

Top tips for reopening

Lessons learnt from attractions that have reopened including Zoos, Aquariums, Botanical gardens, Historic houses, Castles, Museums, Places of worship and Parks, and visitor research from ALVA and ASVA.

Have a group that meets at the end of every day to review visitor and staff feedback and make changes as necessary. Post-visit surveys can pick up where more safety measures are needed to reassure visitors.

Pre-visit info:

- There will be lots more calls and emails before they visit – clearly written and easily searchable FAQs help reduce these.
- Videos - Visitors find it reassuring to be able to see the safety measures in place but they are not as useful as FAQs.

Tickets & Members:

- For most sites, the entrance is a bottle neck, use timed tickets to spread out arrival but be flexible to let people in before their slot to reduce queues. Your website may be overloaded at first and people will need extra support to book slots.
- Tickets that are booked but not used can be as high as 40%. Make it clear to members that booking a slot will prevent someone else from visiting and monitor drop-off rate to adjust tickets available day-to-day. Can start with a low number and increase tickets available each day if processes are working and feedback positive. Have an easy way for people to cancel booked slots. Some sites have asked for a deposit or small donation when booking a slot.
- If allocating a percentage of tickets for members these might sell out faster than paid tickets leading to frustrated members.
- Conversion of visitors to members and renewal rates are higher than normal – people are not planning to go abroad and want to visit again. Visitors are also signing up to higher tier memberships even though some perks cannot be offered right now. Invest in building member loyalty.
- Consider introducing gift memberships for NHS staff that visitors can buy.
- On the gate tickets? A QR code on signage at the entrance can direct people to book a slot. Have staff help the entrance queue, check people have tickets ready to scan (so any that have not booked do not have to wait in line to find out they cannot get in).
- Even with restricted numbers visits during the week may be higher than normal.

Toilets:

- The number 1 pre-visit question! Visitors want to know that the toilets are open and clean. Including accessible toilets and baby-changing. Are your toilets easy to find?
- Pre-visit info is key. More than 50% would not visit if the toilets are closed and if they do they will spend less time onsite and less money on food & drink. Toilets are a high use, high anxiety area – visitors need to be reassured that they are open and clean, it is important to communicate safety measures taken.

- Visitors are more comfortable when they see staff on hand to clean toilets and sinks, socially-distanced entrance queues and staff managing the number of people inside. Cleaning teams wearing bright colours can make them more visible.
- If toilets are located where the queue cannot be distanced safely hiring portable toilets has only a small amount of negative feedback, visitors understand why they are closed.
- When planning the queue routes move leaflets and other things people might stop to look at and block the queue. Provide a safe space for people to wait while other people in their group use the toilet.
- Planning for reopening could be an opportunity to fix toilet issues. People with babies need nappy changing facilities (dads change nappies too). If your toilets are cubicles only could consider making them gender neutral to reduce the number of queues.

Catering:

- Having food available increases dwell time – make it clear what is available in FAQs.
- Consider providing picnic hampers and space for picnics
- Visitors will rearrange outdoor seating so this will need resetting to safe distances.

Signage:

- Brightly coloured and themed work best, ZSL has good examples:



Training:

- Staff will need training on new procedures/routes/handwashing locations etc. so they are confident when visitors ask.
- Visitors are reassured by seeing staff actively managing social distancing. Retail/entrance staff may be confident doing this but other staff might not be and will need training.

Social distancing & one-way routes:

- People are concerned about other visitors not following the social distancing rules, crowds and long queues and are reassured by advance booking to limit numbers and distancing measures onsite.
- If you have a one-way route and are controlling numbers entering the site you may not need to manage numbers in individual areas as much as you expect, people will distance themselves.
- Putting down floor stickers takes time - think about other staff to help your interpretation/signage team.

- Feedback on one-way routes is positive, they give structure and people feel like they miss less. People feel safer but be wary of bunching points, review this and add more signage/arrows as necessary. If you have an audio guide this can keep people moving along a route.
- When planning a one-way route think about the location of toilets. Are they only accessible at the start/end of a long route?

Engagement/education:

- Where staff have space to innovate, target students who have been disadvantaged by Covid-19 and missed out on education. Use your collection to engage and enthuse them. Create partnerships with schools and parents' groups and improve online content to reach a wider audience but remember the most disadvantaged communities will not have access to digital content.

Rain – some visitors are happy to be outside even in the rain, others will congregate in sheltered areas.

Top things that make visitors feel safer:

- Washing and hand sanitiser stations,
- Outdoor facilities,
- Staff wearing gloves/visors/masks,
- Cashless payments,
- Staff enforcing distancing,
- Visible regular cleaning,
- Limiting the number of people,
- Socially distanced routes.

Have a phased reopening plan – and be ready to move to the next phase at short notice.