openers, ice buckets &amp; tongs</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Enable no-contact policy, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid shaking hands</li> <li>• Online ordering &amp; contactless payment</li> <li>• Messaging apps to contact service team</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Discourage delegate use of room controls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screen remote controls</li> <li>• Air conditioning controls</li> <li>• Windows and light switches</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

Ensure measures around use of toilets are clearly communicated to delegates	✓	✓	
Implement cleaning regime into room refreshes if delegates are vacating the room for breaks, meals etc	✓	✓	✓
Manage a full post meeting clean-down regime (Remembering that where a meeting room is booked more than once in a day that this may have to be carried out by the service team rather than dedicated cleaners)	✓	✓	✓

#### 4. Implement crowd control

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Pre-meeting: Agree with booker to send delegate lists containing names and addresses of each person This should form part of the venue's compliance with Track and Trace requirements	✓		
Agree arrival process with booker. I.e. • Permit delegates to access room on arrival, or • Ask delegates to remain outside of the venue until stipulated start time	✓	✓	
Adapt registration process and manage set-up to reduce contact onsite e.g. • Encourage online registration wherever possible • Print badges at home	✓	✓	
Manage catering offer to allow physical distancing and encourage additional hygiene measures e.g. • Avoid buffet-style service stations • Offer pre-packed or pre-ordered food • Take bespoke tea & coffee orders rather than setting up stations • Single serve, sealed bottles of water	✓	✓	

#### 5. Encourage and enforce measures

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Establish and maintain direct communication with local authorities - check for specific measures required for the hosting of meetings & events?	✓		
Monitor new sources of information and establish processes to act accordingly, e.g. • Designate a team to follow local news, podcasts and practise rumour controls • Establish mechanisms for epidemic prevention and control	✓		
Manage procedure to address onsite concerns and answer questions from all attendees	✓	✓	

## 6. Communication

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Build reassurances around delegate safety into the online booking journey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share details on how the room facilities have altered (e.g. removal of flipchart if requested; provision of wipes)</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Share and display measures taken with bookers and delegates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online: Include as part of pre-meeting comms</li> <li>Offline: Re-confirm measures within the pub and meeting space(s)</li> </ul>	✓	✓	
Ensure delegates are aware of key points of contact during their meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID related, i.e. if an attendee falls ill during the meeting</li> <li>Meeting related, i.e. equipment issues, food &amp; beverage etc</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
Design appropriate delegate / service team communication methods - i.e. Text or WhatsApp messaging rather than requiring service team to make additional visits to the room	✓	✓	

## 7. Commercial considerations

	Planning	Operational	Post Event
Ensure venue is set up to safely accommodate multiple uses of the meeting space across one day	✓	✓	✓
Build pricing strategy to take into account additional costs of operating safely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deeper cleaning</li> <li>Provision of gels and handwipes</li> <li>Cost of delivering food &amp; beverage offer</li> </ul>	✓		
Review deposit and cancellation policies so that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't encourage delegates to attend if they are unwell</li> <li>Protect the profitability of the business</li> <li>Include specific pandemic clauses</li> </ul>	✓	✓	

## Future development

### Alignment

It is proposed to create a cross-industries initiative that will align the interests of pub companies and small meetings bookers. Working title for this initiative is **Pub Meet UK**. Pub Meet UK will seek endorsement from existing trade bodies that currently represent and support the pub and meeting venue sectors:



**Pub Co's**  
– UK Hospitality

[Visit Website](#)

**Meetings Venues**  
– Meetings Industry Association

[Visit Website](#)

Pub Meet UK will take a phased approach to supporting the development of the pub sector as a more significant player in the small meetings market:

1. Agreement and sign up to the objectives and principles laid out in this framework
2. Sharing of detailed guidelines around the delivery of a safe small meeting experiences in pubs
3. Training materials to support the implementation of guidelines
4. Commitment to MIA accreditation for pubs so that they can promote their meetings room to a global booking's audience

### Drop-In meeting opportunity

With reduced capacity in coffee shops there is a significant opportunity for pubs to offer a safe and controlled environment for very small, often informal meeting of less than 4 delegates. Through a simple adjustment to current table booking systems pubs should be able to offer pre-booked tables that are socially distanced for small business meetings.

Pubs are ideally positioned to market drop-in meetings as a key post COVID-19 offering. Drop-in meetings often occur at traditionally quiet trading times when pubs are able to offer the space and table service that will ensure social distancing is maintained.

## MeetingsInn – an introduction

MeetingsInn is a platform that has been built to exclusively promote pubs with corporate meetings space to the global meetings booker market. The team behind MeetingsInn brings with them significant experience of the UK pub and hospitality market as well the global meetings and events industry.

The business takes a collaborative approach to the growth of pubs as venues for corporate meetings. As part of our COVID-19 response we want to bring together as many partners as possible to ensure the UK pub sector can quickly and safely build revenues from meetings & events.



[Visit Website](#)

## References:

### WHO Advice for the Public

[Visit Website](#)

### WHO Question and Answers

[Visit Website](#)

### Tourism and Health Protocols

[Visit Website](#)

### Meetings Industry Association

[Visit Website](#)



## Appendix A: Contributors to this framework and support from the industry



### Pub Companies / Operators

- Brewhouse & Kitchen - [<https://www.brewhouseandkitchen.com/>]
- Youngs - [<https://www.youngs.co.uk/>]
- Cubitt House - [<http://cubitthouse.co.uk/>]

### Booking Agencies, event organisers etc

- Healthcare Venues
- Top-Banana
- C2 Events
- HBAA (pending)

### Technology Suppliers

- The Venue Directory
- Meeting Packages

### Associations

- The Meetings Industry Association [<https://www.mia-uk.org/>]
- UK Hospitality [<https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/>]