

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Our customers already know that we take H&S and hygiene extremely seriously at The Square, maintaining our high standards at all times. At our current size we're not legally required to have risk assessments published, but Covid-19 has presented us all with a unique challenge, which raises many customer questions and fears, so we have published the following risk assessment to allow everyone to see exactly what has been considered and what changes have been made at The Square to minimise the risks of Covid-19 infection on reopening.

Please feel free to contact us directly if you have any other questions relating to this.

This document may be updated regularly, but we will strive to keep the website updated with the latest version

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1. What are the hazards?

The risk of catching, or spreading, Covid-19.

2. Who might be harmed?

Staff & Customers, and to a lesser extent delivery drivers and contractors. Due to the nature of our business, with controlled entry, we don't get any other visitors.

All deliveries/contractors are, by definition, pre-arranged and will also have their own Covid-safe procedures. Our only procedure regarding these groups will therefore be to remind them before arriving on site about the importance of sticking to Covid-19 guidelines.

3. Controls required?

3.1. Staff / working practices

3.1.1. Handwashing

Staff will be required to wash their hands far more frequently between different tasks and also at regular timed intervals. Staff will also have their own hand sanitising station behind the café counter

3.1.2. Commitment to social distancing outside of work

Staff will sign a commitment to follow all current social distancing and Covid-safe guidance whilst not at work.

3.1.3. Working patterns

From opening, we will have reduced operating hours and days. Although staff will have more tasks to complete, when coupled with lower (controlled) customer numbers and increased shifts for each staff member, it means the total number of individual staff at The Square can be cut, thus minimising the chances of cross-infection between different members of staff working together on various shifts

3.1.4. Masks

Staff will each have a non-disposable PPE mask that is easily sterilised. Due to the nature of our business, we selected clear, see-through masks so they're as 'friendly' as possible to allow children to still see our smiles. Remember, masks are not about forming a hermetic seal around the mouth to protect the wearer, their only purpose (at least for the general public during a pandemic) is to prevent exhaled vapours from circulating too far from the wearer.

3.2. Customers

3.2.1. Social distancing

To accommodate current social distancing guidance we have done the following:

Capacity – We have drastically reduced our total customer capacity (see 3.2.2 below for details)

Furniture – We have removed some items of furniture

Seating Layouts – We have completely rearranged our seating layout to ensure distancing between each table. We have removed the first three tables (attached to the main play frame) to open up the entrance corridor and allow for pram space to prevent the entrance room getting cluttered. We have also opened up the ‘party room’ as a permanent, additional seating space. This means we have both a reduced seating capacity and additional space in which to accommodate it.

Pedestrian Flow – We have opened up both the front & rear ‘party room’ doors permanently, to create a pedestrian (and air) flow around the whole building

One Way – We have made the corridors a recommended one-way system (for adults), to minimise crossover.

Toilets – We have added an additional toilet room for public use. So we now have a total of 7 toilets, consisting of 5 toilet cubicles across two rooms, and two completely separate toilets (ie. in their own lockable room), plus two baby-change areas. This provides at least one toilet for every 9 customers, even when fully booked, to minimise customer contact whilst our capacity controls are in place. We may close some toilet blocks during quieter sessions, but we will always have at least one toilet per 9 persons on site.

3.2.2. Capacity control

We designed our play centre originally so that we run out of adult space long before we run out of child play space, which makes it very easy to control our capacity safely in normal times; even when completely full we would still be below our total, safe child capacity.

The official capacity of our play spaces is worked out on the British Standard EN 1176 (part 10) for enclosed play spaces. In 2010, these standards were updated to be far more liberal with regard to capacities. The current official capacity for all of our play spaces combined would be around 190 children (with all areas open). Based on the old, stricter measures it would be around 94 children. We have therefore always taken an average of the two as a safety precaution. So our max capacity (of children playing) would be 142. Our max capacity of adults is around 100. So our total max. capacity for

all customers is **242 people**.

For the purposes of this risk assessment, we have drastically reduced our total capacity temporarily *from 242 to 60 people*. Bear in mind this is all people (adults, children & babies combined), so when coupled with layout changes and the additional seating spaces, the centre should always feel relatively empty, even when fully booked for a session.

Due to the unknown factors of bubble group sizes and the adult/child ratio of bookings during the pandemic, and also any changes to legislation or guidance after we have reopened, this limit will be constantly reviewed to assess the impact on the real-life situation in our play centre, and adjusted accordingly.

3.2.3. Pre-booking

We have moved all bookings to pre-booking, to allow even greater control of capacity. We will still allow walk-ins, but only if that session's capacity has not been exceeded by bookings, whether or not they have yet turned up.

Due to the govt's announcement on the 'rule of 6', we will also contact anyone who tries to book more than 6 people in a single booking. Anyone who turns up as a walk-in customer with more than 6 people in their group will be turned away, unless they are all from the same household.

3.2.4. Masks

All customers will be required to wear a mask whenever they are not seated. They may remove their mask only when seated at their own table with their own booking group. Customers with a mask exception should make us aware of this when booking.

3.3. Hygiene measures (over & above our normal procedures)

3.3.1. Regular cleaning

We have always prided ourselves on keeping The Square as clean as possible, with staff having over 100 regular cleaning jobs on a constant rota of daily, weekly and monthly tasks. To be Covid-safe we have increased our cleaning schedules throughout each shift. We now also have 3 trading sessions each day, with an hour's break period between each to allow for additional deep-cleaning & sterilising whilst no customers are on site.

3.3.2. Sanitising points

We have installed 8 separate, wall-mounted, hand sanitising units around the play centre to encourage regular hand sanitising. The hand sanitiser we use is a non-alcohol, naturally-based, anti-viral sanitiser that is completely safe for regular use, for children and adults alike.

3.3.3. Touchpoints

As well as our additional cleaning measures, staff will be focussing on sanitising key touchpoints throughout the building, almost every time they leave the café counter. Examples of touchpoints are door handles, main door exit button, baby room gate, etc. During our closed periods between trading sessions we will also be sanitising other items that may have shared touch, such as any padded shapes in the play areas.

3.3.4. Additional, whole-centre sanitising

Whilst not mandatory, there is now an argument for some other form of whole-centre sanitising process to back up all of the other cleaning measures and provide additional protection against infection risks. After researching this, we chose UV-C and we are the **first play centre in the country** (and possibly the first leisure business overall) to adopt UV-C across our whole business area.

**For an explanation of UV-C, and also why we chose it over other options, please read the notes at the end of this document*

3.4. Other controls

3.4.1. Parties

We completely removed parties during normal opening hours. Not only because a visiting party would seriously affect the low capacity numbers, but also because traditional children's parties would have been extremely hard to run under the guidelines, both for bubble groups and for social distancing, and we couldn't physically sit children together around a party table anyway.

We were offering private (out of hours) parties only, after reopening, but since the govt announcement about the 'rule of 6' we have removed those also, to completely remove the risk of gatherings greater than 6 people.

3.4.2. Air circulation/Extraction

We have always had an extraction system at The Square but before the pandemic it was never really necessary to consider the *routes* of airflow, as long as we were getting fresh air into the building, and stale air out, it was perfectly acceptable. But Covid-19 has obviously changed all of this. We have therefore made adjustments to our extraction system, combined with other physical and procedural changes on site to divert the airflow far more appropriately and ensure areas have a constant flow of fresh air, and that air is also appropriately directed.

Along with these changes, we have also purchased a CO2 meter to regularly check the CO2 levels in various areas around the building and ensure the ventilation is working as it should. So you can be confident you'll never be breathing stale air at The Square.

3.4.3. Chemicals

We have always strived to be as green as possible but we have had to review our chemicals to ensure they're also effective against Covid-19. Even during a pandemic we should not lose sight of the importance of being green. We have therefore ditched

almost all of our existing cleaning chemicals and moved to a company that provides products that are effective and kind to the environment (it's not possible to be 100% green with effective, commercial sanitising products, but we'll always try to be as close as possible). Unfortunately, the cost of these is considerably higher but we cannot cut corners on such an important part of the fight against Covid-19. There are three key areas we use chemicals in our play centre and they are all now from the same green provider:

Hand sanitiser – Unlike many others, our hand sanitiser is completely alcohol-free and is primarily vegetable-based. This makes it child-friendly but still highly effective against all viruses and bacteria, including Covid-19.

Surface sanitiser – we will now be using a new product from the same green provider for all of our surface and touchpoint sanitising, which is also guaranteed effective against Covid-19

Floor cleaner – We will now be using a new sanitising and deep-cleaning floor cleaner from the same company, again which is guaranteed to be effective against Covid-19

3.4.4. Screens

We have installed a 1m x 1m counter-top perspex screen on our front entrance desk. We have also installed fixed Perspex screens across the total free space of the main café counter. This is not only for protection of staff and customers from potential face-to-face transmission; it also forms part of our air-extraction diversion, to prevent the airflow coming directly past staff.

3.4.5. Removal of loose items

To avoid any possibility of cross-infection, we have removed:

Ball pits – As clean as our ball pits were, and as sad as it makes us to remove a popular attraction for the children, we cannot justify keeping such an obvious cross-infection risk as 1000s of plastic balls whilst Covid-19 is with us. So we removed all ball-pit balls from our centre. The spaces are still there and we instead added some easily-sterilised, soft building shapes to keep the children entertained.

Dressing-up costumes – This makes us even sadder than the ball pits but we have removed all dressing-up costumes and masks/hats. Obviously, we have therefore had to suspend our longstanding free-entry-for-a-costume offer until further notice.

Baby-Room loose items - All loose play items have been removed other than the baby-rockers, baby-ring, and the bubble-tube colour-changing control cube. All of these are now sanitised during each booking session.

Tractors – We had 8 ride-on tractors which have now been removed. As a single tractor could be used by many different children in one day, and because they have a defined touchpoint used by every child (the steering wheel), it would be impossible in practice to sterilise these after each use.

3.4.6. Cutlery and crockery items

We have replaced all reusable crockery and cutlery with single-use items. In line with our policy of being as green as possible, these will also be made from recyclable or compostable materials. This includes all cups for hot drinks, all cutlery, replacing teaspoons with stirrers and replacing plates with bagasse plates.

3.4.7. Door openers

We have installed foot plates to the main entrance doors and all toilet doors, so they can be opened with a foot instead of using the handles, if customers wish.

3.4.8. Toilets

We have replaced all the bins with enclosed units, installed hygiene bag dispensers in every cubicle, installed hand dryers with HEPA filters (anti-bacterial and anti-viral), and opened up an additional toilet room for public use.

3.4.9. Cashless

We have moved to a completely cashless business to minimise cross-infection. In the 4 years we have been open, we have seen our credit card sales increase from around 30% to 80% of all sales, so the switch was inevitable at some point anyway, and now is the perfect time.

3.4.10. Track & Trace

Our pre-booking system also allows us to operate a comprehensive track & trace system at no inconvenience to our customers. We keep details of any no-shows or add-ons, and any walk-in customers must complete *either* a track & trace form with some minimum contact details *or* scan the NHS app QR code in our entrance *before* they are allowed to enter. Unlike many other hospitality businesses, we are confident that we can accurately trace ALL people who enter our building should the need arise.

Notes

*With regard to section 3.3.4. about our UV-C sterilising system, we'll explain why we chose UV-C here.

When dealing with viruses or bacteria that are able to survive for longer than 24 hours on surfaces, any whole-centre sterilising system must realistically be done every day to have an effect. Or it must provide some form of anti-viral barrier following application, up until the next application is made. After researching potential solutions, we decided upon only four realistic possibilities:

- Do nothing further
- Manual cleaning
- Fogging
- UV-C

Do nothing further

This was clearly an option. We're still perfectly hygienic and one of the cleanest play centres you could ever hope to visit, even more so with our upgraded sanitising procedures during the pandemic. It's not mandatory to have a whole-centre sanitising system in place, as long as you can show you have procedures in place to minimise infection risks, which we do. And very few other business sectors would even consider such a thing. But we want to be the best at what we do and Covid-19 has changed things a little! So we decided doing nothing further was not an option.

Manual cleaning

This is simply wiping everything down by hand with sterilising agents. Whilst perfectly acceptable as a sterilising routine (if done correctly), and we already do this during sessions and in-between sessions on all common touchpoints, it has two major drawbacks when talking about a whole play centre. Firstly, it's not possible to manually sterilise even a significant portion of all surfaces and touchpoints in a play centre every day, due to the sheer number and intricate designs involved. And secondly, the time and cost of manually cleaning our whole building every day would be financially prohibitive. So we had to rule this option out.

Fogging

This is a process of spraying a fine mist across all internal areas and surfaces using specialist chemicals and equipment. It has risen in popularity recently and you will see many businesses (not just play centres), starting to use it. However, we have never been convinced on the efficacy of fogging. It certainly works as an immediate sanitising method, of that there is no argument, but there are many claims of multi-day protection (up to 30 days with some providers) which simply cannot be achieved in reality unless you're leaving a chemical residue on all surfaces, which is obviously not ideal in a play environment. And even then, many of those systems only work in sterile environments. IE. as soon as the surface is touched it can become infected again. So it seems regular sanitising is the only realistic way to reduce risks, by fogging at least daily. An extensive daily fogging regime, whilst not impossible, is certainly hard to make economically viable for any business such as a play centre. Even more so during times of heavily-restricted customer numbers. And it must be done well-outside of normal operating hours, to ensure enough time for all chemical mist to settle and/or dissipate into harmless residues. And aside from that, there is also the plain fact that no matter how much suppliers can persuade us it's perfectly safe, chemicals *are* being sprayed all over a play environment! For example, one of its main claims is that it's so invasive it can literally get into every square millimetre of the building to sanitise it, which is great. But even if it dissipates into harmless residues over time, whilst it's being sprayed it would still be getting into such things as slush machines, fridges, cake displays, etc? So we ultimately decided against fogging too.

UV-C

Ultraviolet light (UV) is a short wavelength of visible light which has varying effects on all biological cells. It comes in 3 variants:

UVA - This represents around 95% of all UV light that reaches us from the sun. It's the longest wavelength of UV and can therefore penetrate quite deep into the skin. UV-A is what gives you an immediate tan when sunbathing.

UVB - This is mostly filtered out by our atmosphere, so it makes up the other 5% of UV light reaching us. It's a medium wavelength UV so cannot penetrate the skin very much. UVB is what gives you're your delayed tan the next day after sunbathing (and also your burns)!

UVC - This is completely filtered out by our atmosphere, it never reaches us. It has the shortest wavelength, so cannot penetrate the skin but it causes the most damage to biological cells. Hence why it is ideal as a sterilant.

UVC lamps are installed across the whole area requiring sterilisation and are then turned on for a short burst when the building is empty, to sterilise all air and surfaces exposed to the light. It has been in use for years in hospitals, etc. but never in a soft play, as far as we know. So we decided to choose UVC because of its advantages over the other options, which makes it by far the best solution in our opinion.

It's advantages:

- It requires no human input during operation, so there's no possibility of errors or missed areas, etc.
- This also makes it far cheaper, long-term, than any other option due to minimal labour costs.
- It can be used at any time, even minutes before the building would be occupied again. So we could use it not only every evening but also between sessions if we wished.

- It leaves no residue, involves no chemicals and has no effect on air quality at all; it is quite literally just light!
- It is highly-effective, no bacteria or virus has ever been found that is resistant to UVC .
- It's far safer because it doesn't require any human input at all. Although UVC light itself is dangerous if you spend any significant time in it or look at it directly*, there are many built-in safeguards to ensure the system cannot ever turn on when people are present.

*We should just point out that it's short wavelength means it cannot penetrate much at all, so although you may see the lamp operating through our windows, the UVC cannot penetrate the window, so it's perfectly safe to view from outside.

In fact, the only negatives we could see are:

- The high initial cost? But long-term it is far cheaper, so we took the plunge!
- The problem of shadows, as it can only kill what it shines on? But very good coverage can be achieved with the right positioning and number of lamps, and certainly almost all areas that would be regularly touched. No sterilising system can guarantee 100% coverage, so when balanced against other options it is at least as effective.
- The deterioration of non-UV-resistant materials, such as plastic furniture or frame netting & vinyl? The effectiveness of UVC is based on a relationship between three things: lamp power, distance from the lamp and time of exposure. These are very well understood and the power and time required to sterilise a surface is far less than you would expect, which means the daily exposure for any material is tiny. So the time required to cause any noticeable UV damage would almost always fall well outside of the natural lifespan of the material or item anyway.